

Stratasys Ltd. (SSYS)

\$16.06 (As of 11/26/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$17.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 05/02/19)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:D

Value: D

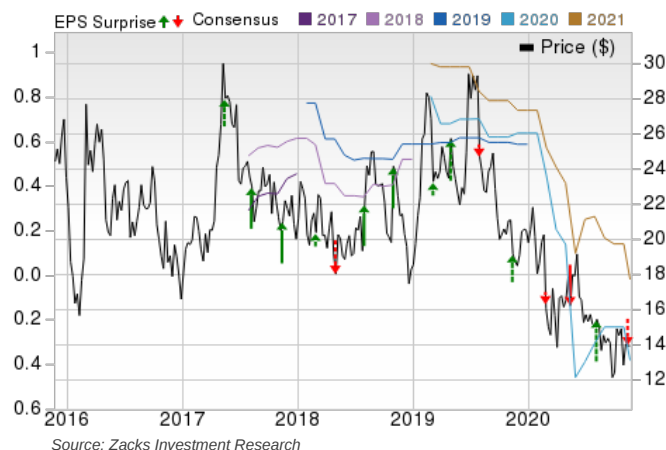
Growth: C

Momentum: F

Summary

Stratasys is benefiting from an increase in demand for 3D printed medical equipment. Notably, the adoption of PolyJet and FDM printers was strong. Moreover, the company's cost-control initiatives are expected to reflect positively on expenses in the forthcoming quarters. Firm focus on launching products and entering into partnerships is a key driver. However, economic weakness due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic affected the top line. Also, falling sales of high-end products in North America makes us increasingly cautious about its near-term performance. Moreover, the company withdrew its 2020 guidance, considering the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. The company witnessed a year over year decline across each of its reportable segments. Shares have underperformed the industry in the past year.

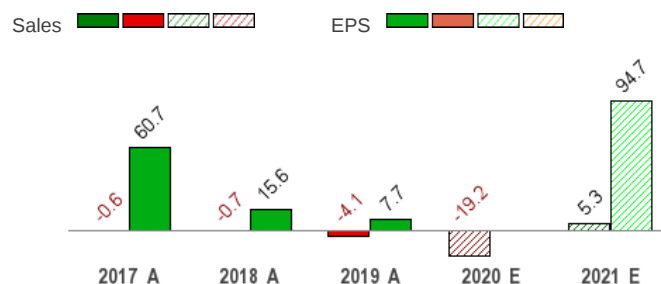
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$22.21 - \$11.89
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	988,374
Market Cap	\$874.3 M
Year-To-Date Price Change	-20.6%
Beta	1.62
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Computer - Peripheral Equipment
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 19% (47 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-25.0%
Last Sales Surprise	4.4%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-16.4%
Expected Report Date	02/24/2021
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	NA
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	1.6

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	128 E	131 E	136 E	140 E	541 E
2020	133 A	118 A	128 A	135 E	514 E
2019	155 A	163 A	157 A	160 A	636 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	-\$0.06 E	-\$0.02 E	\$0.01 E	\$0.04 E	-\$0.02 E
2020	-\$0.19 A	-\$0.13 A	-\$0.05 A	\$0.00 E	-\$0.38 E
2019	\$0.10 A	\$0.16 A	\$0.12 A	\$0.18 A	\$0.56 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 11/26/2020. The reports text is as of 11/27/2020.

Overview

Headquartered in Eden Prairie, MN, Stratasys Ltd. is a manufacturer of in-office rapid prototyping (RP) and manufacturing systems and 3D printers for automotive, aerospace, defense, electronic, medical, education and consumer product original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

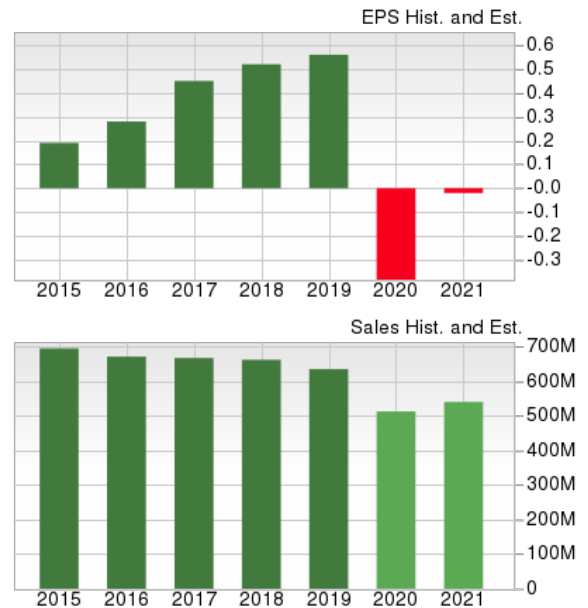
The company's systems are also used in direct digital manufacturing (DDM) and rapid tooling applications. With the use of patented Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM) and PolyJet rapid prototyping processes, engineers and designers are able to create precise physical models, tools and three-dimensional (3D) prototypes out of plastic and other materials using workstation-based computer-aided design (CAD).

These prototypes are used for testing form, fit and function throughout the design and development process. Essentially, Stratasys' systems allow design engineers to develop highly complex geometrical designs using a wide range of high-performance engineering materials with in-office RP systems that require no chemical post processing, special venting or facility modification.

The company generally reports revenues under two segments. First, Product Revenues, which includes revenues generated through the sales of products and consumables. Second, Services Revenues, which include revenues generated from service offerings, such as RedEye paid parts, installation and maintenance, and other services. In 2019, Products and Services accounted for 74.6% and 25.4% of the total revenues, respectively.

The company competes in a marketplace that is still dominated by conventional methods of model-making and prototype development. Machinists and engineers working on blueprints or CAD files and using machining or manual methods generally perform prototype development and fabrication.

The company's competitors include 3D Systems Corp., EOS GmbH and EnvisionTEC GmbH in the prototype development and customized manufacturing processes. Stratasys competes with companies such as Delta Micro Factory, Affinia, Ultimaker, Printbot, Leapfrog, Solidoodle and 3D Systems in the entry-level desktop 3D printers.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Stratasys launched several innovative products that positioned the company well over the long term. Stratasys' machines facilitate prototyping within a few hours which reduces development time and upfront costs. Also, the company's spool-based system compares favorably with UV polymer systems. For these reasons, we think the company maintains a leading position at RP machines. Moreover, the company's RedEye RPM is the world's largest RP and part-building service. RedEye RPM is an online extension of the company's BuildFDM service. This product has grown rapidly over the past several years and offers good business for the company. Furthermore, Stratasys launched two products in late last year – The Infinite-Build 3D Demonstrator and the Robotic Composite 3D Demonstrator. These launches have helped users to reduce complexities and data loss, thereby enhancing user experience and providing high-quality prints.
- ▲ Stratasys has been scaling newer heights across all its business segments. Over the past few quarters, the company has inked strategic partnerships to fuel its growth momentum. The 3D printing company has made strategic partnerships with the likes of Schneider Electric, The Boeing Co., Ford Motor Co., Siemens, Boom Supersonic and United Launch Alliance. The collaborations are aimed at introducing advanced 3D printing technologies to the aerospace and automotive industries. The deal is a strategic move by Stratasys to expand its geographic reach and drive market penetration. Both these partnership spell opportunities for Stratasys' 3D systems business and will increase its installed base.
- ▲ The 3D printing market presents a favorable long-term investment opportunity as a large number of engineers, designers, architects and entrepreneurs are resorting to 3D solutions for their primary designing and product modeling. According to market research firm CONTEXT, over half a million 3D printers have already been shipped across the globe between the 1980s and mid-2015 and the industry witnessed its millionth unit shipment in 2017. Per Statista, the global 3D printing market is expected to reach \$40 billion by 2024, representing a CAGR of 26.4% through 2020-2024. As the industry leader in 3D printing, this is encouraging information for Stratasys as it will be able to grab a large share of this market.
- ▲ Stratasys has a strong balance sheet with ample liquidity position and no debt obligations. Cash and cash equivalents have remained stable over \$300 million for the past 15 quarters. As of Sep 30, 2020, the company had cash balance of \$308 million. Since it carries no long-term debt, the cash is available for pursuing strategic acquisitions, investment in growth initiatives and distribution to shareholders.

Stratasys' sustained focus on launching new products and entering into strategic partnerships will drive long-term growth.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ Stratasys has been witnessing declining gross margin due to the incremental sales generated from the lower-margin products. The company tries to mitigate the gross margin contraction by lowering operating expenses as a percentage of revenues. Nonetheless, we opine that it will be a tough task for the company to lower operating expenses as it will have to continue to invest in marketing and R&D to generate higher sales, which will weigh on the company's operating margins. Therefore, Stratasys have to look for ways to generate revenues from the sales of higher margin products to maintain its profitability over the long-run.
- ▼ Stratasys is exposed to considerable foreign currency risk as it invoices sales to certain European distributors in Euros, and reported results are therefore, subject to fluctuations in the exchange rates of that currency compared to the U.S. dollar. The company has a hedging strategy in place for its Euro-denominated accounts, for which it uses 30-day foreign currency forward contracts. Nevertheless, earnings may be adversely affected by changes in currency exchange rates. It is expected that the company would continue to face currency-related problems.
- ▼ Stratasys has a high cost structure and remains in the investment mode. As a result of its plans announced in 2015 of investing in product and infrastructure development, the company expects incremental annual operating expenditure of 2% of anticipated revenues over the few years. Considering the evolving nature of the 3D printing market and the high cost of operations associated with it, we believe that much of the company's long-term profitability will depend on efficient cost management.

Falling sales of high-end products in North America is hurting Stratasys' top-line performance, which makes us increasingly cautious about its near-term performance.

Last Earnings Report

Stratasys Reports Wider-Than-Expected Loss in Q3

Stratasys reported non-GAAP loss of 5 cents per share in the third quarter, wider than the Zacks Consensus Estimate of a loss of 4 cents. Moreover, the company had recorded earnings per share of 12 cents per share in the year-ago quarter.

Stratasys' revenues of \$127.9 million also declined 18.8% year over year. The revenue figure, however, surpassed the consensus mark of \$122.5 million. This year-over-year decline in the top line reflects the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has dampened the demand for its products and services.

Quarter Details

Segment wise, Product revenues were down 21.4% from the year-ago quarter to \$83.5 million. Within Product revenues, System revenues decreased 20.8% and Consumables revenues fell 22% year over year.

Revenues from Services decreased 13.2% year over year to \$44.3 million. Within Service revenues, customer support revenues dropped 1.6% year over year.

Stratasys' non-GAAP gross profit dipped 22.7% from the year-ago quarter to \$59.8 million. Non-GAAP gross margin contracted 560 basis points (bps) to 46.8%.

Non-GAAP operating expenses slid 18.3% year over year to \$60.8 million, on management's efforts to cut SG&A costs.

Non-GAAP operating loss totaled \$1 million against the operating income of \$8.1 million recorded in the prior-year quarter.

The company exited the third quarter with cash and cash equivalents of \$308 million compared with the \$313 million witnessed at the end of the previous quarter.

As of Sep 30, 2020, there was no long-term debt.

During the July-September quarter, the company generated operating cash flow of \$2.6 million.

Quarter Ending 09/2020

Report Date	Nov 12, 2020
Sales Surprise	4.39%
EPS Surprise	-25.00%
Quarterly EPS	-0.05
Annual EPS (TTM)	-0.19

Recent News

On Nov 24, Stratasys announced that Volkswagen AG has invested in its full color, multi-material 3D printing technology, to drive enhancements in automotive designs.

On Nov 16, Stratasys announced that KeyShot 3D rendering software now supports the company's J55 and J8 Series 3D printers. With this, designers can now 3D print in full color and textures like wood right from KeyShot software to Stratasys PolyJet printers.

On Nov 9, Stratasys announced collaborating with nTopology in an effort to make additive manufacturing even easier. The two companies are providing a series of accessible, customizable Design for Additive Manufacturing workflows for their users, starting with the FDM Assembly Fixture Generator..

On Nov 3, Stratasys disclosed that it has successfully sold and installed its J750 Digital Anatomy 3D printers at healthcare institutions and medical service providers in major markets across the globe, including the United States, China, Italy, Spain, and Australia.

On Oct 29, Stratasys announced that Boeing has approved the company's Antero 800NA thermoplastic to its repertoire of 3D printing capabilities.

On Oct 6, Stratasys' wholly-owned subsidiary MakerBot announced the expansion of its materials offering with Nylon 12 Carbon Fiber.

On Sep 17, Stratasys announced a new multi-year technical partnership agreement with Team Penske to continue to bring the time-saving benefits of 3D printing to all Team Penske NASCAR, INDYCAR and IMSA SportsCar teams.

On Aug 3, Stratasys revealed that General Motors is accelerating 3D printing capabilities for speed, weight reduction and cost efficiency on its production lines.

On Jul 15, Stratasys revealed that BAE Systems has added a fourth Stratasys F900 3D printer to its manufacturing site in Samlesbury, UK, in a continued effort to reduce costs and improve production agility.

Valuation

Stratasys' shares are down 20.5% so far this year and 13.1% over the trailing 12 months. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Computer & Technology sector have increased 36.5% and 33.9%, respectively, in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, while the Zacks sub-industry has increased 46.6%, the sector gained 37.5%.

The S&P 500 Index has increased 14.9% year to date while has gained 17.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 1.62X forward 12-month sales, which compares to 0.73X for the Zacks sub-industry, 4.34X for the Zacks sector and 4.24X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 2.37X and as low as 1.10X, with a 5-year median of 1.62X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our \$17 price target reflects 1.7X forward 12-month sales.

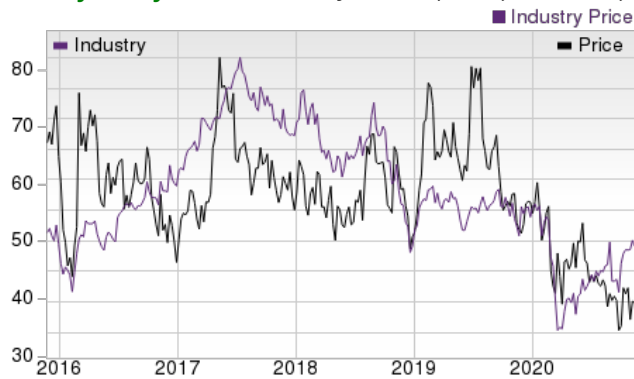
The table below shows summary valuation data for SSYS

Valuation Multiples - SSYS					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F12M	Current	1.62	0.73	4.34	4.24
	5-Year High	2.37	7.05	4.48	4.30
	5-Year Low	1.10	0.52	2.77	3.17
	5-Year Median	1.62	5.06	3.44	3.67
P/B TTM	Current	1.22	1.70	8.25	6.16
	5-Year High	1.43	1.76	8.32	6.17
	5-Year Low	0.59	0.65	4.09	3.74
	5-Year Median	0.98	1.00	5.61	4.91
EV/Sales TTM	Current	1.05	1.28	5.09	4.23
	5-Year High	1.99	1.28	5.23	4.23
	5-Year Low	0.61	0.29	2.85	2.62
	5-Year Median	1.22	0.59	3.86	3.58

As of 11/25/2020

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 19% (47 out of 254)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Apple Inc. (AAPL)	Neutral	3
Canon, Inc. (CAJ)	Neutral	2
Cisco Systems, Inc. (CSCO)	Neutral	3
3D Systems Corporation (DDD)	Neutral	2
Lenovo Group Ltd. (LNVGY)	Neutral	3
Panasonic Corp. (PCRFY)	Neutral	2
Proto Labs, Inc. (PRLB)	Neutral	3
HP Inc. (HPQ)	Underperform	3

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Computer - Peripheral Equipment				Industry Peers		
	SSYS	X Industry	S&P 500	DDD	HPQ	PRLB
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Underperform	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	2	3	3
VGM Score	D	-	-	F	A	D
Market Cap	874.31 M	123.71 M	26.28 B	1.07 B	30.56 B	3.64 B
# of Analysts	3	2	14	4	6	2
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.48%	0.00%	3.17%	0.00%
Value Score	D	-	-	F	A	F
Cash/Price	0.41	0.18	0.07	0.08	0.17	0.04
EV/EBITDA	12.93	13.47	14.65	-151.63	6.80	31.16
PEG F1	NA	3.89	2.76	NA	4.25	NA
P/B	1.22	2.86	3.57	2.44	NA	5.81
P/CF	14.06	17.81	13.72	167.32	7.60	38.51
P/E F1	NA	31.31	21.80	NA	9.49	57.88
P/S TTM	1.62	1.71	2.83	1.96	0.54	8.25
Earnings Yield	-2.37%	-2.37%	4.40%	-1.50%	10.56%	1.73%
Debt/Equity	0.00	0.02	0.70	0.05	-2.49	0.00
Cash Flow (\$/share)	1.14	0.40	6.93	0.05	2.93	3.53
Growth Score	C	-	-	D	B	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	1,736.95%	7.61%	9.72%	NA	-1.60%	9.44%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-168.45%	-22.10%	0.45%	-62.50%	2.85%	-15.77%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-15.46%	-30.50%	5.23%	-64.21%	-3.13%	-8.86%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	-19.40%	-2.37%	8.33%	-43.37%	-18.40%	11.60%
Current Ratio	4.40	1.86	1.38	2.09	0.79	4.47
Debt/Capital	0.08%	1.62%	41.99%	4.42%	NA	0.28%
Net Margin	-84.95%	-8.02%	10.44%	-24.61%	5.02%	12.80%
Return on Equity	-2.91%	-9.29%	14.99%	-11.38%	-196.27%	9.41%
Sales/Assets	0.43	0.77	0.50	0.72	1.69	0.64
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-19.24%	0.00%	0.23%	-17.06%	-0.95%	-6.02%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	C	A	D
Daily Price Change	5.80%	0.00%	-0.56%	2.86%	2.30%	-0.28%
1-Week Price Change	-0.11%	0.67%	0.21%	3.06%	4.28%	3.00%
4-Week Price Change	23.73%	3.13%	14.04%	44.48%	28.24%	15.75%
12-Week Price Change	6.50%	6.50%	8.89%	54.56%	12.15%	-17.20%
52-Week Price Change	-13.05%	7.82%	5.87%	2.37%	12.43%	38.72%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	988,374	59,938	2,256,422	3,497,025	9,723,252	246,217
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-16.42%	0.00%	1.00%	26.88%	2.40%	6.98%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-16.42%	1.89%	3.64%	26.88%	3.61%	6.98%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	NA%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	15.84%	-6.06%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	D
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	F
VGM Score	D

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a medium-term price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the most recent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every \$1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.