United Airlines (UAL)

$36.03 (As of 09/09/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$38.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 08/14/19) Prior Recommendation: Outperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**4-Sell**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:C
	Value: B | Growth: D | Momentum: D	

Summary

Shares of United Airlines have declined nearly 41% since the beginning of March due to coronavirus-led drop in demand. Thanks to low demand, passenger revenues declined 59.7% year over year in first-half 2020. For the third quarter, the carrier anticipates passenger revenues to fall approximately 85% (previous expectation: decline of 83%). Additionally, capacity is expected to decrease approximately 70% in the current quarter (previous expectation: decline of 65%). However, low fuel prices (down 16.6% in first-half 2020) are partly offsetting the adversities. The company is making consistent efforts to preserve cash through reduction in capital expenses and operating costs. Total operating costs declined 36.6% in first-half 2020. The update on average daily cash burn (expected to be roughly $25 million in the September quarter) is also encouraging.

Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

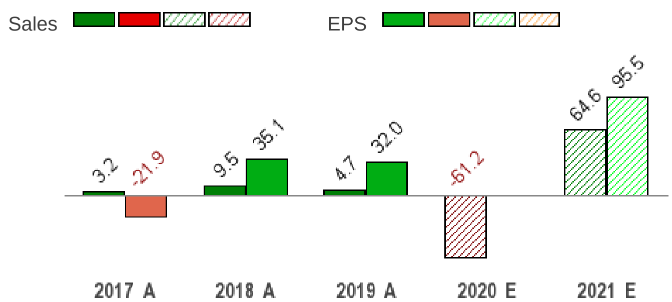
Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$95.16 - $17.80**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**31,307,564**
Market Cap	**$10.5 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**-59.1%**
Beta	**1.53**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$0.00 / 0.0%**
Industry	**Transportation - Airline**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 5% (239 out of 251)**

Last EPS Surprise	**-2.0%**
Last Sales Surprise	**21.2%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**-0.6%**
Expected Report Date	**10/20/2020**
Earnings ESP	**1.4%**

P/E TTM	**NA**
P/E F1	**NA**
PEG F1	**NA**
P/S TTM	**0.3**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	5,370 E	7,114 E	7,876 E	8,234 E	27,641 E
2020	7,979 A	1,475 A	2,873 E	4,508 E	16,789 E
2019	9,589 A	11,402 A	11,380 A	10,888 A	43,259 A

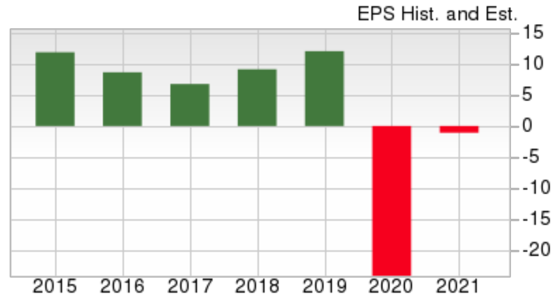
EPS Estimates

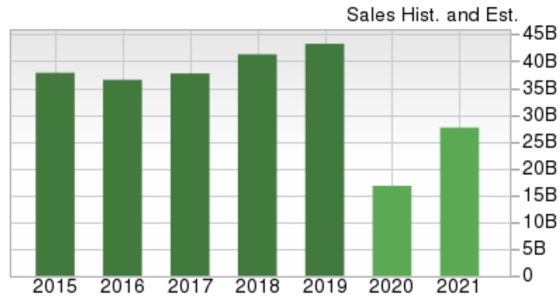
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	-$2.50 E	$0.32 E	$1.31 E	$1.78 E	-$1.09 E
2020	-$2.57 A	-$9.31 A	-$7.53 E	-$4.40 E	-$24.13 E
2019	$1.15 A	$4.21 A	$4.07 A	$2.67 A	$12.05 A

*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 09/09/2020. The reports text is as of 09/10/2020.

Overview





United Airlines Holdings is based in Chicago. The carrier changed its name from United Continental Holdings to United Airlines Holdings in June 2019. It is the holding company for both United Airlines and Continental Airlines.

United Airlines, whose fiscal year coincides with the calendar year, transports people and cargo not only throughout North America but also destinations in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. The company operates more than 4,800 flights (mainline+regional) a day to 353 airports across multiple destinations. The regional carriers operate under the United Express brand.

The carrier's hubs are at Newark Liberty International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport , Denver International Airport , George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Los Angeles International Airport , A.B. Won Pat International Airport, San Francisco International Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport.

As of Dec 31, 2019, the carrier's total fleet size stood at 1,358, out of which 777 and 581 were mainline and regional aircraft respectively. United Airlines is a member of Star Alliance, the largest and most comprehensive airline alliance in the world.

As of January 1, 2020, Star Alliance carriers served more than 1,300 airports in 195 countries across the globe. United Airlines is part of four passenger joint business arrangements ("JBAs"). Moreover, the company's MileagePlus loyalty program is aimed at promoting customer loyalty by offering awards, benefits and services to its members.

Participants in the program are eligible to earn miles for flights on United Airlines, United Express, Star Alliance members and certain other airlines. MileagePlus flight awards represented 7.2% of the company's total revenue passenger miles in 2019. In August 2019, the carrier removed expiration dates on its frequent flyer miles.

Passenger revenues account for the bulk of its top line. In 2019, 91.6% of the top line came from passenger revenues. **Cargo revenues** accounted for approximately 2.7% and the remaining came from "others."

Domestic revenues (United States and Canada) accounted for 62.3% of the total revenues in 2019. Atlantic, Pacific and Latin American regions accounted for 17.1%, 11.9% and 8.7% respectively in 2019.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

> Cost cuts and low fuel prices are partly offsetting the coronavirus-related adversities

- Amid low air travel demand due to coronavirus concerns, significant reduction in fuel prices since the beginning of this year should partly offset the adversity. In fact, low fuel prices (down 7.1% in 2019 and 16.6% in first-half 2020) are aiding the carrier's bottom line. Also, with most of the fleet remaining grounded/under-utilized in the April-June period, fuel gallons consumed were down 81.5% to 204 million in the June quarter, thereby aiding the bottom line.

- To counteract the enormous slump in demand, the company took several cost-controlling measures like freezing hiring (except for crucial roles), delaying salary increases as well as giving employees the option to apply for voluntary leave or early retirement. The carrier is also trying to preserve cash by cutting down on capital expenditures and operating expenses. While releasing its first-quarter results, the carrier reduced its adjusted capex guidance for 2020 by $2.5 billion in view of the coronavirus crisis. Adjusted capital expenditures for the current year are anticipated to be approximately $3.7 billion. Notably, total operating costs declined 36.6% in first-half 2020. The update on average daily cash burn is also encouraging. During the June quarter, cash burn averaged $40 million a day including $3 million of principal payments and severance expenses. The carrier expects average daily cash burn to be approximately $25 million for the September quarter (including $6 million of principal payments and severance expenses).

- The decision to increase the number of flights between United States and China is encouraging. Following the decision, United Airlines aims to increase service to Shanghai. The carrier will increase service between San Francisco and Shanghai to four weekly flights from two, effective Sep 4. United Airlines will utilize a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft to operate this route on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Moreover, with uptick in demand for leisure travel, the airline plans to operate 40% of its full schedule in October, indicating a rise from 34% of the schedule it hopes to fly in September. On the domestic front, the carrier expects to fly 46% of its October 2019 schedule, higher than the September flying schedule of 38%. Meanwhile, on the international front, United Airlines expects to fly 33% of its October 2019 schedule, compared with 29% of the year-ago flying schedule planned for September.

- As coronavirus keeps majority of the customers away from air travel, the airline is offering several flexibilities to attract passengers. To this end, the carrier permanently scrapped change fees ($200) on all standard Economy and Premium cabin tickets for domestic travel. Additionally, all customers can fly standby for free on a flight departing the same day of their booked flight, with effect from Jan 1, 2021. To offer flexibility in ticket changes, the carrier is also extending the waiver for new tickets issued through Dec 31, 2020. This option is valid for all tickets issued after Mar 3, 2020, on both domestic and international travel. The array of benefits should provide an impetus to flyers, thereby helping United Airlines gradually ramp up its business. Additionally, the company's move to operate cargo-only flights in the face of declining passenger revenues paid off as revenues from the same surged 36.3% year over year in the June quarter.

Reasons To Sell:

Due to coronavirus woes, passenger revenues are expected to decline approximately 85% year over year.

- The coronavirus outbreak is taking a significant toll on United Airlines. Due to slump in air-travel demand, the carrier incurred a loss in each of the first two quarters of 2020 with passenger revenues declining 59.7% in first-half 2020. With air-travel demand at an unprecedented low level, the airline anticipates capacity to decrease approximately 70% year over year in the third quarter. Previously, the carrier estimated capacity to decline approximately 65%. Additionally, passenger revenues are predicted to fall approximately 85% year over year in the current quarter, compared with the previous expectation of a decline of approximately 83%.

- United Airlines has received $4.5 billion at the end of the second quarter via the payroll support program under the CARES Act. While a $3.2-billion amount of the above is through grants (it doesn't have to pay back), $1.3 billion is via 10-year loans. Additionally, the carrier has signed a letter of intent for federal loan under the CARES Act. This is likely to worsen its debt profile. Moreover, in March, international credit rating agency Fitch lowered its outlook for the carrier to a negative due to the plunge in air-travel demand amid the coronavirus pandemic.

- The government funding will protect jobs only through Sep 30, 2020. However, air-travel demand is likely to remain suppressed for a much longer time. Given the current demand scenario, United Airlines expects to operate a smaller airline in future. As a result, the carrier has warned that up to 30% of its managerial staff may be laid off after Sep 30. Moreover, in September, United Airlines announced that it will have to furlough roughly 16,000 employees post Sep 30. This implies that 2,010 mechanics and 6,920 flight attendants alongside multiple management and support staff might lose their jobs between Oct 1 and Nov 30. Additionally, many more employees will have to forego their pays. United Airlines is also taking a hit from the Boeing 737 MAX groundings. They have remained non-operational since March 2019.

Last Earnings Report

Wider-Than-Expected Loss in Q2

Quarter Ending	06/2020
Report Date	**Jul 21, 2020**
Sales Surprise	**21.20%**
EPS Surprise	**-1.97%**
Quarterly EPS	**-9.31**
Annual EPS (TTM)	**-5.14**

The company incurred a loss (excluding $3.52 from non-recurring items) of $9.31 per share, comparing unfavorably with the Zacks Consensus Estimate of a loss of $9.13. Results were hurt by the coronavirus-induced weakness in air-travel demand.

Even though operating revenues of $1,475 million slumped 87.1% year over year, the same beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $1,217 million. This year-over-year plunge was due to the 93.5% drop in passenger revenues. However, the carrier's move to operate cargo-only flights in the face of declining passenger revenues paid off as revenues from the same surged 36.3% year over year. Meanwhile revenues from other sources declined 36.9% in the June quarter.

Operating Results

Consolidated passenger revenue per available seat mile (PRASM: a key measure of unit revenues) decreased 46.9% year over year to 7.6 cents. Total revenue per available seat mile, however, increased 5.7%. On a consolidated basis, average yield per revenue passenger mile jumped 37.8% from the year-ago quarter.

During the quarter under review, consolidated airline traffic, measured in revenue passenger miles, tumbled 95.3% year over year. Capacity (or available seat miles) contracted 87.8%. Consolidated load factor (percentage of seat occupancy) deteriorated 5290 percentage points to 33.1% as traffic decline was more than capacity contraction. Meanwhile, average fuel price per gallon fell 45.4% year over year to $1.18. With most of the fleet remaining grounded/under-utilized, fuel gallons consumed were down 81.5% to 204 million.

Total adjusted operating expenses declined 41.4% year over year to $4,263 million in the reported quarter. Consolidated unit cost or cost per available seat mile (CASM) excluding fuel, third-party business expenses, profit sharing and special charges escalated in excess of 100%.

United Airlines exited the second quarter with cash and cash equivalents of $6,505 million compared with $2,762 million at 2019 end. Long-term debt at the end of the reported quarter was $14,318 million compared with $13,145 million at 2019 end.

Other Details

During the June quarter, cash burn averaged $40 million a day including $3 million of principal payments and severance expenses. The carrier expects average daily cash burn to be approximately $25 million for the September quarter (including $6 million of principal payments and severance expenses). Liquidity at the end of the third quarter is forecast to be more than $18 billion. Consolidated system capacity is expected to tank 65% year over year during the period. Adjusted capital expenditures for the current year are anticipated to be approximately $3.7 billion.

Recent News

Deal to Avert Pilot Furloughs — Sep 9, 2020

As United Airlines grapples with the coronavirus-induced reduced demand for air travel, it warned of furloughing roughly 16,370 employees post Sep 30, i.e, when the federal aid expires. This implies that 2,850 pilots, 2,010 mechanics and 6,920 flight attendants alongside multiple management and support staff might lose their jobs between Oct 1 and Nov 30.

However, the company has been evaluating possibilities to reduce the extent of job cuts. In this regard, it has reached an agreement in principle with the pilots' union to avoid furloughs. Details of the agreement, which need to be approved by the union members, were not available.

Expansion Update — Aug 12, 2020

United Airlines is planning to add up to 28 daily non-stop flights to Florida this winter as air-travel demand seems to be picking up, after months of slowdown. The airline intends to add flights from New York, NY, Boston, MA and Cleveland, OH to the Florida cities of Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Orlando and Tampa, effective Nov 6. It expects to gradually increase services to up to 28 daily nonstop flights to Florida with additional flights connecting Columbus, OH; Indianapolis, IN; Milwaukee, WI; and Pittsburgh, PA with Fort Myers and Tampa. These flights are expected to begin operations from Dec 17 onwards.

Valuation

United Airlines shares are down 59.1% and 59.2% in the year-to-date period and over the trailing 12-month period respectively. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are down 39.2% in the year-to-date period, while those in the Zacks Transportation sector are up 0.9%. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry is down 36.2%, while the sector is up 3.3%.

The S&P 500 index is up 3.6% and 11.7% in the year-to-date period and in the past year respectively.

The stock is currently trading at 0.43X forward 12-month price to sales, which compares to 0.73X for the Zacks sub-industry, 1.35X for the Zacks sector and 4.08X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 0.66X and as low as 0.12X, with a 5-year median of 0.5X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our $38 price target reflects 0.45X forward 12-month sales.

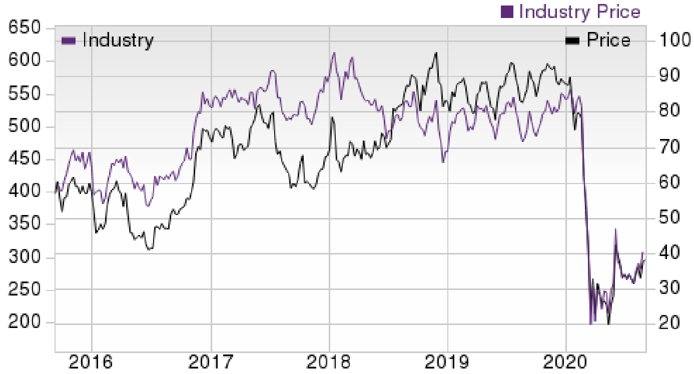
The table below shows summary valuation data for UAL

Valuation Multiples - UAL

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F 12M	Current	0.43	0.73	1.35	4.08
	5-Year High	0.66	0.94	1.41	4.29
	5-Year Low	0.12	0.37	0.85	3.11
	5-Year Median	0.5	0.74	1.2	3.66
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	12.8	11.46	9.87	14.42
	5-Year High	13.09	11.52	11.07	15.6
	5-Year Low	3.07	2.92	5.17	9.51
	5-Year Median	5.27	5.62	7.24	13
EV/S TTM	Current	0.71	0.86	1.85	3.79
	5-Year High	0.89	1.17	1.87	4.15
	5-Year Low	0.43	0.46	1.13	2.6
	5-Year Median	0.73	0.94	1.61	3.55

As of 09/09/2020 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Bottom 5% (239 out of 251)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
American Airlines Group Inc. **(AAL)**	Neutral	3
Delta Air Lines, Inc. **(DAL)**	Neutral	4
Hawaiian Holdings, Inc. **(HA)**	Neutral	4
Southwest Airlines Co. **(LUV)**	Neutral	4
Spirit Airlines, Inc. **(SAVE)**	Neutral	4
China Southern Airlines Company Limited **(ZNH)**	Neutral	NA
Air FranceKLM SA **(AFLYY)**	Underperform	5
JetBlue Airways Corporation **(JBLU)**	Underperform	4

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Transportation - Airline

Industry Peers

	UAL	X Industry	S&P 500	AAL	DAL	LUV
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	4	-	-	3	4	4
VGM Score	C	-	-	C	B	C
Market Cap	10.48 B	2.31 B	23.35 B	6.64 B	20.26 B	23.13 B
# of Analysts	15	4	14	11	11	13
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.63%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	B	-	-	A	B	B
Cash/Price	0.67	0.60	0.07	1.50	0.77	0.62
EV/EBITDA	3.32	3.92	13.13	4.41	2.64	4.19
PEG F1	NA	0.38	2.97	NA	NA	NA
P/B	1.23	0.85	3.22	NA	2.33	2.13
P/CF	1.68	2.79	12.52	1.27	2.79	5.77
P/E F1	NA	27.04	21.45	NA	NA	NA
P/S TTM	0.33	0.53	2.48	0.20	0.59	1.39
Earnings Yield	-66.97%	-29.75%	4.45%	-144.98%	-29.75%	-16.29%
Debt/Equity	2.32	0.84	0.70	-9.06	2.23	0.84
Cash Flow ($/share)	21.42	4.09	6.93	10.27	11.37	6.80
Growth Score	D	-	-	F	D	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	-1.10%	2.82%	10.41%	-20.54%	6.97%	3.78%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-300.27%	-254.21%	-4.73%	-486.20%	-229.29%	-249.74%
Current Cash Flow Growth	15.52%	11.77%	5.22%	5.17%	17.74%	-3.22%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	8.25%	8.55%	8.49%	-4.04%	10.18%	8.55%
Current Ratio	0.61	0.77	1.35	0.77	0.94	1.70
Debt/Capital	69.87%	53.95%	42.95%	NA	69.08%	45.67%
Net Margin	-5.25%	-5.25%	10.25%	-10.40%	-10.74%	0.99%
Return on Equity	-15.01%	-4.68%	14.59%	-124.31%	-4.02%	-4.11%
Sales/Assets	0.60	0.49	0.50	0.55	0.51	0.58
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-61.19%	-46.74%	-1.42%	-60.85%	-61.45%	-56.94%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	C	A	C
Daily Price Change	-3.35%	-0.81%	1.39%	-4.26%	-2.40%	-3.16%
1-Week Price Change	2.33%	0.00%	-1.28%	0.15%	-0.69%	1.49%
4-Week Price Change	-1.02%	3.10%	-1.22%	-3.62%	9.18%	11.26%
12-Week Price Change	-8.20%	2.64%	5.76%	-23.15%	3.39%	8.01%
52-Week Price Change	-59.23%	-40.14%	-0.03%	-56.15%	-45.97%	-28.31%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	31,307,564	155,593	1,805,652	59,496,128	19,876,388	11,117,460
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.26%	-0.52%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-0.60%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.26%	-0.70%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-14.29%	-32.38%	3.99%	-20.69%	-22.36%	-32.90%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-2.87%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.37%	-0.13%

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	B
Growth Score	D
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	C

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.

Disclosures

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Additional Disclosure

This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forwardlooking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

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 mediumterm 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 mostrecent 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 a 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.