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Oct 30, 2020

Unum Group (UNM)

$17.04 (As of 10/29/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$18.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 12/25/18) Prior Recommendation: Outperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**4-Sell**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:B
	Value: A | Growth: C | Momentum: C	

Summary

Unum's third-quarter earnings missed estimates. Its conservative pricing and reservation practices have contributed to its overall profitability. Sustained increase in premiums was fueled by high persistency levels in core business lines and strong sales volume along with solid benefits experience. Continued rollout of dental products and geographic expansion has been paying off as acquired dental insurance businesses are growing in the United States and the U.K. Its shares have underperformed its industry in the past year. Nonetheless, solid level of statutory earnings and capital, boosting financial flexibility bodes well for Unum. It has consistently enhanced shareholders' value via dividends and buybacks. However, persistent soft results at the Closed Block and Corporate segment are concerns for Unum. High cost weigh on its margins.

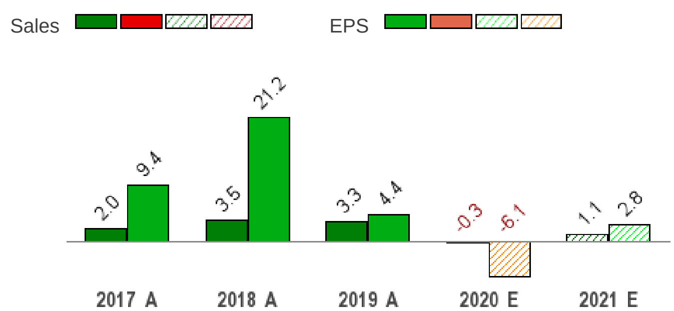
Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$31.32 - $9.58**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**2,260,612**
Market Cap	**$3.5 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**-41.6%**
Beta	**1.73**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$1.14 / 6.7%**
Industry	**Insurance - Accident and Health**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 5% (238 out of 250)**
Last EPS Surprise	**-7.6%**
Last Sales Surprise	**-0.2%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**-1.9%**
Expected Report Date	**02/02/2021**
Earnings ESP	**-0.2%**
P/E TTM	**3.3**
P/E F1	**3.3**
PEG F1	**0.4**
P/S TTM	**0.3**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	3,038 E	3,035 E	3,019 E	3,032 E	12,122 E
2020	3,015 A	2,987 A	2,992 A	2,996 E	11,991 E
2019	2,987 A	3,024 A	2,986 A	3,025 A	12,022 A

EPS Estimates

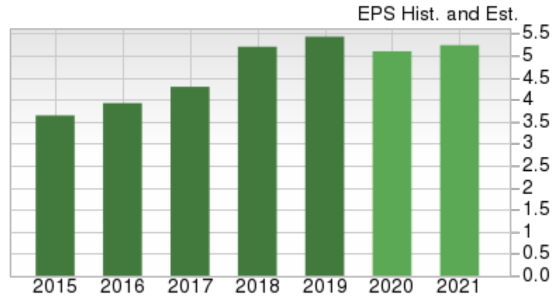
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	$1.29 E	$1.31 E	$1.31 E	$1.32 E	$5.24 E
2020	$1.35 A	$1.23 A	$1.21 A	$1.27 E	$5.10 E
2019	$1.31 A	$1.36 A	$1.36 A	$1.41 A	$5.43 A

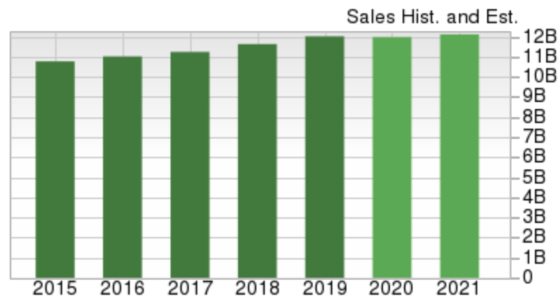
*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 10/29/2020. The reports text is as of 10/30/2020.

Overview

Headquartered in Chattanooga, TN, Unum Group (UNM) was created following the Jun 1999 merger of Provident Companies, Inc. and Unum Corporation. Along with disability insurance, the company provides long-term care insurance, life insurance, employer- and employee-paid group benefits and related services. Since Jan 2003, UnumProvident has been classifying its operations into five segments: Income Protection, Life and Accident, Colonial, Corporate, and Other. Effective Jul 1, 2005, the company modified its reporting segments to separate its United States business from its United Kingdom subsidiary, Unum Limited. The company's business operations are now segmented as follows:





- **Unum U.S. (64.24% of 2019 premium)** – This segment provides U.S. group income protection insurance, group life and accidental death and dismemberment products, and supplemental and voluntary lines of business comprising individual income protection (recently issued, group and individual long-term care, and brokerage voluntary workplace benefits products).

- **Closed Block (11.03%)** – This closed block segment accounted for policies written prior to its restructuring which occurred from 1994 to 1998. Originally, the individual disability insurance policies had been designed to be distributed to individuals in a non-workplace setting. However, the company gradually changed its distribution focus for individual disability insurance to workplace distribution as opposed to individual setting distribution. A minimal amount of new business continued to be sold subsequent to these changes, but the company stopped selling new policies in this segment at the beginning of 2004.

- **Colonial Life (18%)** – This segment provides life, cancer, critical illness, accident and sickness, and income protection insurance.

- **Unum International** (earlier known as Unum U.K.) **(6.73%)** – This segment provides group income protection and group life products.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

Unum's conservative pricing and reservation practices should help its segments continue to deliver strong operational results. Growth of product lines and improving premium income are tailwinds.

- Shares of Unum Group have lost 38.1% in a year compared with the industry's decline of 31.1%. Nevertheless, its solid fundamentals, robust capital position and segmental performances should help the shares bounce back.

- Unum is ranked as the leading disability income writer and the second-largest writer of voluntary business in the United States. The company reported favorable operating results across majority of its insurance entities driven by driven by a sustained solid operational performance, favorable benefits experience as well as solid top-line growth in the core businesses. Over the past few years, Unum's conservative pricing and reservation practices have contributed to its overall profitability. However, given a challenging operating backdrop due to the pandemic, the bottom line in the third quarter declined 11%. In the first nine months of 2020, premium income increased 0.6% year over year to $7 billion. Unum Group estimates slower premium growth or even declines in premium income due to lower sales and persistency.

- Two of the largest operating segments of Unum — Unum U.S. and Colonial Life — have been reporting operating income growth consistently over the past few years. Unum U.S. continues to benefit from disciplined sales trends, strong persistency in group lines and growth of new product lines like dental and vision. Though operating income declined in the third quarter, the company continued to see strong performance from Unum U.S. long-term disability business. Better performance in this segment is likely to drive positive premium growth, which might substantially add to the company's overall performance.

- Operating income in the Colonial Life Segment has risen over the last few years, banking on improving premium income and favorable risk results. Adjusted operating income grew in the first nine months of 2020, due to higher net investment income and lower operating expenses, partially offset by less favorable benefits experience. Also, premiums grew in the first nine months of 2020 due to growth in the in-force block resulting from prior period sales growth and stable persistency. Sales however decreased in the first nine months of 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, which has caused higher unemployment levels and general uncertainty around the financial condition of customers as well as disruption in sales processes. Management remains focused on moving on to a mix of businesses with higher growth and stable margins.

- Unum Group has consistently enhanced shareholders' value through dividend hikes and share buybacks. Its continuous efforts to reduce share count are expected to bolster earnings going forward. Moreover, the board approved a quarterly dividend hike of 9.6% in July 2019, marking the 11th consecutive year of dividend hike. Dividend yield of the company stands at 6.9%, higher than the industry average of 3.3%, making it an attractive pick for yield-seeking investors.

- Unum Group boasts a solid capital position. Sustained solid operating results have been fueling a solid level of statutory earnings and capital, cushioning financial flexibility. Strong statutory earnings might provide an impetus to strong dividend capacity. Risk-based capital ratio for the company's traditional U.S. insurance companies was 380% as of Sep 30, 2020, and holding company cash and marketable securities was $1.2 billion, both above targeted levels. Also, the cash balance at Sep 30 reflects the $40 million debt maturity in September and next maturity is not until 2024.

Reasons To Sell:

Soft performances at the Closed Block and Corporate segment over the past few quarters and rise in total benefits and expenses for the past few years inducing margin contraction remain concerns.

- Unum Group has been witnessing a rise in total benefits and expenses for the past few years inducing margin contraction. Total benefits and expenses escalated 2.8% in the last four years (2015 - 2019). Total benefits and expenses rose 1.1% year over year to $8 billion in the first nine months of 2020 due to higher benefits and change in reserves for future benefits, interest and debt expense, compensation expense, and other expenses. In the third quarter, net margin contracted 10 bps sequentially and 90 bps year over year. The company should grow its revenue higher than the magnitude of expense increase; else margin will continue to drain.

- A still low interest rate environment continues to weigh on the company's operations. Coupled with a stricter credit spread, this has been creating pressure on profit margins by impacting net investment income yields. The first nine months of 2020 witnessed net investment income drop 2.8% year over year to $1.8 billion. The metric declined as a result of the current economic conditions. Most significantly, declines in the net asset values of partnership investments in the third quarter of 2020, resulted in a decline in net investment income of approximately $30 million.

- Unum Group's debt level has been increasing in the past few years. As of Sep 30, 2020, the company's long-term debt was $3.4 billion, up 15.4% from the 2019-end level. The company's total debt/total equity ratio of 35.9 compared unfavorably with the industry's measure of 27.3%. The company's times interest earned of 7.4 at third quarter end was poor when compared with 8.8 at 2019 end and the industry's measure of 15.9, implying that its earnings are not sufficient to cover interest obligations.

- Performances at the Closed Block and Corporate segment have also been disappointing over the past few quarters. The Corporate segment has been suffering losses for the past few quarters and a turnaround is not expected in the near term. For the corporate segment in total, the company continues to expect quarterly losses in the mid-$15 million range.

Last Earnings Report

Unum Group Q3 Earnings and Revenues Miss Estimates

Quarter Ending	09/2020
Report Date	Oct 27, 2020
Sales Surprise	-0.19%
EPS Surprise	-7.63%
Quarterly EPS	1.21
Annual EPS (TTM)	5.20

Unum Group's third-quarter 2020 operating net income of $1.21 per share missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 7.6%. Also, the bottom line decreased 11% year over year.

The company witnessed lower claim resolutions and higher expenses, offset by higher net investment income.

Operational Update

Total operating revenues of Unum Group were nearly $3 billion, up about 0.2% year over year on the back of higher net investment income and other income. However, the top line missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 0.2%.

Net investment income increased 2.3% to $613.2 million.

Total benefits and expenses increased 1.3% year over year to $2.7 billion. Rise in amortization of deferred acquisition costs, benefits and change in reserves for future benefits, interest and debt expense and other expenses resulted in an overall increase in costs.

Quarterly Segment Update

Unum U.S.: Premium income was $1.4 billion, down 1.2% year over year.
Adjusted operating income was down 28% year over year to $188.2 million, attributable to lower group disability line of business and group life, accidental death and dismemberment line of business and supplemental and voluntary line of business.

Unum International: Premium income increased 8.6% year over year to $165.4 million. Adjusted operating income was $21.4 million, down 11.6% year over year.

Unum UK line of business' premium income was £112.1 million, up 2.8%, driven by growth in in-force block and the impact of rate increases in the group long-term disability product line. Adjusted operating income, in local currency, of £15.2 million was down 18.7%.

Benefit ratio was 77.1%, down 370 basis points (bps), due to lower claim resolutions in the group long-term disability product line resulting from the continued disruption in claim processes related to COVID-19 and overall higher claims incidence.

Persistency decreased in group long-term disability, group life business and supplemental line of business.

Colonial Life: Premium income remained flat year over year at $419.9 million. Sales decreased 27.6% to $87.3 million. Adjusted operating income increased 5.7% to $92.2 million.

Benefit ratio deteriorated 80 bps year over year to 52.2% due to unfavorable experience in the life product line, likely resulting from the impacts of COVID-19, partially offset by favorable experience in both the cancer and critical illness and accident, sickness, and disability lines of business.

Closed Block: Premium income decreased 3% year over year due to continued policy terminations and maturities in the individual disability line of business, partially offset by premium rate increases on certain in-force business in the long-term care line of business. Adjusted operating income was $70.8 million, up 163.2% year over year.

Corporate: The segment incurred an operating loss of $54.1 million, wider than operating loss of $48.9 million in the year-earlier quarter.

Capital Management

As of Sep 30, 2020, the weighted average risk-based capital ratio for Unum Group's traditional U.S. insurance companies was approximately 380%. Unum Group exited the quarter with cash and marketable securities worth $1.2 billion.

Book value per share of Unum Group improved 14.6% year over year to $53.50 as of Sep 30, 2020.

Valuation

Unum Group shares are down 41.6% in the year-to-date period and up 1.2% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Finance sector are down 31.6% and 18.5% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are down 4.7% and 0.2%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index are up 2.7% in the year-to-date period but down 1.7% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 0.33x trailing 12-month book value, which compares to 0.76x for the Zacks sub-industry, 2.5x for the Zacks sector and 5.74x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 1.37x and as low as 0.21x, with a 5-year median of 0.9x. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our $18 price target reflects 0.34x book value.

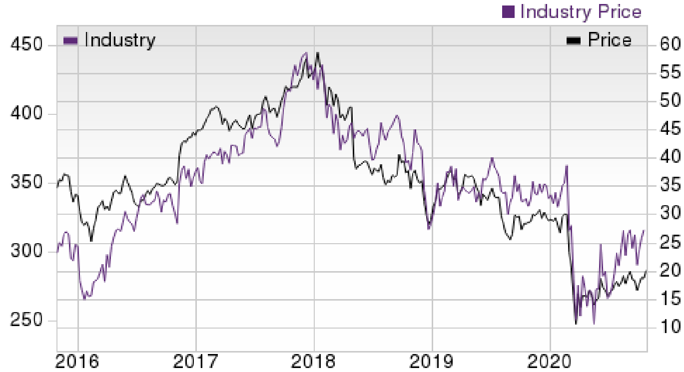
The table below shows summary valuation data for UNM

Valuation Multiples - UNM

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/B TTM	Current	0.33	0.76	2.5	5.74
	5-Year High	1.37	1.6	2.90	6.2
	5-Year Low	0.21	0.58	1.72	3.75
	5-Year Median	0.9	1.33	2.54	4.91
P/S F12M	Current	0.29	0.97	6.14	3.93
	5-Year High	1.13	1.54	6.66	4.31
	5-Year Low	0.17	0.91	4.96	3.18
	5-Year Median	0.69	1.31	6.05	3.67
P/E F12M	Current	3.25	6.97	15.12	21.18
	5-Year High	13.24	13.13	16.73	23.47
	5-Year Low	1.78	6.71	11.59	15.27
	5-Year Median	7.38	10.36	14.4	17.68

As of 10/29/2020 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 5% (238 out of 250)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
BrownBrown, Inc. **(BRO)**	Outperform	1
Aflac Incorporated **(AFL)**	Neutral	3
Assurant, Inc. **(AIZ)**	Neutral	4
Arthur J. GallagherCo. **(AJG)**	Neutral	2
AMERISAFE, Inc. **(AMSF)**	Neutral	3
CNO Financial Group, Inc. **(CNO)**	Neutral	2
Employers Holdings Inc **(EIG)**	Neutral	4
Trupanion, Inc. **(TRUP)**	Neutral	4

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Insurance - Accident And Health

	UNM	X Industry	S&P 500	AFL	EIG	TRUP
				Industry Peers		
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	4	-	-	3	4	4
VGM Score	B	-	-	A	C	D
Market Cap	3.47 B	1.05 B	22.80 B	24.40 B	930.71 M	2.54 B
# of Analysts	11	3	14	6	1	3
Dividend Yield	6.69%	0.90%	1.69%	3.27%	3.12%	0.00%
Value Score	A	-	-	A	B	F
Cash/Price	0.68	0.20	0.07	0.20	0.18	0.04
EV/EBITDA	2.44	4.48	12.93	4.48	3.48	461.27
PEG F1	0.37	0.90	2.61	1.42	NA	NA
P/B	0.32	0.75	3.27	0.75	0.80	17.91
P/CF	2.81	8.03	12.49	5.47	8.03	658.73
P/E F1	3.35	11.37	20.40	7.09	15.64	NA
P/S TTM	0.29	1.20	2.51	1.12	1.20	5.47
Earnings Yield	29.93%	6.39%	4.65%	14.09%	6.39%	-0.07%
Debt/Equity	0.31	0.00	0.70	0.24	0.00	0.19
Cash Flow ($/share)	6.06	3.99	6.92	6.26	3.99	0.11
Growth Score	C	-	-	D	F	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	10.86%	7.14%	10.10%	9.90%	4.38%	NA
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-6.14%	-5.84%	-1.80%	8.67%	-35.94%	0.00%
Current Cash Flow Growth	0.34%	0.34%	5.54%	2.80%	-16.17%	6.64%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	4.61%	8.80%	8.50%	10.44%	14.95%	17.75%
Current Ratio	0.18	0.42	1.37	0.07	0.42	1.63
Debt/Capital	23.67%	0.04%	41.80%	19.42%	0.00%	16.16%
Net Margin	8.00%	8.00%	10.46%	21.11%	11.32%	-0.37%
Return on Equity	10.29%	5.85%	14.93%	12.12%	5.85%	-1.23%
Sales/Assets	0.18	0.19	0.50	0.14	0.19	1.70
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-0.26%	-0.26%	-0.40%	-1.85%	-13.72%	27.52%
Momentum Score	C	-	-	A	B	D
Daily Price Change	2.84%	0.49%	0.93%	0.20%	1.91%	0.78%
1-Week Price Change	7.35%	2.00%	0.01%	1.72%	4.63%	-19.01%
4-Week Price Change	0.24%	0.12%	-1.35%	-5.96%	6.23%	-11.21%
12-Week Price Change	-0.76%	-3.30%	-0.80%	-3.36%	-3.64%	-3.24%
52-Week Price Change	-38.13%	-11.77%	-2.34%	-35.63%	-24.26%	204.05%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	2,260,612	103,635	1,805,578	3,170,648	127,468	502,362
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	-1.16%	0.00%	0.00%	3.95%	2.50%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-1.86%	0.00%	0.44%	4.51%	2.50%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-1.79%	6.36%	2.86%	6.36%	22.39%	-25.00%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-2.24%	0.00%	0.26%	2.35%	-7.69%	0.00%

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	A
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	C
VGM Score	B

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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ZIR uses the following rating system for the securities it covers. **Outperform-** ZIR expects that the subject company will outperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Neutral-** ZIR expects that the company will perform in line with the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Underperform-** ZIR expects the company will underperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months.

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.