Valmont Industries(VMI)

$244.62 (As of 03/01/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$257.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 02/22/21) Prior Recommendation: Underperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**2-Buy**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:B
	Value: C | Growth: B | Momentum: C	

Summary

Valmont's adjusted earnings and sales for the fourth quarter beat the respective Zacks Consensus Estimate. The company is enhancing its productivity and overall cost structure through restructuring actions. The Engineered Support Structures unit is witnessing solid sales volume growth in North American transportation market and wireless communications market. Valmont is also seeing growth in lighting and traffic products in North America. Also, it is focused on pursuing acquisitions and expand capacities to boost growth. Valmont also has a strong liquidity position. However, the company is facing certain volume-related headwinds in the Coatings business. Challenges in the Access Systems business is another concern for the company. Also, higher raw material costs are likely to hurt margins in the Utility Support segment.

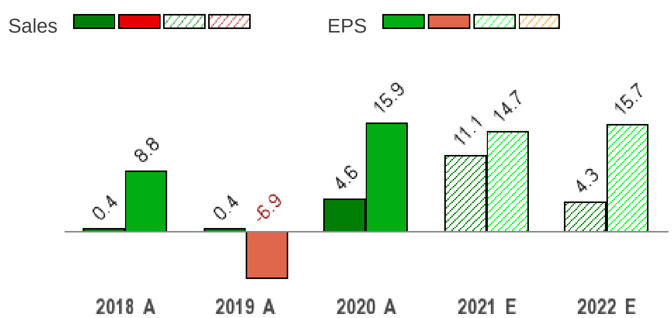
Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$246.63 - $82.60**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**201,480**
Market Cap	**$5.0 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**35.2%**
Beta	**1.20**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$2.00 / 0.7%**
Industry	**Steel - Pipe and Tube**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Top 43% (110 out of 253)**
Last EPS Surprise	**22.2%**
Last Sales Surprise	**10.0%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**5.7%**
Expected Report Date	**04/28/2021**
Earnings ESP	**0.0%**
P/E TTM	**28.9**
P/E F1	**26.1**
PEG F1	**2.6**
P/S TTM	**1.7**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					3,353 E
2021	755 E	796 E	818 E	847 E	3,216 E
2020	674 A	689 A	734 A	798 A	2,895 A

EPS Estimates

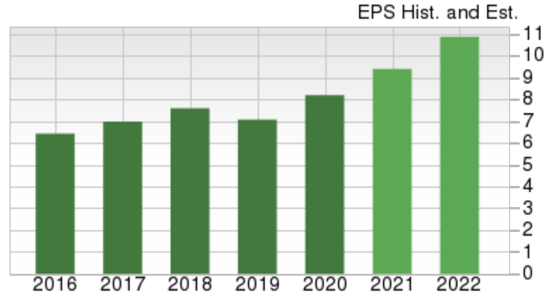
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					$10.85 E
2021	$2.12 E	$2.30 E	$2.35 E	$2.66 E	$9.38 E
2020	$1.99 A	$2.00 A	$1.99 A	$2.20 A	$8.18 A

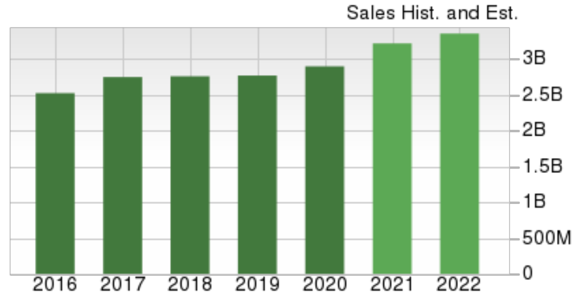
*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 03/01/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 03/02/2021.

Overview

Headquartered in Omaha, NE, Valmont Industries, Inc. is primarily engaged in the production of fabricated metal products, metal and concrete pole and tower structures and mechanized irrigation systems in the United States and abroad. The company operates through five segments:





Engineered Support Structures/ESS (32% of 2020 sales and includes inter-segment sales): The division is engaged in manufacturing and marketing of engineered metal structures and components for lighting and traffic, wireless communication, roadway safety and access systems applications. It offers steel and aluminum poles and structures, which carry lighting and traffic control fixtures at outdoor lighting locations such as streets, highways, parking lots, sports stadiums, and commercial and residential development sites.

Utility Support Structures (34%): This segment manufactures engineered steel and concrete structures for the global utility industry. It also produces hybrid structures with a concrete base section and upper sections of steel. These products are used for supporting the lines that transmit power for electrical distribution, transmission and substation applications. Sales in the segment are mainly in the North American market. The key drivers of the division are significant upgrades in electrical grid.

Irrigation (22%): Under this segment, the company manufactures and distributes mechanical irrigation equipment and related service parts used to water crops and deliver soluble chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The company has majority ownership in AgSense LLC, through which it produces and markets remote monitoring technology for pivot irrigation systems on subscription basis.

Coatings (11%): This segment provides metal coating services such as hot-dipped galvanizing, anodizing, and powder coating and e-coating (where paint is applied through an electrical charge). Galvanizing is used in various applications where resistance from corrosion of steel is required. The technology enables growers to remotely operate and monitor irrigation equipment along with other farm implements.

Other (1%): Consists of activities including manufacture of forged steel grinding media for the mining industry.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

> Valmont is looking to improve productivity and its overall cost structure through restructuring actions. It also remains focused on pursuing acquisitions and expand capacity to boost growth.

- Valmont remains on track with its restructuring actions and continue to reap benefits from it. In 2018, it initiated a new restructuring activity in order to drive productivity improvements and simplify its operating structure. The company sees positive results from these actions that will contribute to its future growth. Cost-savings stemming from restructuring actions are expected to support its operating income.

- Owing to solid sales volume in North America transportation market and higher sales of wireless communication, the company expects the ESS segment to see improved sales and operating profit. The company is witnessing solid demand in transportation markets in North America. It saw a solid sales growth in lighting and traffic products in North America during the fourth quarter of 2020 on account of favorable pricing across all markets. The company is upbeat on the long-term market trends for both transportation and wireless communication structures and components. Moreover, Valmont expects sales growth in the segment to be supported by continued government investments in infrastructure development. Further, through the Walpar acquisition at the ESS segment, the company expanded participation in the signs structures market and expects margins to be higher.

- Valmont continues to grow through acquisitions. The company witnessed stronger cash flow in 2020, supporting acquisitions and other capital deployment activities. The company deployed $75.3 million toward four strategic acquisitions in 2020 The company increased its ownership stake in AgSense and Convert Italia by paying $54 million during the first quarter of 2020. Notably, the buyout of Larson Camouflage and Connect-It Wireless is supporting sales of wireless communication structures and components. Also, the acquisition of AgSense is in sync with its strategy of consolidating leadership position in global technology. The acquisition of the remaining stake of Torrent Engineering and Equipment in the Irrigation segment was also completed in the last reported quarter.

- The company has a strong balance sheet and liquidity position. At the end of 2020, it had total available liquidity of around $986 million including roughly $401 million in cash. It also generated strong operating cash flow of around $316 million in 2020. Valmont also had long-term debt of roughly $728 million at the end of the fourth quarter of 2020, down from $780 million in the sequentially prior quarter. It has no significant long-term debt maturities until 2044. The company also has adequate liquidity to meet its short-term debt obligations.

Reasons To Sell:

- Valmont is facing volume-related headwinds in the Coatings business. Lower volumes in North America stemming from impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on end customers, mainly in oil and gas, bridge and highway as well as commercial building markets are exerting pressure on margins.

- Challenges in the Access Systems business are another concern. Valmont witnessed a slowdown in the business from sustained challenging construction environment in Australia during the first quarter of 2020. Moreover, the company initiated a focused restructuring plan in the business as it does not anticipate meaningful changes to the market demand environment in Australia. Further, sales of access systems products were lower year over year in the most recent quarter mainly due to the decision to exit certain product lines. Sales also fell 23% year over year in 2020. Notably, the company plans to divest the Access Systems product line. This may impact the ESS unit.

- The company expects significant raw material cost inflation in the Utility Support Structures segment. It also faces headwind from higher logistic costs. This could have an adverse impact on Valmont's gross profit margins for the first half of 2021.

The company is facing certain challenges in the Access Systems business. Volume-related headwinds in the Coatings business and expected raw material cost inflation are other concerns.

Last Earnings Report

Valmont's Earnings & Revenues Surpass Estimates in Q4

Quarter Ending	12/2020
Report Date	Feb 17, 2021
Sales Surprise	9.97%
EPS Surprise	22.22%
Quarterly EPS	2.20
Annual EPS (TTM)	8.18

Valmont registered profits of $35.8 million or $1.68 per share in fourth-quarter 2020, up from $32.5 million or $1.51 per share in the year-ago quarter. Barring one-time items, adjusted earnings were $2.20 per share for the reported quarter that beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $1.80.

Revenues in the quarter were $798.4 million, up 16.8% year over year. The figure also surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $726 million.

Segment Highlights

Infrastructure-Related

Sales in the Engineered Support Structures segment were flat year over year at $256.1 million. Per the company, lower volumes in international markets were offset by favorable currency impacts and favorable pricing.

Sales in the Utility Support Structures segment rose 16.9% year over year to $271 million. The upside was driven by higher volumes resulting from strategic capacity additions in existing North American operations and increased sales of global generation products.

Sales in the Coatings segment were flat year over year at $89.3 million as benefits of higher internal and international volumes were offset by lower external volumes in North American markets due to pandemic-led disruptions.

Agriculture-Related

Sales in the Irrigation unit amounted to $199.3 million, up 49.8% year over year on higher volumes across all markets. This was partly offset by unfavourable currency impacts. Sales in North America were $97.1 million, up 14.8% year over year led by higher volumes across all irrigation product lines.

International irrigation sales more than doubled year over year to $102.2 million.

FY20 Results

Earnings (as reported) for full-year 2020 were $6.57 per share compared with earnings of $6.73 per share a year ago. Net sales rose 4.6% year over year to around $2,895 million.

Financial Position

Valmont ended 2020 with cash and cash equivalents of $400.7 million, up 13.3% year over year. Long-term debt stood at $728.4 million, down 4.8% year over year.

Cash flows from operating activities were $316.3 million for the year (as of Dec 26, 2020), up from $307.6 million for the same period a year ago (as of Dec 28, 2019).

Outlook

Valmont expects net sales of $740-$765 million for first-quarter 2021. It also expects operating profit margins of 9-10% for the first quarter. Valmont also anticipates revenues from the Irrigation segment to increase around 50-56% year over year to $235-$245 million for the first quarter.

For full-year 2021, it expects an increase in net sales of 9-14% and an increase in irrigation segment revenues of 27-30% year over year. The company also expects earnings of $9.00-$9.70 per share for 2021.

Recent News

Valmont's Valley Irrigation Forms JV With Kusto Group

Valmont's Valley Irrigation unit, on **Jan 12, 2021**, announced its joint venture with private holding company, Kusto Group. This multi-year strategic project is geared for the establishment of sustainable agriculture in Central Asia through an agreement with Government of Kazakhstan.

This project aims to improve sustainability and resource conservation, introduce local farmers to the utility of advanced farm technology as well as serve as the base for making the country an agricultural hub in Central Asia.

The government of Kazakhstan is turning to Valley Irrigation for the implementation of precision agricultural practices and cutting-edge farming technologies which are not only sustainable but also generate better yields with fewer resources.

The joint venture will help Kazakhstan unlock its potential in agriculture. Moreover, Valley Irrigation's 75 years experience will facilitate the farmers to create sustainable incomes and jobs. It will also help the government fulfil its mission of making Kazakhstan the food provider of the world.

The collaboration is registered within the Astana International Financial Centre. It commits to the construction of a plant in Kazakhstan for the manufacture of Valley pivots and a volume guarantee from the government of 4,000 machines. The plant is expected to have an annual production capacity of at least 1,000 pivot irrigation machines.

Valuation

Valmont's shares are up 111.8% over the trailing 12-month period. Over the past year, the Zacks Steel - Pipe and Tube industry and Zacks Basic Materials sector are up 31.9% and up 40.5%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 29.2% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 25.41X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 46.21X for the Zacks sub-industry, 22.87X for the Zacks sector and 22.02X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 25.41X and as low as 10.98X, with a 5-year median of 17.75X.

Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our $257 price target reflects 26.69X forward 12-month earnings per share.

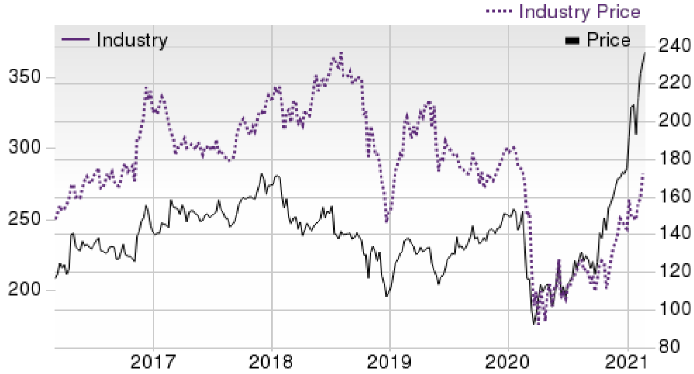
The table below shows summary valuation data for VMI:

Valuation Multiples - VMI

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F 12M	Current	25.41	46.21	22.87	22.02
	5-Year High	25.41	114.9	22.99	23.8
	5-Year Low	10.98	12.21	12.64	15.3
	5-Year Median	17.75	32.15	17.99	17.87
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	15.46	18	23.85	16.95
	5-Year High	15.46	42.41	24.36	17.54
	5-Year Low	6.61	4.44	11.1	9.63
	5-Year Median	9.59	15.09	15.28	13.29
P/B TTM	Current	4.3	1.35	6.83	6.85
	5-Year High	4.3	1.94	6.99	7.07
	5-Year Low	1.56	0.58	3.33	3.84
	5-Year Median	2.8	1.38	4.59	4.97

As of 03/01/2021 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Top 43% (110 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Lindsay Corporation **(LNN)**	Outperform	2
AZZ Inc. **(AZZ)**	Neutral	3
Leggett & Platt, Incorporated **(LEG)**	Neutral	3
MRC Global Inc. **(MRC)**	Neutral	4
MUELLER WATER PRODUCTS **(MWA)**	Neutral	3
Tenaris S.A. **(TS)**	Neutral	3
United States Steel Corporation **(X)**	Neutral	3
Olympic Steel, Inc. **(ZEUS)**	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Steel - Pipe And Tube

	VMI	X Industry	S&P 500	LNN	MRC	MWA
				Industry Peers		
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Outperform	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	2	4	3
VGM Score	B	-	-	C	A	B
Market Cap	5.02 B	733.97 M	27.84 B	1.74 B	717.54 M	2.04 B
# of Analysts	3	4.5	13	2	6	5
Dividend Yield	0.76%	0.65%	1.43%	0.80%	0.00%	1.71%
Value Score	C	-	-	F	B	B
Cash/Price	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.17	0.11
EV/EBITDA	16.55	13.09	15.61	24.54	-6.49	13.09
PEG F1	2.61	2.06	2.33	NA	NA	2.26
P/B	4.16	2.05	3.78	5.73	2.05	3.11
P/CF	18.92	14.95	15.65	31.32	14.42	14.95
P/E F1	26.08	25.22	20.41	45.53	NA	22.61
P/S TTM	1.73	1.15	3.10	3.67	0.28	2.07
Earnings Yield	3.97%	2.51%	4.82%	2.20%	-0.57%	4.42%
Debt/Equity	0.60	0.60	0.67	0.38	1.08	0.68
Cash Flow ($/share)	12.93	1.11	6.78	5.36	0.62	0.89
Growth Score	B	-	-	C	A	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	6.41%	8.75%	9.32%	1.34%	11.86%	6.56%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	14.67%	57.13%	14.54%	-1.12%	80.36%	9.62%
Current Cash Flow Growth	16.44%	-12.94%	0.44%	95.74%	-60.47%	-7.10%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	0.74%	5.25%	7.37%	1.40%	-21.77%	5.43%
Current Ratio	2.31	2.72	1.39	3.48	2.42	4.24
Debt/Capital	37.62%	34.96%	41.42%	27.56%	34.96%	40.53%
Net Margin	4.86%	-1.77%	10.59%	7.89%	-10.70%	7.93%
Return on Equity	15.05%	1.69%	14.85%	12.26%	1.69%	13.93%
Sales/Assets	1.01	1.01	0.51	0.85	1.32	0.72
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	11.06%	0.00%	6.76%	4.12%	-4.14%	5.97%
Momentum Score	C	-	-	B	A	B
Daily Price Change	3.42%	2.79%	2.18%	4.66%	2.29%	2.79%
1-Week Price Change	2.24%	2.24%	-1.51%	-3.28%	6.59%	1.18%
4-Week Price Change	25.39%	13.78%	5.45%	17.21%	20.32%	9.69%
12-Week Price Change	45.67%	19.64%	6.76%	40.80%	38.60%	11.63%
52-Week Price Change	106.40%	2.17%	20.60%	68.83%	2.17%	16.64%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	201,480	61,844	1,979,313	71,479	789,535	653,893
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	26.62%	0.00%	0.00%	68.18%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	5.75%	29.49%	0.30%	0.00%	81.58%	2.15%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	5.35%	45.86%	2.10%	7.18%	86.36%	1.42%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	3.58%	3.40%	0.00%	0.00%	3.23%	-1.22%

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

Value Score	C
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	C
VGM Score	B

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.

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.