



Fastenal Company (FAST)

Updated January 20th, 2021 by Eli Inkrot

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$49	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	2.0%	Market Cap:	\$28 B
Fair Value Price:	\$35	5 Year Growth Estimate:	6.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	02/02/21
% Fair Value:	139%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	-6.3%	Dividend Payment Date:	03/03/21
Dividend Yield:	2.3%	5 Year Price Target	\$47	Years Of Dividend Growth:	21
Dividend Risk Score:	C	Retirement Suitability Score:	C	Last Dividend Increase:	12.0%

Overview & Current Events

Fastenal began in 1967 when Bob Kierlin and four friends pooled together \$30,000 to open the first store. The original intent was to dispense nuts and bolts via vending machine, but it would take a few decades before that idea got off the ground. The company went public in 1987, and today provides fasteners, tools and supplies to its customers via 2,003 public branches, 1,265 active Onsite locations and over 95,000 industrial vending devices. The \$28 billion market cap company employees over 20,000 people and generates over \$5 billion in annual sales.

On January 20th, 2021 Fastenal reported Q4 and full year 2020 results for the period ending December 31st, 2020. For the quarter, the company reported net sales of \$1.358 billion, a 6.4% increase compared to the year ago period, driven by higher unit sales of safety and janitorial products. Net earnings totaled \$196.1 million, a 9.7% increase compared to Q4 2019, while earnings-per-share equaled \$0.34 compared to \$0.31 previously.

For the year, Fastenal generated \$5.647 billion in sales, a 5.9% increase compared to 2019. Net earnings equaled \$859.1 million, an 8.6% year-over-year improvement, while earnings-per-share totaled \$1.49 versus \$1.38 previously.

During Q4 2020 Fastenal signed 3,456 industrial vending units and 36 Onsite locations, bringing the totals up to 95,733 and 1,265 respectively. Meanwhile, the number of public branches continues to decline, from 2,114 in Q4 2019 to 2,003 in Q4 2020. Total debt on the balance sheet equaled \$405 million or 12.9% of total capital.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
EPS	\$0.61	\$0.71	\$0.76	\$0.84	\$0.89	\$0.87	\$1.01	\$1.31	\$1.38	\$1.49	\$1.60	\$2.14
DPS	\$0.33	\$0.37	\$0.40	\$0.50	\$0.56	\$0.60	\$0.64	\$0.77	\$0.86	\$1.00	\$1.12	\$1.50
Shares¹	591	593	594	592	579	578	575	572	574	576	576	575

From 2008 through 2020, Fastenal grew earnings-per-share by an average compound rate of 9.9% per annum. This was driven by a variety of factors, including sales more than doubling over this period, an improvement in margins and tax reform. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted many businesses, but Fastenal proved resilient in 2020. The traditional business continues to face challenges, but the Safety segment is making up for lost sales. We expect 6% growth over the intermediate term, coming off an anticipation of \$1.60 in earnings-per-share for this year.

Fastenal is in the midst of a transformation from the traditional public branches leading the business to Onsite locations and vending devices heading the growth story (public store count topped out in 2014 and has since been declining, while Onsite and vending have increased materially). We believe this is a prudent move, establishing stickier relationships with customers. This is especially true since only a small fraction of the company's business is from walk-in customers while the majority is done business-to-business.

On the flip side, the large, national accounts that the company is pursuing are tougher for margins, but this should be made up for in incremental volume. Moreover, the company is exposed to a fair amount of cyclicity as over half of the business is in construction and heavy manufacturing. Something to watch as economic conditions remain uncertain.

¹ In millions.

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Valuation Analysis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Now	2026
Avg. P/E	28.2	31.7	32.3	27.9	23.2	25.3	23.3	20.8	23.6	25.7	30.5	22.0
Avg. Yld.	1.9%	1.6%	1.6%	2.1%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%	2.6%	2.6%	2.3%	3.2%

Over the past decade shares of Fastenal have traded hands with an average P/E ratio of 26 times earnings. Even during the depths of the last recession, shares did not trade below 15 times earnings. And since 2010 you would be hard pressed to find shares trading under 20 times earnings. Fastenal, it seems, has always traded at a premium valuation.

This premium has implications on the shareholder return side, as the dividend yield will remain average (even with an elevated payout ratio) and share buybacks do not look particularly attractive. (The last time a meaningful number of shares were retired was in 2015, when the company took on debt.) Against an assumed fair value of 22 times earnings, the current valuation implies the potential for a significant total return headwind.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
Payout	54%	52%	53%	60%	63%	69%	63%	59%	62%	67%	70%	70%

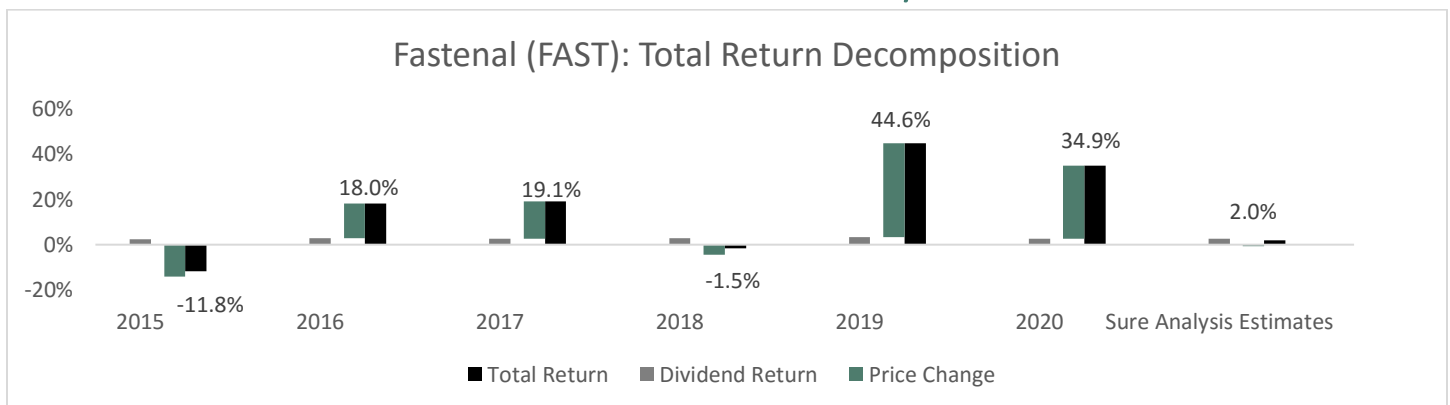
Fastenal has a first mover competitive advantage in its industrial vending and Onsite locations, creating a very sticky and well-attuned customer relationship with high switching costs. Moreover, the company's scale allows for the company to continue on its growth path, adjusting to business preferences and reliably delivering needed goods.

During the last recession, Fastenal reported earnings-per-share of \$0.39, \$0.48, \$0.31 and \$0.45 for the 2007 through 2010 period. Moreover, the dividend kept on increasing during this time. While we note some cyclical possibilities in the construction industry, thus far the company has proven itself to be well prepared to survive financial storms. We note that the dividend payout ratio is elevated, but we believe this is reasonable considering the strong financial position. Indeed, the company actually paid a special dividend at the end of 2020, citing high cash balances and favorable outlook.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Shares are up 7% since our last report. Fastenal has proven itself to be a great business, with earnings and dividends growing consistently over the years. Moreover, the company is executing moves to better cement itself as a go-to supplier. It's the sort of business that you would be proud to own. However, on the security side the elevated valuation gives us pause. Total return potential comes in at 2.0% per annum, driven by 6% growth and a 2.3% dividend yield offset by the potential for a significant valuation headwind. We are enthused about the quality of the business and growth prospects, but we are not excited about the security's valuation. Shares earn a sell rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenue	2767	3134	3326	3734	3869	3962	4391	4965	5334
Gross Profit	1434	1615	1719	1897	1949	1965	2164	2399	2515
Gross Margin	51.8%	51.5%	51.7%	50.8%	50.4%	49.6%	49.3%	48.3%	47.2%
SG&A Exp.	859	941	1007	1111	1122	1170	1283	1400	1459
D&A Exp.	45	54	64	73	87	104	127	138	149
Operating Profit	575	673	712	787	827	795	881	999	1056
Operating Margin	20.8%	21.5%	21.4%	21.1%	21.4%	20.1%	20.1%	20.1%	19.8%
Net Profit	358	421	449	494	516	499	579	752	791
Net Margin	12.9%	13.4%	13.5%	13.2%	13.3%	12.6%	13.2%	15.1%	14.8%
Free Cash Flow	148	258	210	310	395	330	465	498	596
Income Tax	217	254	265	293	310	290	295	235	253

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Assets	1685	1816	2076	2359	2532	2669	2911	3322	3800
Cash & Equivalents	118	80	59	114	129	113	117	167	175
Accounts Receivable	339	372	414	462	468	500	608	714	742
Inventories	646	715	784	869	913	993	1093	1279	1366
Goodwill & Int. Ass.	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Total Liabilities	226	255	303	444	731	736	814	1019	1134
Accounts Payable	74	78	91	104	126	109	148	194	193
Long-Term Debt	0	0	0	90	365	390	415	500	345
Shareholder's Equity	1459	1560	1773	1915	1801	1933	2097	2303	2666
D/E Ratio	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.13

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Return on Assets	22.7%	24.0%	23.1%	22.3%	21.1%	19.2%	20.7%	24.1%	22.2%
Return on Equity	26.1%	27.9%	26.9%	26.8%	27.8%	26.7%	28.7%	34.2%	31.8%
ROIC	26.1%	27.9%	26.9%	26.2%	24.8%	22.2%	23.9%	28.3%	27.2%

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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