# MSC Industrial Direct Co., Inc. (MSM) <br> Review of 3QF13 Results 

Maintain Outperform rating and \$90 price target. MSM reported solid 3QF13 results despite continued lackluster end-market trends, consistent with our 2Q13 survey. Encouragingly, BDNA is proceeding on schedule, and gross margin is expected to ramp meaningfully in 1QF14. While 4QF13 guidance is below expectations, the midpoint is based on zero organic growth, basically reflecting no improvement in near-term trends. We believe MSM will be a prime beneficiary if industrial end market trends improve later this year as we expect.

- Maintain Outperform rating and $\$ 90$ price target based on approximately 11 x EV/C2014E EBITDA.
- Estimate changes. We are fine-tuning our F2014 EPS estimate to \$4.27, our 2013 estimate is unchanged.
- 3QF13 results solid. MSM reported 3QF13 "organic" EPS of $\$ 1.03$ (excluding \$0.02 BDNA accretion) above comparable \$0.95-\$0.99 guidance, driven by better-than-expected gross margin and solid expense leverage.
- 4QF13 guidance below expectations. 4QF13 sales guidance of \$661-\$673 million (organic ADS flat at the midpoint) was below prior $\$ 693.6$ million consensus, and expected EPS of \$0.87-\$0.91 places prior $\$ 1.02$ consensus above the range.
- Outlook mostly as expected / previewed. Consistent with themes highlighted in our 2Q13 earnings preview, management noted continued sluggish metalworking trends, which have persisted through June. Guidance assumes zero organic daily sales growth at the midpoint as the company expects no improvement in the business environment.
- BDNA integration on schedule. Management noted that BDNA integration is proceeding smoothly, and maintained synergy and accretion expectations. Furthermore, overall gross margin is expected to uptick meaningfully in 1QF14, as an unfavorable BDNA acquisition purchase accounting adjustment abates.
- F2014 pricing expected. While recent muted growth has prevented mid-year price increases and pressured gross margin, management is planning for typical new-year price increases in the F2014 Big Book, which should be a positive earnings catalyst next year. To the extent that underlying trends show any improvement going forward, potential mid-year price increases would be an additional source of upside.
- Prime beneficiary of a $\mathbf{2 H 1 3}$ recovery. We continue to believe that MSM is well positioned for a 2 H 13 industrial recovery, with potentially improving volumes and pricing reading through at incrementally higher contribution margins.
- 3QF13 results. Adjusted EPS $\$ 1.05$ vs. $\$ 0.96$ estimate. Sales $\$ 636.9$ million vs. $\$ 630.7$ million estimate. Gross margin $45.5 \%$ vs. $44.9 \%$ estimate. EBIT margin $16.7 \%$ vs. $15.9 \%$ estimate.

MSC Industrial is a leading direct marketer of industrial products used mainly for customers' maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) requirements.


Chart/Table Sources: Bloomberg and Baird Data

| MSC Industrial Direct (MSM - NYSE) Quarterly Results and Variance Sheet |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Quarterly Results |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Percent of Revenue |  |  |
|  |  | 3QF13 |  | 3QF12 | Change |  | Baird/ | Variance | 3QF13 | 3QF12 | Baird/ |
| Net Sales | \$ | 636.9 | \$ | 612.0 | 4\% | \$ | 630.7 | 1\% |  |  |  |
| Cost of Sales |  | 347.4 |  | 332.4 | 5\% |  | 347.5 | (0\%) |  |  |  |
| Gross Profit |  | 289.5 |  | 279.6 | 4\% |  | 283.2 | 2\% | 45.5\% | 45.7\% | 44.9\% |
| SG\&A |  | 182.9 |  | 168.7 | 8\% |  | 182.7 | 0\% | 28.7\% | 27.6\% | 29.0\% |
| Operating Income |  | 106.6 |  | 110.9 | (4\%) |  | 100.5 | 6\% | 16.7\% | 18.1\% | 15.9\% |
| Other Exp (Inc) |  | 1.1 |  | 0.0 | 18483\% |  | 2.7 | (58\%) |  |  |  |
| Pretax Income |  | 105.5 |  | 110.9 | (5\%) |  | 97.8 | 8\% | 16.6\% | 18.1\% | 15.5\% |
| Taxes |  | 38.8 |  | 40.6 | (5\%) |  | 37.4 | 4\% | 36.7\% | 36.7\% | 38.2\% |
| Net Income | \$ | 66.7 | \$ | 70.2 | (5\%) | \$ | 60.5 | 10\% | 10.5\% | 11.5\% | 9.6\% |
| Diluted EPS | \$ | 1.05 | \$ | 1.10 |  | \$ | 0.96 |  |  |  |  |
| Diluted Shares |  | 63.1 |  | 63.1 |  |  | 63.1 |  |  |  |  |

Source: Company reports, Robert W. Baird \& Co. estimates

## 3QF13 results above expectations

- EPS. 3QF13 EPS (ex-items) was $\$ 1.05 \mathrm{vs}$. $\$ 1.10 \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$, above our $\$ 0.96$ estimate ( $\$ 0.97$ consensus) and the $\$ 0.95-\$ 0.99$ guidance range. Guidance excluded BDNA, which provided $\$ 0.02$ of accretion. EPS excludes $\$ 0.07$ in non-recurring expenses related to the Barnes Distribution acquisition and ongoing co-location of the company's headquarters to Davidson, NC, as did our estimates and guidance.
- Sales. 3QF13 sales were $\$ 636.9$ million vs. $\$ 612.0$ million $y / y(+4 \%)$, above our $\$ 630.7$ million estimate (and $\$ 635.2$ million consensus). BDNA contributed $\$ 34.7$ million to sales, implying organic sales of $\$ 602.2$ million ( $-1.6 \%$ ) near the mid-point of $\$ 597-\$ 609$ million guidance.
- Geographic performance. The strongest trends were again seen in the West (+2.7\% $\mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$ ), followed by the Midwest ( $+0.6 \%$ ), Southeast (flat), International ( $-2.7 \%$ ), and the Northeast (-2.7\%).
- Daily sales. Daily sales growth reflects weaker underlying trends along with the contribution of BDNA beginning mid-April, with March $-1.5 \% \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$, April $+7.1 \%$, and May $+13.9 \%$. Excluding contribution from the acquisition, daily sales trends were likely flattish.
- Customers. Growth in non-manufacturing customers (+0.9\% y/y) outpaced manufacturing growth (-0.3\%), for the first time since F2010.
- Gross margin. Gross margin was $45.5 \%$ vs. $45.7 \% \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$, above our $44.9 \%$ estimate. Excluding BDNA, gross margin of $45.0 \%$ was above the midpoint of the guidance range of $44.9 \%+/-20 \mathrm{bps}$.
- SG\&A. SG\&A as a percent of sales (ex-items) was $28.7 \%$ vs. $27.6 \% \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$, slightly below our $29.0 \%$ estimate.
- EBIT margin. EBIT margin (ex-items) was $16.7 \%$ vs. $18.1 \% \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$, above our $15.9 \%$ estimate due to better-than-expected gross margin and SG\&A leverage.


## Management's outlook assumes no improvement in trends

- Outlook assumes continued sluggishness. Consistent with the findings from our 2Q13 Distribution Survey, underlying industrial trends continue to remain challenging. Citing recent conversations with the Company's customers which indicated a lack of improving demand, management noted that customers remain acutely focused on minimizing spending levels, which is reflected in 3QF13 sales to manufacturing customers declining $-0.3 \% \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$. Muted demand has continued, with June sales tracking flat $y / y$, reflected in management's conservative outlook.
- Metalworking trends challenging, as previewed. Consistent with a key theme from our recent survey work, which saw the cutting tools product category moderate sequentially and decline on a $\mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$ basis, management noted particularly challenging trends in metalworking. This mirrors
commentary from key supplier KMT, which recently indicated that while distributor de-stocking has abated, it has yet to see inventory levels increase.
- Government trends feeling sequestration headwinds. As would be expected given sequestration pressures, overall government sales declined for the second consecutive quarter. Encouragingly, however, management cited significant growth in the state government business, which should help mitigate the impact from sequestration going forward.


## 4QF13 outlook below expectations

- Sales. Sales guidance (including BDNA) is $\$ 661-\$ 673$ million, below our previous $\$ 688.5$ million estimate ( $\$ 693.6$ million consensus). The midpoint of the range assumes flat $y / y$ organic average daily sales and \$70+ million in sales from BDNA. Excluding the headwinds from an extra week in last year's fiscal fourth quarter and the lack of a mid-year price increase this year, management believes 4QF13 sales will be very similar to the past couple of quarters.
- EPS. 4QF13 EPS (ex-items) is expected to be \$0.87-\$0.91, vs. our previous $\$ 1.00$ estimate and $\$ 1.02$ consensus. Adjusted EPS excludes $\$ 0.06$ in total costs related to the recent Barnes Distribution acquisition and relocation of the company's co-headquarters in Davidson, NC. Of note, BDNA is expected to be neutral to 4QF13 EPS.
- Gross margin. Gross margin is expected to be $45 \%+/-20 \mathrm{bps}(-20 \mathrm{bps} \mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y})$ reflecting vending headwinds and unfavorable seasonal product mix, mostly offset by private label sales and BDNA accretion. Encouragingly, that BDNA accretion should gravitate much higher in 1QF14 and beyond, as temporary headwinds from acquisition-related inventory accounting is likely to abate after 4QF13.
- SG\&A. SG\&A is expected to increase at the midpoint by $\$ 26$ million sequentially ( $\sim 31.3 \%$ of sales), comprised of an increase of $\$ 5$ million in core SG\&A and $\$ 21$ million in SG\&A associated with the BDNA acquisition. The sequential increase in core SG\&A is consistent with normal seasonal trends.
- Tax rate. The tax rate is expected to be $37.5 \%$ in 4QF13.


## Growth initiatives update

- Overall growth framework. The company plans to double the size of the business to \$4+ billion in sales by F2016, primarily organically (augmented by acquisitions, with BDNA a prime example), with a $\sim 15 \%$ sales growth CAGR targeted. In light of historical growth rates ( $\sim 14 \%$ CAGR historically) and increasing contributions from the company's growth initiatives, this level of growth appears within reach.
- Facility investments supporting expansion. Consistent with these long-term growth targets, the company is in the process of co-locating a new CSC (headquarter) in Davidson, North Carolina, which is expected to cost approximately $\$ 7-\$ 10$ million over the course of F2013 and F2014 and is expected to be opened in August 2013. In addition, plans call for MSC to open a fifth CFC (Distribution Center) in Columbus, Ohio, which is expected to be operational by late CY2014.
- Vending momentum solid overall. The company's vending machine program continues to provide a meaningful tailwind to growth, contributing $+3 \%$ of incremental sales growth this quarter (unchanged vs. $+3 \% \mathrm{q} / \mathrm{q}$ ). Management again highlighted strong signings during the quarter, and ongoing profit improvement programs and the integration of BDNA's offerings should drive continued growth in the medium term.


## Barnes Distribution (BDNA) update

- Overall. Closed on April 22, integration of BDNA appears to be progressing on schedule, and management remains confident in the strategic rationale of the acquisition. Run-rate revenues are now $\$ 290$ million, down slightly vs. the $\$ 300$ million run-rate as of the acquisition date given slight declines seen in 3QF13.
- 3QF13 results. Operations from BDNA (ex-items) contributed $\$ 0.02$ to 3QF13 on $\$ 37.4$ million in revenues (~9\% EBIT margins).
- 4QF13 guidance. Management expects BDNA 4QF13 revenues to be slightly above $\$ 70$ million, contributing roughly $+11-12 \%$ to overall sales growth. Due to a one-time acquisition-related inventory revaluation, 4QF13 gross margins are expected to be depressed in the low-50\%'s, after
which gross margins should revert to more normalized $\sim 55 \%$ levels. Overall, BDNA is expected to be neutral to 4QF13 EPS.
- Accretion guidance maintained. EPS accretion is still expected to be $\$ 0.15-\$ 0.20$ and $\$ 0.30-\$ 0.40$ in F2014 and F2015, respectively, including synergies and excluding transaction/integration costs. Synergies are expected to reach a run-rate of $\$ 15-\$ 20$ million by FY2015, representing 500-600bps of accretion to BDNA's EBIT margins.


## Core investment spending plans mostly consistent

- Overall. Despite depressed levels of growth, management's plan to continue investing in growth initiatives, at the expense of near-term (F2013) operating leverage, remains largely unchanged. Encouragingly, however, management appears to have prudently managed spending levels in light of continued economic softness.
- Tentative F2014 outlook similar to F2013. While management plans to update its F2014 outlook for spending/operating leverage in 4QF13, it appears that much of the F2013 framework (see above) will likely hold for F2014.
- Acquisitions should benefit F2014 operating leverage. Mentioned previously, BDNA's gross margin is expected to improve mid-single-digits+ beginning 1QF14, and should help contribution margins going forward. Accelerating synergies through FY2015 should also help mitigate the impact from continued investment spending in the combined businesses.
- Vending impact remains modest. Ongoing momentum within the company's vending offering is also a modest headwind to operating leverage, attributable to the fact that higher up-front costs are set to accelerate near term as implementations ramp. In addition, vending relationships tend to be more production-focused with higher volumes, leading to gross margins initially below the corporate average (vending was -50 bps dilutive to 3QF13 gross margin). Longer term, there appears to be good opportunity to raise the gross margin of these customers as MSC adds higher-margin MRO purchases to these customers relationships..


## Pricing environment remains challenging

- Sluggish demand pressuring pricing. Consistent with our recent survey work, stable commodity prices are seen as preventing supplier mid-year price increases, while sluggish demand appears to be driving heightened customer pricing sensitivity, on the margin. To this point, guidance continues to assume no pricing actions until the F2014 issue of the Big Book.
- Pricing tailwind consequently moderating. Pricing contributed $+0.8 \%$ to overall $\mathrm{y} / \mathrm{y}$ growth in 3QF13, moderating vs. $+1.5 \% \mathrm{q} / \mathrm{q}$, reflecting the impact mid-year price increases which benefited the prior-year quarter.
- Price increases planned for F2014 Big Book. Alluded to above, management expects to implement a "normal" price increase in the F2014 Big Book. While management declined to quantify the amount of pricing it expects to implement, we believe levels in line with historical averages ( $\sim 2-3 \%$ ) appear reasonable.

| MSC Industrial Direct (MSM - NYSE) Estimate Changes |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 4QF13E | New | Old | Change |
| Sales (millions) | \$669.6 | \$688.5 | -\$18.9 |
| Sales Growth | 5.4\% | 8.4\% | (0bp) |
| Gross Margin | 45.0\% | 44.7\% | 33bp |
| Op Ex | \$208.1 | \$202.3 | \$5.8 |
| Op Ex \% of Sales | 31.1\% | 29.4\% | 170bp |
| EBIT Margin | 13.9\% | 15.3\% | (137bp) |
| Diluted EPS | \$0.90 | \$1.00 | -\$0.10 |
| F2013E | New | Old | Change |
| Sales (millions) | \$2,453.5 | \$2,466.2 | -\$12.7 |
| Sales Growth | 4.1\% | 4.7\% | (0bp) |
| Gross Margin | 45.3\% | 45.1\% | 24bp |
| Op Ex | \$716.4 | \$710.4 | \$6.0 |
| Op Ex \% of Sales | 29.2\% | 28.8\% | 39bp |
| EBIT Margin | 16.1\% | 16.3\% | (16bp) |
| Diluted EPS | \$3.89 | \$3.89 | n/c |
| F2014E | New | Old | Change |
| Sales (millions) | \$2,822.9 | \$2,842.7 | -\$19.8 |
| Sales Growth | 15.1\% | 15.3\% | (0bp) |
| Gross Margin | 46.3\% | 45.3\% | 93bp |
| Op Ex | \$863.7 | \$826.5 | \$37.2 |
| Op Ex \% of Sales | 30.6\% | 29.1\% | 152bp |
| EBIT Margin | 15.7\% | 16.3\% | (60bp) |
| Diluted EPS | \$4.27 | \$4.40 | -\$0.13 |

Source: Robert W. Baird \& Co. estimates


Source: FactSet, Robert W. Baird \& Co. estimates

## Investment Thesis

The call. We rate MSM Outperform. Our $\$ 90$ price target is based on 11x EV/C2014E EBITDA, a slight premium to the $10.5 \times$ NTM average. We are encouraged by solid contributions from the company's growth initiatives and believe current sentiment and valuation levels largely discount for expected near-term pressure on operating leverage. We remain positive on this higher "industrial beta" name given our outlook for improving conditions in 2 H 13 under our mid-cycle thesis. Increased comfort with recent management changes, along with continued execution, should allow valuation to rebound to more normal historical levels. Our estimates now include the recently-closed BDNA acquisition, which we estimate to be neutral to F2013 EPS and nearly 5\% accretive to our F2014 view.
MSC is a leader in a large, fragmented, and attractive market. MSC Industrial has a low-single-digit share of the highly fragmented $\$ 100+$ billion MRO market. Approximately $2 / 3$ of the market is made up of local "mom and pop" distributors, leaving significant room for consolidation.
Consolidation trends favor large players. As the industry continues to consolidate, large distributors like MSC should continue to gain share due to national capabilities, IT and management resources, advanced supply chain solutions, broad product lines, access to capital, superior fill rates, etc.
Cyclical thesis. We expect improving conditions in 2013 under our mid-cycle thesis.
Company-specific initiatives. We believe several company-specific initiatives including sales force additions, vendor and customer managed inventory (VMI and CMI, respectively), vending, MSCdirect.com, BDNA cross-selling, and extended overnight shipping could add to sales momentum.
West Coast expansion. With $<10 \%$ of total branches on the West Coast, there is significant potential for additional sales force additions going forward. The company recently added three more branches in the region (Seattle, Portland and Salt Lake City). The acquisitions of Rutland Tool and ATS Industrial provide additional traction in this under-penetrated market.
Pricing. Pricing is tied to the annual Big Book publication in September, leading to fairly predictable pricing gains; the most recent F2013 Big Book included price increases of approximately $+3.5-4.0 \%$. The company has also implemented additional increases mid-year in the past, a practice which management cited it would repeat opportunistically.
Share repurchase. The company has approximately 4 million shares remaining under current authorization.

## Risks \& Caveats

Economy/durable goods manufacturing. Approximately three-quarters of MSC's sales are to durable goods manufacturers, which are cyclical and tied to the macro-economic environment.
Growth expenditures. Consistent with the company's view that the current environment is a "once in a lifetime land-grab opportunity" to gain share, MSC in proactively investing in growth. Investments in technology, salespeople, vending machines, private label initiatives, etc. are initially dilutive, but should help the company continue to take share at a rapid pace. In addition, the newly announced plans for a fifth distribution center located in Columbus, OH , should provide for future growth, but could potentially be poorly timed should economic conditions worsen.
Maintaining and managing rapid growth. As MSC grows and matures, it may become increasingly difficult to maintain historical growth rates. Managing growth could also become increasingly difficult.
Internet-only industrial supply sources. The recent entry of Amazon.com into the industrial supply market is mainly headline risk, in our opinion, due to the very large market, complexity of many products, high levels of customer service and support provided by companies like MSC, etc. While there are undoubtedly some customers who may try to search for cheaper items, increasingly, large customers are consolidating with national players like MSC due to one-stop-shop convenience for the myriad of MRO supplies, technical sales support, and customized levels of service such as vending and integrated supply.

Management transition. The company recently completed the transition of the CEO, and also recently hired an experienced VP of Investor Relations, filling another key role. We are comfortable with the timing and rationale of the transitions as well as abilities of the incoming executives.
Two classes of stock. Insiders control super-voting B stock (10 votes), providing effective insider control.

## Company Description

MSC Industrial is a leading direct marketer of industrial products, including cutting tools, abrasives, measuring instruments, machine tool accessories, safety equipment, fasteners, and welding supplies used mainly for customers' maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) requirements. MSC markets approximately 600,000 SKUs through roughly 16 million direct mailing catalogs and other direct-marketing pieces as well as approximately 1,900 salespeople including the BDNA field sales force. Through four regional distribution centers and over 100 sales offices, MSC serves approximately 320,000 customers throughout the United States and provides next-day delivery to most of the US population.

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Note: All figures exclude non-recurring items. Income statement, balance sheet and cash flow figures are restated to reflect accounting changes.
Reflects adoption of SFAS 123R as of 1QF06. Historical figures have not been restated.

| Cal. Year | Calendar EPS |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | \$ | Chg |
| 20 | 2.18 | 26 |
| 2007 | 2.70 | 23.8\% |
| 2008 | 3.06 | 13.1\% |
| 2009 | 1.78 | (41.8\%) |
| 2010 | 2.62 | 47.4\% |
| 2011 | 3.63 | 38.6\% |
| 2012 | 4.18 | 14.9\% |
| 2013E | 3.86 | (7.5\%) |
| 2014E | 4.42 | 14.3\% |

Source: Company Reports, Robert W. Baird \& Co. estimates

MSC Industrial Direct
(MSM - NYSE)


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