



Position Close Update: Pluralsight, Inc. (PS)

Pluralsight, Inc. (PS) – Closing Short Position – up 17% vs. S&P up 18%

We put Pluralsight, Inc. (PS: \$20/share) in the [Danger Zone](#) on [March 2, 2020](#). At the time, PS received an Unattractive [rating](#). Our report focused on Pluralsight’s misleading GAAP and non-GAAP metrics, rising competition, negative profitability, lack of economies of scale, and the high expectations baked into Pluralsight’s stock price.

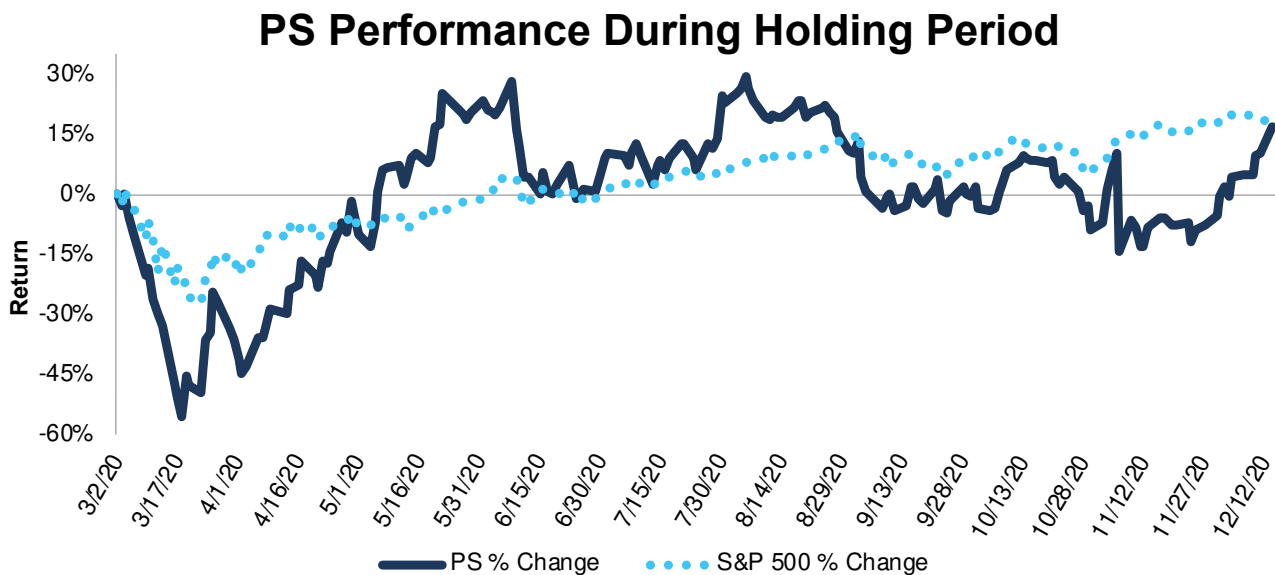
This report, along with all of our research¹, utilizes our superior data² to get the truth about earnings, as shown in the Journal of Financial Economics paper, “[Core Earnings: New Data and Evidence](#).”

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During the 287-day holding period, PS outperformed as a short position, rising 17% compared to an 18% gain for the S&P 500.

While the firm’s fundamentals remain poor, with negative [economic earnings](#) and return on invested capital ([ROIC](#)), the Wall Street Journal [reports](#) private-equity firm Vista Equity Partners has agreed to acquire Pluralsight for \$20.26/share. As a result, we are closing this short position.

Figure 1: PS vs. S&P 500 – Price Return – Successful Short Call



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Note: Gain/Decline performance analysis excludes transaction costs and dividends.

This article originally published on [December 14, 2020](#).

¹ Harvard Business School features the powerful impact of our research automation technology in the case [New Constructs: Disrupting Fundamental Analysis with Robo-Analysts](#).

² Our Core Earnings are a superior measure of profits, as demonstrated in [Core Earnings: New Data & Evidence](#) a paper by professors at Harvard Business School (HBS) & MIT Sloan. Recently accepted by the Journal of Financial Economics, the paper proves that our data is superior to all the metrics offered by S&P Global (SPGI).



Disclosure: David Trainer, Kyle Guske II, and Matt Shuler receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, style, or theme.

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [StockTwits](#) for real-time alerts on all our research.



Footnotes adjustments matter. We are the ONLY source.

We provide ratings, models, reports & screeners on U.S. 3,000 stocks, 700 ETFs and 7,000 mutual funds.

[HBS & MIT Sloan research](#) reveals that:

- **Markets are inefficiently assessing earnings because no one reads the footnotes.**
- **Corporate managers hide gains/losses in footnotes to manage earnings.**
- **Our technology brings the material footnotes data to market for the first time ever.**

Combining human expertise with NLP/ML/AI technologies ([featured by Harvard Business School](#)), we shine a light in the dark corners (e.g. footnotes) of hundreds of thousands of financial filings to unearth critical details.

The HBS & MIT Sloan paper, [Core Earnings: New Data and Evidence](#), shows how our superior data drives uniquely comprehensive and independent debt and equity research.

This [paper](#) compares our analytics on a mega cap company to other major providers. The Appendix details exactly how we stack up.

[Learn more.](#)

Quotes from HBS & MIT Sloan professors on our research:

Get better research:

“...the NC dataset provides a novel opportunity to study the properties of non-operating items disclosed in 10-Ks, and to examine the extent to which the market impounds their implications.” – page 20

Pick better stocks:

“Trading strategies that exploit cross-sectional differences in firms’ transitory earnings produce abnormal returns of 7-to-10% per year.” – Abstract

Avoid losses from using other firms’ data:

“...many of the income-statement-relevant quantitative disclosures collected by NC do not appear to be easily identifiable in Compustat...” – page 14

Build better models:

“Core Earnings [calculated using New Constructs’ novel dataset] provides predictive power for various measures of one-year-ahead performance...that is incremental to their current-period counterparts.” – page 4

Exploit market inefficiencies:

“These results ... suggest that the adjustments made by analysts and Compustat to better capture core earnings are incomplete. Moreover, the non-core items identified by NC produce a measure of core earnings that is incremental to alternative measures of operating performance in predicting an array of future income measures.” – page 26

Fulfill fiduciary duties:

“An appropriate measure of accounting performance for purposes of forecasting future performance requires detailed analysis of all quantitative performance disclosures detailed in the annual report, including those reported only in the footnotes and in the MD&A.” – page 33-34



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