



## Small Companies With Big Futures

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Lisa DiCarlo, 07.22.03, 12:00 PM ET

NEW YORK - It's been a great year (knock on wood) so far for the stock market. Year-to-date, the Dow Jones Industrial Average is up 9.1%, the Nasdaq Composite 25.9% and the S&P 500 11.3%. And the five companies we have highlighted here have done even better, returning an average of 52% to shareholders since the beginning of the year.

These companies aren't followed by the top-tier investment banks and aren't covered much in the press. All of them have rather uncommon products or business models that make them interesting. But beyond that, all are small, have under \$200 million in sales, are profitable and have great growth potential. But value investors might want to wait before buying in. The average P/E for the group is a lofty 26.

**Five Small Companies With Big Futures**

# FirstCashAdvance

**First Cash Financial Services (nasdaq: FCFS)**  
Fiscal 2002 Sales: **\$119 million**  
Fiscal 2002 EPS: **\$1.14**  
2003 Estimated EPS: **\$1.37**  
2003 P/E: **13**  
Price Change, Year-To-Date: **+76%**  
Market Cap: **\$161 million**

First Cash is in a unique segment of the financial services industry: It owns and operates more than 200 pawn shops and cash-advance centers in the U.S. and Mexico. Most of its sales come from merchandise sales derived from the forfeiture of personal property, as well as service charges stemming from cash advances. The company is in high, yet controlled, growth mode, with plans to open between 40 and 50 stores this year. Over five years, First Cash has achieved an annual growth rate of 21% in revenue and earnings.