

Marks Electrical Group



Sales grow 44% in FY2022 with ongoing momentum

11 April 2022

Marks Electrical Group's (MRK) growth strategy remains on track with a sizable 44% increase in sales revenue in FY2022 and EBITDA margins expected to be a healthy 9.0%. The company also finished the year with £3.9m net cash. Moreover, the final quarter – which lapped a significant 127% gain a year earlier – experienced 19% sales revenue growth. We maintain our FY2023 forecasts and continue to argue that fair value is 150p per share.

Marks Electrical released today a pre-close trading update for twelve months to 31st March 2022, which confirmed our expectations of 44% sales growth and 9.0% EBITDA margins. Moreover, the company's strong end to the year – i.e. over 25% year on year growth in March 2022 – augurs well for FY2023, when we expect sales to expand by a further 20%. The strong £3.9m net cash position, sustained investment in marketing, and expansion to the UK delivery footprint all combine to support an optimistic view going into the new financial year.

Operational highlights in FY2022 included strong market share gains in Major Domestic Appliances (MDAs) and Televisions, added focus on brand awareness initiatives, an increase in the number of delivery vehicles and warehouse efficiency improvements. Encouragingly, the company's Trustpilot rating – an objective measure of customer service – improved to 4.8.

Looking ahead to FY2023, MRK confirms that trading momentum has continued during the start of April, which sets the company up well to match its targets for the new financial year. Other progress points which we infer are expansion into the southern areas of Scotland (including Edinburgh and Glasgow) as well as a broader English distribution footprint.

Equity Development initiated coverage of Marks Electrical with a report entitled "[Lighting the touch paper](#)" on 16th March 2022. That research note focused on MRK's core operating model, which benefits from a 5-pillar approach that embraces up-to-date technology, a simple and proven distribution network, a scalable delivery model, premium products, and the importance of a favourable online user experience. Moreover, we highlighted MRK's sizable £5.3bn addressable market in MDAs and scope to gain further share by improving the company's brand recognition.

Robust financials and upside to ratings

Today's statement confirms that prospects remain exciting. The scalable nature of the business should deliver increased operating margins even after brand promotion costs. Plus, there is scope to sustain growth from relatively low inventory levels, which benefits free cash flow. **At our 150p fair value level the implied ratings are an FY2023 EV/sales ratio of 1.6x and 18.7x EV/EBITDA.**

Key Financials						
Year to 31st March	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022E	2023E	2024E
Revenue (£m)	31.2	31.5	56.0	80.5	96.9	118.1
Revenue growth (%)		0.8	77.7	43.7	20.4	21.9
EBITDA (£m) (adj)	1.9	1.3	7.7	7.2	8.2	10.4
EPS adjusted (p)	1.1	0.7	5.0	4.7	5.3	6.3
DPS (p)				0.8	1.1	1.3
EV/sales (x)	3.1	3.1	1.7	1.2	1.0	0.8
EV/EBITDA (x)	51.3	75.5	12.6	13.4	11.7	9.3
P/E ratio (x)	86.0	144.5	19.0	20.2	17.9	15.0
Yield (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.1	1.3

Source: ED estimates, company historic data

Company Data

EPIC	MRK
Price (last close)	95p
Hi/Lo since IPO	128p/95p
Market cap	£100m
ED Fair Value / share	150p

Share Price since IPO, p



Source: ADVFN

Description

Marks Electrical Group PLC (MRK) is a fast growing online electrical goods retailer, which was founded by its current CEO Mark Smithson in 1987. MRK focuses on premium branded Major Domestic Appliances, which it can deliver with its in-house wholly owned fleet of vehicles to more than 99% of the English population on a next day basis.

The company operates from a single site in Leicester, which also houses its headquarters.

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Sales grow 44% in FY2022

FY2022 trading update – financial highlights

A rapid 44% increase in sales revenue to £80.5m was the key feature of Marks Electrical's pre close trading update for the twelve months ended 31st March 2022. In addition, the company has reported a good start to FY2023, which followed a vibrant end to the previous financial year.

MRK's sound financial footing is also important. Having repaid all of its bank debt during the year of its IPO, the company now has a useful net cash surplus of £3.9m. Expectations of a 9.0% EBITDA margin not only matches both our own forecasts and the 9% target published at the time of interim results on 21st November 2021 - but also puts the company in a strong position to reinvest in brand awareness. The current objective is to spend around 5% of sales revenue on advertising and marketing.

We summarise today's trading update highlights in Figure 1. Sales revenue growth is consistent with our expectations at the time of our 16th March initiation report. While the expected adjusted EBITDA margin at 9.0% should turn out to be beneath the previous year's unusually high level of 13.8%, it improved from 8.1% at the six-month stage of the year. Furthermore, **9.0% compares with 4.1% reported in FY2020**.

Figure 1 - Trading statement highlights

All financial figures in £m	FY2021	FY2022	Change
Sales revenue	56.0	80.5	44%
Net cash position	-0.3	3.9	nmf
Trustpilot rating (FY2021 interim)	4.7	4.8	

Source: Company data

It is worth noting that FY2021 EBITDA margins were higher for some specific reasons which included both unusually high gross margins due to supply constraints and relatively low advertising costs due to high volumes of people online and some competitors suspending pay per click. Moreover, overheads were lower in the last full financial year ahead of IPO.

We believe TrustPilot ratings are important and the ability for MRK to improve on the 4.7 rating at the half-year should be noted. TrustPilot ratings are an independently compiled indication of the company's efficacy when dealing with its end-customers. As we highlighted in our initiation, MRK currently boasts superior TrustPilot ratings to its chief peers in the MDA and TV space. The position is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Competitor websites and Trustpilot ratings

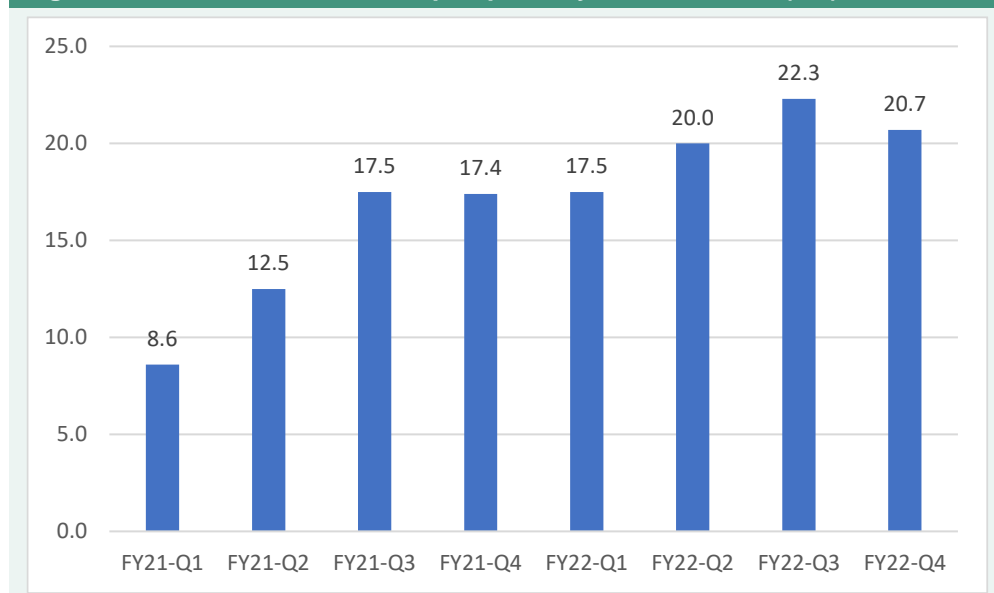
Company	Website	Trustpilot rating
Marks Electrical	www.markselectrical.co.uk	4.8
AO	www.ao.com	4.6
John Lewis	www.johnlewis.com	3.9
Currys	www.currys.co.uk	3.6

Sources: Company websites (www.markselectrical.co.uk, www.ao.com, www.currys.co.uk, www.johnlewis.com) and uk.trustpilot.com

Well positioned for FY2023

Analysis of MRK's quarterly sales bodes well for FY2023. In the final quarter of FY2022 sales advanced by 19%. This growth is arguably all the more impressive for having lapped a period in FY2021 when growth was an unusually rapid 127%, which was the fastest quarterly growth rate recorded by the company in the past two years. Recent quarters' sales progression is summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Marks Electrical Group – quarterly sales revenue (£m)



Source: Company data

Furthermore, the exit rate in March 2022 was significantly faster than for FY2022's Q4 as a whole. Sales advanced at a 25% pace in March 2022 compared with the same month a year earlier. The company also stated that trading momentum continued into April 2022, which bodes well for its FY2023 targets.

At this early stage in the year we leave our forecasts - including an expectation of 20.4% sales revenue growth - unchanged.

FY2022 trading update - operational highlights

Operational highlights in today's update include confirmation of market share gains in both the company's MDA and TV markets.

The ability to gain market share from a 1% to 1.5% position and the substantial share headroom available to MRK in a £5.3bn UK MDA market are important components of the investment case for the company's shares, which we discuss in more detail below.

Market share gains should be assisted by the company's sustained focus on brand awareness initiatives which can help drive sequential improvements in organic and direct website traffic.

MRK added further delivery vehicles to its fleet during the FY2022 and strengthened its free next day delivery capability across the UK. We note that MRK now delivers to the Lake District and Cumbria as well as Cornwall within England, as well as adding the key Scottish populations of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The company also announced further improvements to its warehouse efficiency and an ongoing aim to maximise utilisation rates within its facility, which is located at its Leicester headquarters. The ability to function from a single site remains an important component of MRK's operating model, in our view.

Investment case

The central investment case for Marks Electrical is the company's ability to gain market share by raising awareness of its delivery of premium, branded Major Domestic Appliances (MDAs) and televisions (TVs) to retail customers on a next day basis via its online platform. The simplicity of that message is supported by a clearly articulated, focused approach to doing business.

The MRK premium branded offering primarily serves the Major Domestic Appliance market which is currently estimated to be worth around £5.3bn and in the past seven years grew at a 3.4% compound rate (*source: Marks Electrical analysis of GfK data*). In recent years MRK has consistently gained share of this sizable addressable market, and we see those share gains as proving more important to its growth than that of the overall market. The company is also expanding in Televisions.

MRK's market share gains to date are significantly a function of the company's ability to operate at best practice levels in both customer online experience and speed of delivery. In addition, there is a major service element to the MRK customer proposition given its ability promptly to respond to customer enquiries on a person-to-person basis. Overall service quality is a critical element of the investment case too. Target KPIs are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Target KPIs

Target criterion	Medium-term targets
Revenue growth	Double-digit
Marketing spend / sales	~5.0%
Adj. EBITDA margin	~8.0%-9.0%
Capex / revenue	<3.0%
Working capital / sales	<7.5%
Dividend	~20% pay-out ratio

Source: Company presentation data

A 1.2% Major Domestic Appliances market share in FY2021 allows substantial headroom for sales expansion, so long as MRK continues to execute on a superior basis to its identifiable competition. In particular, the company has relatively high 11% recognition in its home East Midlands region versus 6% across all of England and an unusually low 3% in London (which is currently Marks Electrical's largest customer market in the country for deliveries on a daily basis). As awareness outside its "home turf" improves, so should both brand recognition and sales volume.

The unique nature of Marks Electrical's core online offering is a vital component of the company's investment case. The company should not, in our view, be seen as a replica version of its key competitors (e.g. AO or Currys) in terms of service offering, which in turn should be reflected when benchmarking relative valuation. MRK delivers on a next day basis from a single site and is oriented towards premium, established brands. We discussed the "*Marks Electrical Difference*" and the company's best-in-class Trustpilot ratings in more detail in our previous report.

MRK's valuation appears undemanding relative to a peer group of other online homeware distributors and electrical goods retailers. Consequently, there is good scope for the rating of the company's shares to increase.

This report argues that on improved ratings a fair value for the shares is 150p.

Financials & valuation

Relative valuation

Relative valuation tables for Marks Electrical Group are included in Figures 5 and 6. We draw together two groups. Figure 5 shows MRK relative to its two primary online competitors in the MDA space. Figure 6 draws valuation comparisons with a broader group of web-based consumer goods companies.

Importantly, in the case of Figure 5 we highlight the potential for MRK to trade at a premium valuation to both AO and Currys based on the superior objective feedback received for its offering as evidenced by its higher Trustpilot rankings, and the unique service qualities which we identified at initiation.

In our view, MRK's single site operating model, its location and following day service offer give the company superior traction while reducing risk. MRK is also both profitable and capable of generating substantial cash, which is reflected in a stated 20% pay-out dividend policy.

Figure 5 - Relative valuation - online MDA providers

	Share price (p)	Mkt cap £m	Net Debt £m	EV £m	Sales 2022 £m	EV/ Sales x	EBITDA 2022 £m	EV/ EBITDA x	EPS 2022 p	EPS 2023 p	P/E 2022 x	P/E 2023 x	DPS 2022 p	Yld (%)
AO World (AO)	88	478	-11	409	1,599	0.3	11.8	34.6	-4.0	-2.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Currys (CURY)	95	1,114	863	1,925	9,876	0.2	580.0	3.3	11.0	13.0	8.6	7.3	3.0	3.2
Marks Electrical (MRK)	95	100	-4	96	80	1.2	7.2	13.3	4.7	5.3	20.2	17.9	0.8	0.9
Average						0.5		17.1			14.4	12.6		2.0

Source: ADVFN, Market Screener, ED

Relative to the broader group of web-based consumer goods companies shown in Figure 6, MRK trades beneath the average of this peer group on EV/sales and P/E grounds. While EV/EBITDA represents a premium and the dividend yield is lower, we note the scope for operational gearing to substantially boost profitability at MRK going forward and the ample cash headroom to raise the dividend pay-out ratio.

MRK's combination of market share gains, track record, and sizable headroom to add market share, places the company in a strong position when valued against a number of online companies. It can be argued that the scope for superior sales revenue growth merits significantly higher multiples in terms of EV/sales and EV/EBITDA as well as P/E. (Ocado is stripped out from the profitability measures due ongoing expectations of losses at EBITDA and EPS level).

In our opinion, MRK is an ambitious company at the relatively early stage of its achievable market share gains journey. As a result, what might normally be considered "punchy" multiples seem appropriate.

We base our fair value of 150p on the expected outcome for FY2023 which begins in April 2022. At 150p the relevant FY2023 EV/sales multiple would be 1.9x, EV/EBITDA 18.7x and a 28.2x P/E. (Note that in our relative valuation tables, comparative EV/EBITDA ratios are based on FY2022).

Figure 6 - Relative valuation - online consumer goods providers

	Share price	Shares	Mkt cap	Net debt	EV	Sales 2022	EV/sales	EBITDA 2022	EV/EBITDA	EPS 2022	EPS 2023	P/E 2022	P/E 2023	DPS 2022	Yld
	(pence)	(m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(x)	(£m)	(x)	(p)	(p)	(x)	(x)	(p)	(%)
ASOS (ASC)	1588	100	1583	-118	1465	4303	0.3	273	5.4	75.0	112.0	21.2	14.2	n/a	n/a
B&M (BME)	544	1001	5451	1999	7450	4758	1.6	821	9.1	40.0	39.0	13.6	14.0	20.0	3.7
Boohoo (BOO)	90	1239	1112	-75	1037	1979	0.5	126	8.2	2.0	4.0	44.9	22.4	n/a	n/a
Dunelm (DNLM)	1038	202	2100	120	2220	1509	1.5	287	7.7	80.0	81.0	13.0	12.8	42.0	4.0
Marks Electrical (MRK)	95	105	100	-4	96	80	1.2	7.2	13.3	4.7	5.3	20.2	17.9	0.8	0.9
Next (NXT)	6034	127	7642	1774	9416	4792	2.0	1161	8.1	525	554.0	11.5	10.9	241	4.0
Ocado (OCDO)	1244	741	9221	901	10122	2875	3.5	52	nmf	-42	-33	nmf	nmf	n/a	n/a
Pets at Home (PETS)	328	500	1642	364	2006	1296	1.5	269	7.5	25.0	27.0	13.1	12.2	11.0	3.3
Average							1.6		9.6			21.3	16.4		3.1

Source: ADVFN, Market Screener, ED

Financial forecasts

Rapid sales growth for three consecutive years is a standout feature of our financial forecasts. The 44% revenue increase in FY2022 is in line with previous expectations.

Our revenue projections are based on assumed growth for MRK's core MDA, and more recently TV markets. To these we apply a market share assumption which is expected to grow from its relatively low bases in both categories.

Going forward, we forecast 19.5% gross margins, which is in line with company guidance. MRK expects to reinvest 5% in its brand marketing on a sustainable basis. However, there is scope for this percentage to be increased in the event of scale benefits from sales growth exceeding expectations. Stated dividend policy going forward is a 20% pay-out ratio.

The strength of MRK's balance sheet should be noted. The company paid down all of its bank debt with a £1,538k repayment that was reported in its interim results statement, released on 18th November 2021. The FY2022 balance sheet will be published on 7th June 2022 at which time we expect to initiate forecasts that reflect the finalised post-IPO financial structure of the group. Net cash was £3.9m at end-FY2022.

Free cash flow is expected to be positive and become increasingly so as revenue and profits increase. Capital expenditure of 1.5-2% of sales revenue is expected to be a sustainable underlying outcome.

Figures 8, 9 and 10 include our forecasts for the group's revenue model, income statement, balance sheet and free cash flow respectively. The company will release full year FY2022 results on 7th June 2022. **We summarise this year's financial calendar below.**

Figure 7 - Financial calendar FY2023

7 June	Full year results announcement FY2022 (12 months to 31st March 2022)
11 August	Annual General Meeting
18 November	Half year results announcement FY2023 (12 months to 30th September 2022)

Source: Company

Figure 8 - Income statement

31 March y/e, £000s	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022E	2023E	2024E
Revenue	31,247	31,500	55,984	80,470	96,896	118,092
Change	0.0%	0.8%	77.7%	43.7%	20.4%	21.9%
Cost of sales	-25,411	-26,381	-44,064	-64,778	-78,001	-95,064
Gross profit	5,836	5,119	11,920	15,692	18,895	23,028
Gross margin (%)	18.7%	16.3%	21.3%	19.5%	19.5%	19.5%
Other operating income	26	159	165	173	182	191
Advertising & marketing	-2,296	-1,772	-1,711	-4,050	-4,845	-5,905
Other operating expenses	-2,133	-2,637	-3,550	-5,560	-7,190	-8,385
Total operating expenses	-4,429	-4,409	-5,261	-9,610	-12,035	-14,289
As % sales revenue						
Advertising & marketing	-7.3%	-5.6%	-3.1%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%
Other operating expenses	-6.8%	-8.4%	-6.3%	-6.9%	-7.4%	-7.1%
Total operating expenses	-14.2%	-14.0%	-9.4%	-11.9%	-12.4%	-12.1%
EBITDA (adjusted)	1,882	1,280	7,699	7,155	8,242	10,392
EBITDA margin adj.	6.0%	4.1%	13.8%	8.9%	8.5%	8.8%
Depreciation	-420	-506	-827	-900	-1,200	-1,463
Operating profit (adjusted)	1,404	964	6,776	6,255	7,042	8,930
Operating margin adj	4.5%	3.1%	12.1%	7.8%	7.3%	7.6%
Finance expense	-96	-116	-70	-100	-70	-70
Pre-tax profit (adjusted)	1,308	848	6,706	6,155	6,972	8,860
Taxation (adjusted)	-149	-158	-1,458	-1,262	-1,394	-2,215
Tax rate (adjusted) (%)	-11.4%	-18.6%	-21.7%	-20.5%	-20.0%	-25.0%
Net income (adjusted)	1,159	690	5,248	4,893	5,577	6,645
EPS (adjusted) (pence)	1.1	0.7	5.0	4.7	5.3	6.3
DPS (pence)				0.8	1.1	1.3

Source: ED estimates, Company historic data

Figure 9 - Balance sheet

31 March y/e, £000s	2019A	2020A	2021A
Assets			
Non-current assets			
Investments	665	746	1,146
Property, plant & equipment	5,268	5,091	5,623
Right-of-use assets	445	418	779
Total non-current assets	6,378	6,255	7,548
Current assets			
Inventories	4,772	4,322	11,432
Trade and other receivables	1,968	1,642	2,839
Cash and cash equivalents	670	179	1,493
Total current assets	7,410	6,143	15,764
Total assets	13,788	12,398	23,312
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5,155	4,592	8,303
Corporation tax liabilities	265	244	1,557
Borrowings	1,592	961	233
Lease liabilities	332	137	330
Total current liabilities	7,344	5,934	10,423
Non-current liabilities			
Other payables	512	197	17
Borrowings	1,743	1,529	1,304
Lease liabilities	54	185	422
Deferred tax liabilities	368	383	618
Provisions for liabilities	155	155	155
Total non-current liabilities	2,832	2,449	2,516
Total liabilities	10,176	8,383	12,939
Issued capital and reserves			
Share capital	6	6	6
Revaluation surplus	573	573	1,235
Retained earnings	3,033	3,436	9,132
Total equity	3,612	4,015	10,373
Total liabilities and equity	13,788	12,398	23,312

Source: Company historic data and Equity Development estimates

Figure 10 - Free cash flow

31st March year-end	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022E	2023E	2024E
All figures in £'000s						
Cash from operating activities	1,042	268	6,045	5,457	5,772	7,397
Changes in operating assets and liabilities						
Inventories	-381	450	-7,110	-2,568	-3,000	-2,500
Receivables	-78	326	-1,197	839	-408	-527
Payables	369	-759	3,513	4,399	2,590	3,341
Cash from operations	952	285	1,251	8,128	4,953	7,712
Corporation tax paid	-82	-297	-66	-2,042	-1,394	-2,215
Net cash from operating activities	870	-12	1,185	6,086	3,559	5,497
Cash flows from investing activities						
Property, plant & equipment - purchases	-218	-57	-216	-1,408	-1,696	-2,067
Property, plant & equipment - disposals	48	156	26			
Net cash from investing activities	-170	99	-190	-1,408	-1,696	-2,067
Dividends received		42				
IPO proceeds				4,481		
IPO costs				-2,500		
Interest paid	-75	-105	-42	-100	-70	-70
Net cash from finance activities	-75	-63	-42	1,881	-70	-70
Free cash flow before dividends	550	-81	911	6,458	1,723	3,290
Dividends paid	-352	-315		-3,883	-1,231	-1,186
Free cash flow after dividends	198	-396	911	2,575	492	2,104
Note item:						
Repayment of borrowings				-1,537		

Source: Company historic data and Equity Development estimates



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