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New Highs in Big-Caps: 3 Out of 4 Ain't Bad

Some large-cap firms appear to be pushing through breakout points.

If you scan for U.S. companies with top-quartile market cap presenting very high one-week total return, return vs. index and price high, then screen for the highest one-month max increase, and lastly filter for new high and new relative high for the week, you come up with four names: **American Pharmaceutical** (APPX, \$38.85), **Choice Hotels** (CHH, \$42.05), **USX-US Steel** (X, \$47.51) and **Sandisk** (SNDK, \$64.20).

Am Pharm looks like it's bouncing nicely off its \$33 support level, Choice is soaring to new all-time highs on an almost daily basis and USX bottomed around \$35 in November, hit the breaks at \$50 in December, and now appears poised to break through that barrier.

Sandisk's recent run-up may be too much of a good thing; it peaked around \$65 in November, dipped, and now seems to have stalled there without a strong trend pushing through. Still, not a bad run for a stock that's been bouncing around the \$20-\$30 range for a year and a half. Maybe it's time to go short on this one.

Cheap and Churn-able

Look for U.S. stocks in the third quartile of market cap with the highest level of one-month increase and one-week total return, then see which of them have turned around investor perception by scanning only for those with middling one-month total returns and laggard 12-month total returns. You'll find four small-cap stocks each bargain-priced under \$10.

For the past seven years, **Calgon Carbon** (CCC, \$5.75) has bounced around the \$5 range until, dramatically, intermittently, doubling in price before dropping back down to the near-pennystock range again. It already did that once this year and appears poised to do so again. **Frontier Air** (FRNT, \$9.31) looks like it's ready to take flight again into the \$20 range. **Private Media Group** (PRVT, \$2.31) is in a similar position, albeit at half-scale. And **Wolverine Tube** (WLV, \$5.07), which had been bumping around all-time lows, looks like it could well be changing course; don't be surprised if it doubles or even triples in 2006.

ETFs: Extremely Tired Flyers?

There are four U.S.-based ETFs that have seen above-median max increases for the month and the year. Not surprisingly, two are energy-focused and two track emerging markets. Are **Holdr Oil Service** (OIH, \$128.17), **Ishares MSCI South Africa** (EZA, \$97.86), **Ishares MSCI South Korea Index** (EWY, \$44.49) and **Vanguard Energy Vipers** (VDE, \$71.50) almost out of gas?

