



Who's Really Buying Stocks Right Now? (Hint: It's Not You)

You don't need millions of investors for the market to go up.

You just need one buyer big enough to drown out everyone else.

And right now, that buyer isn't hedge funds.

It isn't pension funds.

It isn't you.

It's corporate America... buying its own stock.

Over the past several years, U.S. corporations have spent **trillions of dollars** repurchasing shares. That's real money hitting the tape. Real demand. Real upward pressure on prices. It's one of the quiet reasons markets can feel "supported" even when investors themselves are cautious.

The pace is brisk to start 2026. Here's the weekly buyback activity and new announcements:

Week Ended	New Stock Buybacks
3-Dec	3,701/14
10-Dec	34,128/36
17-Dec	18,625/32
24-Dec	5,950/20
31-Dec	498/6
7-Jan	6,064/11
14-Jan	10,256/8
21-Jan	6,200/8
28-Jan	20,107/16
4-Feb	70,166/38
11-Feb	40,804/52
18-Feb	29,019/47

Furthermore, the corporate buy/sell ratio (buybacks + mergers - new offerings) is elevated relative to the past 15 years. Simply put, buybacks have been a huge driver of stock prices!



But here's the uncomfortable question about buybacks most people never stop to ask:

**Is the market rising because investors are optimistic...
or because companies are engineering demand for their own shares?**

Buybacks subtly change the optics of the market.

When a company reduces its share count, earnings per share go up—even if the business itself doesn't improve. Fewer slices of the same pie make each slice look bigger. Headlines get friendlier. Valuations look cheaper. Investors feel safer than they should.

That doesn't make buybacks evil. In many cases, they're rational capital allocation.

But in aggregate, buybacks quietly become a structural support for the market.

Here's what almost never gets talked about:

Companies tend to buy back the most stock when times are good. Cash flows look strong. Confidence is high. Executives feel pressure to "return capital" to shareholders. ***Ironically, that's often when valuations are already stretched.***

And when conditions tighten...

When uncertainty rises...

When cash suddenly feels scarce...

Buybacks are one of the first things to get cut.

So the market loses its biggest buyer at precisely the worst possible moment.

This is why buybacks tend to peak near market highs and fade near market lows. Not because CEOs are great market timers—but because corporate behavior follows human behavior. Optimistic at the top. Defensive at the bottom.

That creates a hidden fragility in the market.

Prices feel supported. Pullbacks feel shallow. Volatility feels muted. But part of that stability is artificial. It's propped up by corporate treasuries recycling profits into their own shares.

Remove that bid, and the market suddenly has to discover what "real demand" looks like.

Another uncomfortable truth:

Buybacks concentrate risk.

Fewer shares outstanding means each remaining share represents more exposure to the same underlying business risks. If revenues stall, margins compress, or debt costs

rise, the downside hits harder on a per-share basis. The same financial engineering that flatters returns on the way up can magnify pain on the way down.

This doesn't mean you should hate buybacks.

It means you shouldn't confuse **financial engineering** with **fundamental strength**.

Markets can float on buybacks for a long time.

They can even look healthy while participation thins underneath.

But when that structural bid weakens, markets often discover how shallow the pool of true buyers really is.

Some of the most violent drawdowns in market history didn't begin with panic.

They began with something quieter:

The biggest buyer simply stepping away.

And suddenly, prices had to fall far enough to find someone else willing to buy.

Now here's the part most investors miss...

Not all buybacks are created equal.

Some buybacks create long-term shareholder value.

Others are cosmetic financial engineering.

One is funded by real free cash flow, done at sensible valuations, and paired with strong reinvestment in the business.

The other is often funded with debt, executed at inflated prices, and designed to prop up earnings per share while quietly weakening the balance sheet.

To the casual investor, both look the same.

A press release says:

"Company Announces \$5 Billion Buyback Program."

The stock pops.

The headlines sound bullish.

But Wall Street doesn't stop at the headline.

Professionals immediately ask:

- Is this buyback funded by true free cash flow—or new debt?
- Is the stock actually cheap—or richly valued?
- Are insiders selling while the company is buying?

- Is management investing enough in the business—or starving the future to flatter today’s stock price?

Most individual investors never see this layer of analysis.

They react to the announcement.

Institutions react to the quality behind the announcement.

That’s why some stocks with aggressive buybacks quietly underperform long after the applause fades.

This is exactly why my *FAST Model* doesn’t just note whether a company is buying back stock.

It analyzes the **quality of the buyback**.

Subscribers can see buyback scores across **1,500 stocks**—instantly spotting which programs pass the sniff test and which ones don’t. You can tell the difference between shareholder-friendly capital allocation and short-term financial engineering designed to dress up the numbers.

This is the kind of forensic work Wall Street does behind closed doors.

FAST
Forensic Accounting Stock Tracker
“CSI For Your Stock Portfolio”

Rank	Rank Change	Ticker	Stock Name	Overall Rank	Buybacks	Earnings Quality	Momentum	Sentiment
Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8	Column 9
51	51	AIT	Applied Industrial Technologies, Inc.	A	B-	B	B	A
52	16	NVDA	NVIDIA Corp.	A	C-	A-	A-	A-
53	-41	SFM	Sprouts Farmers Market, Inc.	A	A-	A	C-	B
54	13	UHS	Universal Health Services, Inc.	A	A	B	B	B
825	224	WFRD	Weatherford International plc	D+	B-	C	D	C
826	398	AA	Alcoa Corp.	D+	D	B	B	D-
827	25	REYN	Reynolds Consumer Products, Inc.	D+	D	B-	D-	B+
828	206	HSY	The Hershey Co.	D+	D-	C	D+	B+
829	86	FBNC	First Bancorp (North Carolina)	D+	D-	C-	B	C
830	323	FSLR	First Solar, Inc.	D+	D	C+	B	D
831	-389	POWL	Powell Industries, Inc.	D+	D	A-	C	D-
832	32	FCN	FTI Consulting, Inc.	D+	A+	D-	D-	C

FAST brings that same institutional-quality research to individual investors in a way that’s simple, visual, and usable in the real world.

No accounting degree required.

No spreadsheets.

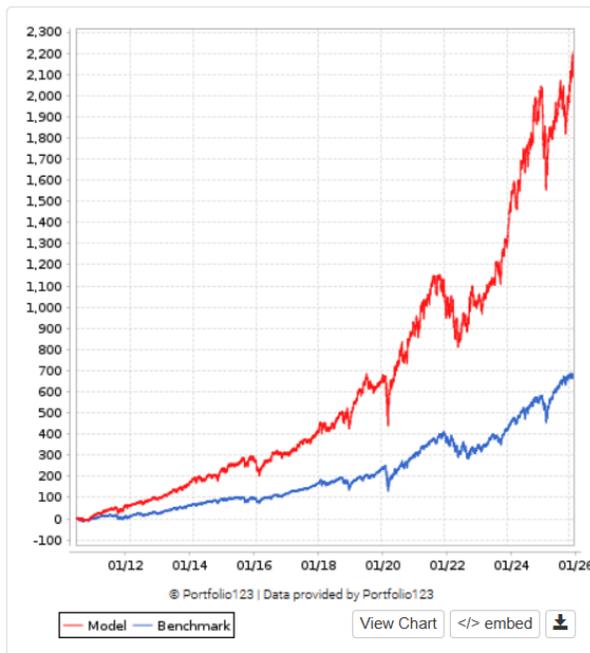
No guessing which headline matters.

Just clarity.

Because in a market quietly supported by buybacks...
the edge doesn't come from knowing buybacks exist.

It comes from knowing **which buybacks deserve your capital—and which ones should make you cautious.**

Since April, 2010 the top 8 stocks in the *FAST Model* have generated returns of 2,207% compared with 677% for the S&P 500.



General Info

PDF Report

Total Market Value (inc. Cash)	2,307,668.12
Cash	3,653.85
Number of Positions	8
Last Trades (2)	02/17/26
Period	04/01/10 - 02/20/26
Sizing Method	Static Weight
Next Rebalance (Every Week)	02/22/26 Tomorrow
Mode	Manual
PIT Method - Prelim	Use
Benchmark	S&P 500 (SPY:USA)
Universe	S&P1500 CompositeCap (IVV+IJH+IJR)
Ranking System	FAST Ranking

Quick Stats as of 2/20/2026

Total Return	2,207.67%
Benchmark Return	676.87%
Active Return	1,530.80%
Annualized Return	21.82%
Annual Turnover	1,308.85%
Max Drawdown	-30.94%
Benchmark Max Drawdown	-33.72%
Overall Winners	(1016/1672) 60.00%
Sharpe Ratio	1.19
Correlation with S&P 500 (SPY:USA)	0.81

To learn more about *FAST*, use the link below!

<https://hsdent.com/product/fast-profit/>

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