

Choice of Discount Rate

Discussion Plan

- **Basic Theory and Practice**
- **A common practical approach:**
 - **WACC = Weighted Average Cost of Capital**
- **Look ahead:**
 - **CAPM = Capital Asset Pricing Model**

Choice of Discount Rate: Basic Theory

- **The Principle**
- **Consequences**
- **Practice**
- **Application to Government**
- **Inflation**
- **Is Critical!**

Choice of DR: Principle

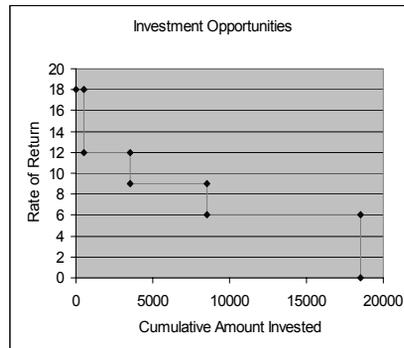
- **DR should reflect rate at which money can increase in productive investments**
= productivity of capital
- **An empirical definition -- answer depends on circumstances**
 - Are there good opportunities? What are they?
 - If on desert island, no investments possible, DR = 0
- **Test: What is rate at which current investments are producing, at margin?**

Example of Application (1 -- Opportunities)

- **A person could invest up to**
 - \$ 3,000 in an enterprise to get 12%
 - \$ 10,000 in saving account at 6%
- **This person also has loans, and can repay up to:**
 - \$ 500 at store 18%
 - \$ 5,000 for tuition 9%
- **What are investment opportunities?**
- **Important to recognize that paying off a debt is a form of investment -- it leads to a similar increase in cash flow compared to new investment**

Example of Application (2 -- Calculation)

	Investment	Return %
Projects	500	18
	3000	12
	5000	9
	10000	6
Cumulative	0	18
	500	18
	501	12
	3500	12
	3501	9
	8500	9
	8501	6
	18500	6
	18501	0



What is the DR for 400? For 6500?

Answer: (a) 18% (b) = alternative return 6500
 $= (90 + 360 + 270)/6500 = 10.9\%$

Consequences of Principle

- DR peculiar to situation of decision-making unit
 - depends on opportunities
- DR not a precise measure
 - except in classroom examples, exact return difficult to obtain precisely; ± 1 or 2% quite acceptable
- DR \geq interest rate paid
 - repaying debt always one possible investment, so DR at least equals interest
 - actually you borrow because: value of money > interest
- Since DR = minimum acceptable profitability, NPV > 0 indicates a good project (may not be best)

DR Used in Practice

- **A nice round number, generally**
 - recognition of imprecision in measurement
 - For example 7% that US Government has used, or 2.5% (real) it uses in 2003 for 10-year projects
- **Where rate must be defended legally, as to regulatory groups - by precise formula**
 - not subjective
 - illusory precision -- not accurate
- **Research, industry reports indicate available real profitability, with no inflation \approx 10 to 15%/year worldwide**

Application to Government

- **Where does Government Money come from?**
 - Taxes: One of Government's possible investments is to reduce taxes
 - Thus, from national perspective, Government DR should equal that of private sector (thus around 10% to 15%)
- **Recall, DR to be used for economic investments.**
 - Many government actions not measured in money (e.g.: defense, justice, ...)
- **DR not appropriate to decide if schools should be built at all; is appropriate for choice of design**

US Govt base position on Discount rate (OMB Circular A-94, Oct 1992)

1. Base-Case Analysis.

Constant-dollar benefit-cost analyses of proposed investments and regulations should report net present value and other outcomes determined using a **real discount rate of 7 percent**. This rate approximates the marginal pretax rate of return on an average investment in the private sector in recent years. Significant changes in this rate will be reflected in future updates of this Circular.
[R de N note: statement about average return is not widely held]

2. Other Discount Rates.

Analyses should show the **sensitivity of the discounted net present value** and other outcomes to variations in the discount rate. The importance of these alternative calculations will depend on the specific economic characteristics of the program under analysis. For example, in analyzing a regulatory proposal whose main cost is to reduce business investment, net present value should also be calculated using a higher discount rate than 7 percent.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a094/a094.html>

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Discount Rate and Inflation

- **Issue is Comparability**
 - the idea is to place all B, C on current basis of value
- **Two factors**
 - Productivity, p % / year
 - Change in purchasing power, i % / year
 - Inflation, same item costs more each period
 - Deflation, same item costs *less* each period
- **Procedure depends on whether B, C stated in constant or changing purchasing power**
 - If constant: $r = p$ this is “real” return
 - If varying: $r = p + i$ this is “nominal” return

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Examples: Which DR?

1) Build Bridge, Tolls \$1/car

$r = p + i$ Tolls unlikely to adjust with inflation

Revenues are in “nominal” terms. If inflation were taken into account, they would be decreasing by i %/year in real terms

2) Build Hospital, Fee \$100/bed/day

$r = p$ Rates here (in US) do adjust with inflation, therefore you get \$ equal to current \$. You do analysis using “real” revenues, that you expect will be adjusted upward according to inflation.

Examples: Which DR?

3) Buy New Furnace, Save 2000 gallons fuel / year

$r = p$ So long as fuel costs vary with inflation

Same rationale as above. You do the analysis in “real” terms, and use the “real” DR.

If you had tried to account for inflation in your estimates of future savings (thus looking at nominal returns, you would want to use a “nominal” DR.

Note that US Government publishes DR for both “real” and “nominal” cases (In OMB Circular A-94, mentioned earlier.

US Government Guidance on Inflation

7. Treatment of Inflation. Future inflation is highly uncertain. Analysts should avoid having to make an assumption about the general rate of inflation whenever possible.

a. **Real or Nominal Values.** Economic analyses are often most readily accomplished using *real* or *constant-dollar* values, i.e., by measuring benefits and costs in units of stable purchasing power. (Such estimates may reflect expected future changes in relative prices however, where there is a reasonable basis for estimating such changes.) Where future benefits and costs are given in *nominal* terms, i.e., in terms of the future purchasing power of the dollar, the analysis should use these values rather than convert them to constant dollars as, for example, in the case of lease-purchase analysis.

Nominal and real values must not be combined in the same analysis. Logical consistency requires that analysis be conducted either in constant dollars or in terms of nominal values. This may require converting some nominal values to real values, or vice versa.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a094/a094.html>

Choice of DR Critical

- **DR indicates if any investment is minimally acceptable**
- **Ranking of investments changes with DR which are:**
 - less capital intensive
 - shorter lives (example: VW vs. Mercedes)
- **Choice of DR very political. Low rates favored by**
 - project enthusiasts
 - believers in government control

Part 2 : A Common Practical Method

Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC)

How do Companies Estimate Cost of Money?

- **Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC) is a common starting point.**
- **WACC is based on**
 - average cost of money – an aggregate measure,
 - estimated returns expected by investors, NOW
- **BUT, limitations on use as Discount Rate**
 - May represent a minimum rate
 - Does not reflect Opportunity Cost
 - Does not account for RISK of project

Issues to Address Now

- **How do companies raise money?**
- **What do investors expect?**
- **Mechanics of Calculations for WACC**
- **Uses and Mis-uses of WACC**
- **Treatment of risk comes later**

How do Companies Raise Money?

- **Debt -- they borrow money**
 - General bank loans and bond issues
 - Company uses immediate proceeds, and repays over time with interest
- **Equity -- they sell shares in the company**
 - Company uses proceeds
 - Shareholders gain ownership in the company
 - Shareholders expect future earnings and growth
 - **Note: Most trades of stock occur in “secondary market”, company gets money only once**

What do Investors Expect?

- **Holders of Debt and Equity expect to make money**
 - **Explicit for Debt:** Equals interest rate
 - **Implicit for Equity:** Investors anticipate combination of growth and earnings, realized as dividends or higher stock prices
- **To Company, these expectations represent cost of money**
 - **Either repay loan with interest**
 - **Or give up part of future earnings and stock growth**

What Affects Cost of Money?

- **Confidence in Company**
 - **Either interest company pays to borrow**
 - **Or value of Shares in company**
- **Factors that Affect Confidence**
 - **Start-up vs. Well-established company**
 - **Risky vs. Safe Industries or Regions of World**
 - **Weak vs. Strong company (financially or strategically)**
 - **Other?**

Calculating WACC (1)

- **Basic Idea: Average Expected Return**
- **First-order formula:**
 - $WACC = R \text{ for equity (Equity \%)} + R \text{ on Bonds (Bond \%)}$
- **Return on Equity difficult to estimate**
 - Estimate future growth and earnings, based on track record (if any) and prospects
 - Examine historical returns for similar companies in similar situations
- **More sophisticated formulas take into account local tax issues, not relevant to current presentation of principle**

Simple Example: Start-up Company

- **Hypothetical case**
 - First money raising effort
 - No outstanding debts
- **Equity:**
 - Will sell \$10 million worth of shares; estimated return = 25%
- **Debt:**
 - Will issue \$5 million in debt, will pay 10% interest a year
 - Note: Bonds cheaper than stock -- WHY?
- **Total money raised = debt + equity = \$15 million**
- **$WACC = 25\% (2/3) + 10\% (1/3) = 20\%$**

Calculating WACC (2)

- **For Established Companies**
 - Procedure similar in concept,
 - more difficult to do because of variety of securities
- **Estimated debt and equity returns estimated from current MARKET prices of securities**
 - A \$1000 bond paying 10% on face value may, for example, be selling at \$1200 so that its actual return = $(10\%) \cdot 1000/1200 = 8.33\%$
 - Total value of Equity = “market capitalization” = (share price)(number of shares outstanding)

Calculating WACC (3)

$$\text{WACC} = r_{\text{equity}} (E/V) + r_{\text{debt}} (D/V)$$

D, E = current market value of debt and equity

V = D + E = sum of debt and equity value

r_{debt} = current rate of borrowing

r_{equity} = current expected rate of return on stock

- **Again, return on equity includes earnings and growth**

Simple Example: Established Company

- **Company has a proven record**
- **Current market value of its securities**
 - Debt = 50 million; Annual payments = 4 million
 - Stock = 100 million; expected return = 20%
- **WACC = Equity R (Equity %) + Bond R (Bond %)**
= 20% (2/3) + 8% (1/3) = 16%
- **Represents Current Average:**
 - Investor expectations (stock less risky => lower return)
 - Cost of capital company could expect

Potential Use and Mis-Use of WACC as DR

- **Uses as a Metric**
 - Performance: cost of money over time
 - Comparison: within and between companies in industry
- **Use as a reasonable discount rate**
 - if project is an average investment for company
 - example: the 10,000th McDonald store
- **Often, WACC is an inappropriate discount rate**
 - Many projects not average (some more risky than others)
 - WACC is cost of money, not necessarily opportunity cost
- **Will explore these issues more deeply later on**

WACC Summary

- **WACC is an average cost of raising money; proportional average of investor expectations**
- **Useful metric for some activities**
- **A starting point for project analyses**
- **HOWEVER, use WACC as DR with caution**
 - Is the investment “typical” for the organization?
 - If not, WACC is probably not applicable

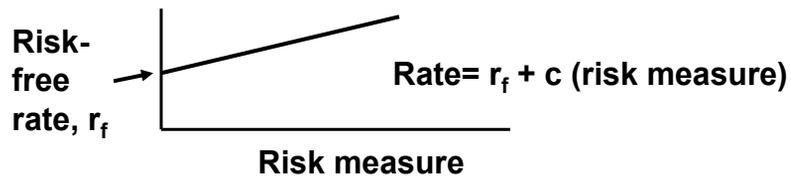
Part 3 – Look Ahead

Capital Asset Pricing Model

(CAPM)

CAPM Overview

- CAPM adjusts discount rate for risk.
- Basic idea: More risk => more return



- Will be covered when we get to Uncertainty...