Real Options

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Outline for Real Options

• Major topics
  – Real options defined
  – Examples of real options plentiful in everyday life
  – Features of several generic real options
  – Comparisons of valuation in practice

• Goals
  – Increase ability to recognize real options
  – Compare and contrast some different approaches
to valuation and use of real options
Option Definition Revisited

- A right, but not an obligation...
  - Asymmetric returns
  - Exercise only if advantageous
  - Acquired at some cost

- to take some action...
  - Often buy or sell something

- now, or in the future...
  - Financial options generally have a limited time
  - Design Options may not have limits

- for a pre-determined price.
  - Price of action separate from option acquisition cost
  - Can be compared to instantaneous benefit of action

Real Options Defined

- Projects often contain option-like flexibilities
  - Rights, not obligations
  - Providing Asymmetric Returns, Exercise only if advantageous

- These flexibilities are “real” options

- Traditional NPV analysis has ignored these options
  - Assumes decisions not possible or are pre-determined
  - Disregards the effect of intelligent management

- “Real Options” analysis includes valuation of flexibility
  - Applies some form of Options Analysis

- Systematically increases value of projects, especially for development projects with greater uncertainties
  - Ex: R & D, new technologies, etc.
Real Options are Common

- **Examples:**

  - **Lease car or equipment with option to buy**
    - Person with lease decides at end of contract
    - Action is to buy at end of lease (or to walk away)
    - Lease period defined up-front (typically 2-3 years)
    - Purchase price defined in lease contract

  - **Flexible manufacturing processes**
    - Ability to select mode of operation (e.g. heater that burns gas or oil)
    - Switching between modes is action
    - Continuous opportunity (can switch at any time)
    - Switching modes often entails some cost (e.g. set-up time)

A Common Option: Insurance

- **Insurance policy**
  - Small annual premium protects from potential losses
  - Payoff equals amount of damage (minus a deductible)
  - Claim is filed (option exercised) if damage total exceeds deductible

- **Payoff is different from value**
  - On average, expected net payoff to policyholder is less than premium
  - Otherwise insurance companies go bankrupt
  - People still buy insurance, because they are risk averse
  - Implies value exceeds expected payoff
A Payoff Diagram for Insurance

- Maximum payoff is insured value minus deductible
- Minimum payoff is zero
- Payoff resembles put option

Boundary on Insurance Value

- Insurance premium approximates value
  - Willingness to pay for protection
  - Reflects value to least risk-averse policyholder
- Can identify boundaries on the premium
  - Upper bound is value of apartment less deductible
    - Even if total loss is certain, this is the limit of the payoff
    - Since damage is uncertain, premium will be less
  - Lower bound is zero
    - Insurance companies are in business to make money
- If insuring already damaged property were possible
  - Lower bound would exceed immediate payoff (exercise value)
Estimate of Insurance Value

Features of Insurance

- Payoff increases with
  - Reduction in value of property
  - Decreases in Deductible (increases in strike price)
  - Time Frame of Policy
  - Likelihood of Damage Occurring

- Same Trends as a put option

- Insurance is like a put option on the insured property
Several Generic Real Options

- **Call-like**
  - Capture benefits from increases in project value
  - Exercise typically involves putting more money into project
  - Exercise when expectations of positive return increase

- **Put-like**
  - Insure against losses from decreased project value
  - Exercise may involve short-term costs or salvage value
  - Exercise when expectations of positive return decrease

- **Compound (nested)**
  - Projects might contain multiple options
  - Exercise decisions based on overall profit maximization

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Call-like Real Options

- **Waiting to Invest**
  - A project might be profitable today, but even better tomorrow
  - Leaving open the opportunity to invest is like holding a call
  - Influences include uncertainty resolution and foregone profits
  - Choice based on: Max [immediate investment, waiting, 0]

- **Expand**
  - Accelerate effort or broaden level of involvement
  - Allows greater participation in upside by increasing exposure
  - Cost of expansion acts like strike price
  - Choice based on: Max [status quo, expanded project]

- **Restart Temporarily Closed Operations**
  - Similar to waiting to invest or expand (a special case)
  - Choice based on: Max [remain closed, re-open]
Put Like Real Options

- Abandon
  - Ability to halt further investment eliminates further exposure
  - Abandoning might include shut-down costs and salvage values
  - Choice based on: Max [continuing, abandoning]

- Contract
  - Decelerate or narrow involvement
  - Reduces participation level and exposure to potential losses
  - Often incur short-term scale down costs
  - Choice based on: Max [status quo, contracted]

- Temporarily Shut Down Operations
  - A special case of contraction
  - Eliminates exposure to variation, but might incur shut-down costs
  - Choice based on: Max [status quo, temporarily shut-down]

Compound or Nested Options

- Combinations of Options
  - Many real options exist simultaneously
  - For Example: can often choose between abandon, contract, or temporarily shut
  - Complex problem because value of multiple options not additive
  - Values of above listed options interdependent
  - Exercise may render others valueless (abandon ends project)

- Switching Between Modes of Operation (example: dual fuel burner case)
  - Flexible systems contain an infinite series of options
  - Allow continual switching between modes of operation
  - If switching modes has a cost, it acts like a strike price

- For compound options, must value as system
Two Types of Real Options

- Those “real” because, in contrast to financial options, they concern projects, they are “ON” projects
  - EX: the option to open a mine (Antamina case)
  - These do not concern themselves with system design
  - Most common in literature

- Those “real” because they concern the design elements of system, they are “IN” projects
  - EX: options for staging of system of communication satellites
  - These require detailed understanding of system
  - Most interesting to system designers

Financial options | Options ON projects | Options IN projects | These need knowledge of system

Real Options

Real Options “on” projects

- These are financial options, but on technical things

- They treat technology as a “black box”

- Example: Antamina mine
  - Successful bidder acquires the option to develop the mine after a two-year exploration period
  - Uncertainty concerns amount of ores and their future price, which combine to determine uncertainty in revenue and thus in value of mine
  - Option is a Financial Call Option (on Mine as asset)

- Differs from Financial Option because
  - Much longer period than financial option
  - Special effort needed to model future value of asset, it can’t be projected simply from data on past performance
Real Options “in” projects

• These create options, by designing technical system

• They require understanding of technology

• Example: Communications Satellites
  – Designers can create options for expansion of capacity by way they configure original satellites and their constellation
  – Option requires technical intervention in order to create and to exercise

• Differs from other “real” Options because
  – Special effort needed to model feasible flexibility within system itself

Choosing Valuation Method in Practice

• Compare efforts at two companies
  – Merck: used financial approach to options
  – Kodak: used decision analysis

• Examine Factors that influence Choice
  – Type of Information available
  – Structure of Industry, possibility of comparable situations
  – People in organization doing analysis: engineers or finance?

• What is goal?
  – Judgement: finding a precise price to pay?
  – Choice: Are we better off with option than without?

• Finding:
  – Valuation is a balance between “precision” and “practicality”
Real Options at Merck

- Merck values real options using financial framework
  - Black-Scholes formula
  - Other models for support (monte-carlo simulation)
  - Applies to variety of areas: R&D, acquisitions, etc...

- Example: Gamma project
  - Options analysis used to value development contract with a biotech company
  - Investment in R&D creates option for future scale-up and commercialization
  - Similar to motivation example in Options Concepts lecture: Investment contract with start-up can be dropped... or company can be bought out research phase successful

Analysis for Merck Case

- Project Gamma as a call option

- Can be exercised after development phase (about two years after time zero) when prospects are more clear

- Valuation procedure
  - Value of project = Capitalized value of projected cash flows acted as underlying asset (stock equivalent)
  - This is equivalent to projected stock market price
  - Volatility based on comparable companies in biotech databas
  - varied between 40-60 percent as part of sensitivity analysis
  - Cost of manufacturing scale-up is strike (exercise) price
  - Time before expiration was varied between 2 to 4 years
  - Risk-free rate based on U.S. Treasuries
Real Options at Kodak

- Kodak has valued real options using decision analysis
  - Understanding financial frameworks informs process
  - Occasionally, might use more strict financial framework

- Example: color printer project
  - R&D project faces technical and market uncertainties
  - Must decide separately if R&D and commercialization are worth pursuing
  - R&D creates option to commercialize
  - Analysis done in R&D/Systems Engineering group

Analysis for Kodak Case

- Color printer project as a real option
  - Project cash-flows serve as basis for valuing asset
  - Commercialization scale-up costs act as strike price
  - Timeframe was two years (1993 - 1995)
  - Discount rate of 12% used
  - Volatility of payoffs implied by considering range of outcomes
Drivers of Choice of Method: Business Structure

- **Merck**
  - Pharmaceutical development process highly regulated by FDA
  - All go through same path to market (10 years))
  - 1000's of candidate drugs provide statistical database
  - Reasonable to speak in terms of an average project and estimate volatility

![Diagram of Drug Development Process]

- **Kodak**
  - Involved in multiple businesses: film, imaging, printing, etc.
  - Product development processes might be similar, but do vary
  - Hard to think of what an average project might be
  - No comparable data available publicly, either from FDA or from range of start-ups in imaging industry (there aren't any)
  - Data needed for a financial analysis not available
Drivers of Choice of Method: Information Availability

- **Merck**: structure yields significant historical information
  - Average drug takes $359 million and 10 years to market
  - 1/10,000 compounds tested becomes a drug
  - Fraction of population with disease X known
  - Successes and failures at each testing step documented and averaged
  - Database of pharmaceutical and biotech stock performance created

- **Kodak**: less homogeneous historical project data
  - Significant variation between and within business units
  - Difficult to assemble relevant databases
  - Projects might vary widely from averages anyway

Goals of Options Valuation at Merck and Kodak

- Companies recognize that project options are valuable
- Mind-set more important than precision
  - Kodak states this explicitly
  - Merck does sensitivity analysis (varies volatility and time)
- Selection of Valuation method based on ease of implementation
  - Merck finance dept: uses financial models, has needed data
  - Kodak R&D dept: uses decision analysis as seems useful
- Hard to argue which approach is better...
  - Objectives, circumstances differ substantially
  - Sensitivity analysis helps to address remaining uncertainties
Real and Financial Options Differ

- Real options may not refer to traded assets
  - The option to change manufacturing process (use a different fuel) rather than to buy a stock

- Thus, possibly no obvious history to value of asset
  - Stocks have a long record of average price and variability

- Real substitutes for this history not obvious
  - If real option concerns traded commodities (such as fuels) a suitable history may be available
  - In other cases it may be quite impractical

- Financial Methods of Valuing Options need adjustment when applied to real systems

Points to Consider in Selecting Valuation Method

- Options theory concerned with pricing
- Decision analysis concerned with developing strategy
- Must consider needs
  - Valuation according to strict finance perspective
  - Setting guidelines for strategic planning
- Should also consider
  - Level of required effort
  - Ease of use -- by developers and clients of analysis
- Beware of false sense of precision
Also Keep in Mind...

- Conditions when financial models work well
  - One or a few uncertainty variables
  - These have an established market price history

- Conditions when decision analysis works well
  - Likelihood, timing of critical uncertainties and decisions understood
  - Information sources focused on individual project
  - Variables without an established price history are important

- Real options approaches can be more compact
  - Decision trees rapidly become bushy

- Significant value in the mind-set
  - Approximate values can be a vast improvement

Summary

- Real options encountered in projects and daily life, and are in 1 of 3 general forms
  - Call-like (opportunities to increase commitment)
  - Put-like (opportunities to insure or decrease commitment)
  - Compound (many options influence project simultaneously)

- Finance Models
  - Are Correct Theoretically
  - May be Differ to apply
  - Precision may be illusory, since data is not fully appropriate

- Decision analysis
  - Not Correct if Replicating portfolio can be established
  - Make often be most practical, however

- Choice of Valuation depends on Circumstances
Some References

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