BCA Market Perspective ©

Ways to de-risk a portfolio

Following a 6-year bull market, the anxiety among investors reached a tipping point. As witnessed during the third quarter, the S&P 500 pulled back as much as 12.4% from the August 24 peak. During the same time, the 10-year U.S. Treasury Yield fell below 2.0%. The uncertainties of the Federal Reserve policy, the effects of the currency volatility and a global slowdown have contributed to the severity of the recent pullback.

When evaluating portfolio asset allocation, many investors are looking to de-risk their portfolios using both traditional and "alternative" investments (examples below).

Traditional Equity / 10 Yr Beta	Equity Alternatives / 10 Yr Beta	Traditional Fixed / 10 Yr Beta	Fixed Inc. Alternatives / 10 Yr Beta
Large Cap Stocks / 1.0	Preferred Stock / 0.70	US Treasury / -0.34	Private Real Estate / 0.1
Mid Cap Stocks / 1.15	Convertible Securities / 0.79	US Agency / -0.28	Low Volatility Hedge Funds / 0.29
Small Cap Stocks / 1.17	MLP / 0.76	US Mortgage / -0.07	Private Equity / 0.45
Foreign Developed / 1.07	REIT / 1.30	US Corporates / 0.13	Infrastructure Assets / 0.80
Foreign Emerging / 1.17	Commodities / 0.64	Global Bonds / 0.03	Direct Lending / 0.05

Beta Benchmark: S&P 500; for illustrative purposes only.

One of the most important risk attributes to consider is *Beta*, a measure of the asset's sensitivity to market movements (example below). A *Beta* of 1.0 could be explained as market-like sensitivity; when the market moves by 1.0%, the asset is expected to move by 1.0%. A *Beta* of 1.1% represents a higher degree of market sensitivity; when the market moves by 1.0%, the asset is expected to move by 1.1%. Consequently, one way to reduce portfolio risk is to identify and decrease exposure to assets with a *Beta* greater than 1.0.

The *Beta* reduction process, however, should be achieved within certain risk/return parameters. Assets in an investment portfolio should not be increased/decreased based solely on Beta; it is also important to consider how assets might change in price relative to how every other asset in the portfolio might change in price. This is known as correlation. Lower correlating assets should help to lower volatility and de-risk a portfolio. Tools such as the Efficient Frontier and Monte-Carlo simulations can guide the investor to maximize the probability of achieving an expected risk/return profile.

Glossary:
Efficient Frontier: a set of optimal portfolios that offer the highest expected return for a defined level of risk or the lowest risk for a given level of expected return. Portfolios that lie below the Efficient Frontier are sub-optimal.
Monte-Carlo Simulation: quantitative risk analysis technique that randomizes all possible outcomes and approximates the probability of certain outcomes.