

Does size of total revenue impact operating margin and what does that say about risk in investing?

Here are two charts containing the operating margins by year for two sectors, energy and real estate.

When comparing two sectors operating margin, it is easier to see the relative risk of buying into these markets. Although Energy has one of the largest revenues and dwarfs Real Estate by a significant margin, the statistics give another story.

The mean operating margin of the Real Estate sector over the four years sampled was 29.32%, whereas the mean operating margin in Energy is only 10.87%. This would suggest that the Real Estate industry costs less to run on average compared to their revenue. When separating by years, we see an even better look as all statistics stay regular for Real Estate throughout the four years, whereas Energy varies drastically. For instance, in year 2, the mean operating margin was 24.49% whereas year 4 was -21.50%. The overall range when divided by sub industries for energy is 77.88% whereas the range for real estate was 30.39%. This range indicates the Energy sector is more risky and fluctuates revenue and spenditure more than the real estate sector which stays stable. The standard deviation of operating margin for the Energy sector is also illuminating as it varies between 5.45% and 17.53%, whereas the standard deviation of Real Estate stays stable around 9%. This means that throughout years and companies, the standard deviation for real estate is reliable whereas the standard deviation for Energy varies significantly and changes throughout the years and companies. This means that an investment in a real estate company will predictably earn within a certain margin, whereas investing in an energy company can vary significantly.

