I have been looking to switch jobs in the past couple of months and have been weighing multiple evaluation criteria before making a final decision. I have been at the current job for more than 6 years and the opportunities for career advancement and doing impactful client work have been stagnating recently. Our vertical has also been facing headwinds in the market and leadership has lacked any clear direction in navigating the tough times.

My decision criteria for a new job are innovative thinking, clear leadership direction, good location, compensation with flexible performance incentives, and a clearly defined role. After giving a lot of thought, I have organized these criteria into a priority list. The highest priority would go to focus of the company in building innovative products using advanced AI algorithms. This would be followed by a clearly defined role for me with a path to senior leadership. I would also like to talk to the current senior leadership on their vision for the future if possible and understand if that matches my view. Compensation and good location are lower priority factors for me while deciding which job to take up. I would be willing to relocate to a different city or country and settle for similar compensation if the first three criteria are met.

With the criteria firmly set in my mind, I started to look for the job postings in various online forums and understand what kind of jobs and industries are looking for candidates like me. I also looked for job postings on linked-in using keywords that matter to me like innovation, product centric, leadership, artificial intelligence. etc. I also reached to my family, friends, batchmates and ex-colleagues’ network to find the right fit for me and possibly refer my resume to their firm’s HR. Referrals in my experience have had a higher conversion rate for leadership roles. I also reached out to various HR consulting firms which help to place leaders in my industry. Using this process and after a couple of months of search, I found various categories of roles suitable for me but differing from each other in multiple areas.

One category of jobs is in similar companies to mine with same or higher seniority level and similar compensation structure based in India. Another category of jobs is in foreign locations with companies looking to setup an AI function from scratch and paying good compensation. Last category of jobs is innovative AI startups or boutique consulting firms with flexible compensation which come with higher risk as well. Although each of the alternative options is quite attractive, I’m inclined towards switching to a startup as it scores very high on my decision criteria around innovation, clear leadership direction, well defined role and flexible compensation based on growth of the company as well.

Looking back at the way I ranked and came up with my decision criteria, I realized that some biases might have crept in unconsciously in the decision-making process. Since a lot of my friends and batchmates have founded or are part of startups, a lot of my discussions with them are around how they drive innovation and impact through their firms. These conversations might have resulted in a confirmation bias creeping into my thought process since my immediate group is not working in companies and roles like me. The confirmation bias might have led me to choose a much riskier option instead of choosing a more suitable corporate leadership role.

Another bias that might have impaired my decision making is the availability heuristic. There is a lot of news coverage of startups with innovative business models making products which solve some profound problems and receiving high investment amounts. However, according to available statistics 99% of these startups fail and a very risky option especially for experienced professionals with financial obligations and families to support. I’ll try to not remove these biases from my decision making by taking advice from outside my immediate circle of friends and also doing proper research on risks related to joining a startup business at early stages before deciding which role to take up.