

Rethink Business Model as a Multisource Diagnostic Framework for Preimplementation Organizational Readiness

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Abstract

Organizations often assess readiness for change through members' perceptions of commitment and capability, yet a favorable perception does not establish that the organization has the operational capacity or external conditions needed for a particular initiative. This article develops the Rethink Business Model (RBM) as a proposed diagnostic framework for preimplementation decisions. It distinguishes six interdependent internal dimensions—leadership alignment, coaching readiness, behavioral alignment, systems readiness, operational alignment, and business acumen—from external conditions concerning demand, competition, finance, technology, and regulation. The article proposes a multisource assessment in which survey perceptions, interviews, organizational records, and dated external sources are interpreted together. Contradictory evidence is retained as a diagnostic signal rather than concealed in an overall score. Four propositions specify when alignment, coaching, resource fit, and environmental uncertainty should matter for implementation decisions. RBM is a conceptual model and assessment protocol; no primary data are reported and its reliability, validity, and predictive value remain to be tested. The proposed research agenda distinguishes feasibility, measurement validity, and prediction of implementation outcomes.

Keywords: organizational readiness; leadership alignment; executive coaching; systems thinking; diagnostic assessment; entrepreneurship

Introduction

Before launching an initiative, leaders must decide whether the organization can carry it out and whether external conditions support its assumptions. Existing scholarship offers important but partly different answers. Organizational readiness for change emphasizes shared commitment and collective efficacy (Weiner, 2009); change-readiness scales examine beliefs about an impending change (Holt et al., 2007); business-model scholarship focuses on value creation and adaptation (Foss & Saebi, 2017). None of these traditions alone requires a decision maker to reconcile perceived readiness with operational records and independent evidence about demand or constraints. This is a proposed integration problem, not a claim that prior scholarship ignores all such evidence.

The central question is: How can leaders assess readiness for a specified initiative before committing resources when internal perceptions, organizational records, and external conditions disagree? RBM answers by treating readiness as a conditional judgment about an initiative at a time and place. The six dimensions describe capabilities within the organization; an external scan tests assumptions the organization cannot establish by introspection. The model's contribution is the explicit comparison of evidence sources, the preservation of disagreement, and the translation of uncertainty into a decision to proceed, revise, pilot, or defer. The article develops the theoretical logic, operational definitions, propositions, proposed protocol, and tests needed to evaluate the model.

Historical and Social Context

The diagnostic question has a history in organizational development and entrepreneurship research. Change scholarship has long considered the relationship among organizational structure, behavior, and implementation. Later reassessments of Lewin's work caution against reducing organizational change to a rigid sequence of stages (Cummings et al., 2016; Burnes, 2020). The more relevant lesson for RBM is that organizational conditions should be examined as interacting and changing, rather than assumed stable because a plan has been approved. RBM places the decision point before a defined initiative and invites reassessment when its conditions change.

Planning research also complicates simple claims that failure is caused by a lack of plans. Delmar and Shane (2003) examined the role of business planning in new venture development; business-model research has since broadened attention to value creation and adaptation (Foss & Saebi, 2017). An organization can produce a detailed plan while leaving unresolved whether leaders agree on priorities, whether operations can deliver the plan, or whether market assumptions remain credible. RBM treats the plan as one evidence source whose underlying assumptions must be tested against organizational and contextual evidence.

Contemporary organizations face distributed work, changing technology, shifting financing conditions, and stakeholder demands that may change during implementation. These conditions make a single readiness survey especially difficult to interpret. A team may report confidence in its capacity based on current work while the proposed initiative depends on a new vendor, unfamiliar regulatory setting, or untested demand. This social context supports a time-bounded assessment rather than a permanent organizational readiness label. It also requires

sensitivity to unequal access to information: frontline personnel, customers, and leaders can hold different and equally relevant evidence.

The social stakes of a flawed decision extend beyond organizational performance. Commitments to hiring, investor funding, customer delivery, and community programs can create obligations before feasibility is clear. A diagnostic tool should therefore clarify the assumptions and uncertainties behind a decision and make corrective action possible. It should not be used to present a venture as safe, exclude participants based on an unvalidated score, or imply that managers can control external disruption.

Conceptual Foundations

Readiness and the Limits of Perception

Weiner (2009) theorizes readiness for organizational change as a shared psychological state of commitment to a change and confidence in collective capacity. Holt et al. (2007) and Rafferty et al. (2013) show that readiness involves multiple levels and beliefs. These constructs are valuable when the question concerns whether organizational members intend and expect to act. A launch decision also depends on whether resources, workflows, and assumptions match a concrete implementation demand. RBM therefore treats perceived readiness as evidence about a particular component of readiness, rather than as proof of feasibility or future success.

The distinction matters when a leadership team reports strong commitment while its workflow has unassigned handoffs or its proposed customer demand is undocumented. The commitment claim could be accurate and still be insufficient for the launch decision. Conversely, sound systems and a plausible market do not ensure staff engagement. RBM retains both types of

evidence so that agreement and contradiction can be explained rather than converted prematurely into one index.

Readiness also varies by level. A favorable organization-wide average could conceal a critical unit whose staff lack time, authority, or technical support. Conversely, one dissatisfied respondent need not represent the whole organization. Rafferty et al. (2013) draw attention to the multilevel nature of readiness, while Holt et al. (2007) provide a measurement tradition against which a new scale could be compared. RBM proposes that assessment reports preserve the unit and role of each observation, aggregate responses only when justified, and investigate differences that matter for the initiative.

Systems Thinking and Dynamic Capabilities

Systems thinking directs attention to relationships, feedback, and unintended consequences across organizational components (Senge, 2006). Dynamic-capabilities scholarship examines how firms integrate, build, and reconfigure resources as conditions change (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). RBM applies these ideas to a decision before implementation: each dimension has value partly through its fit with other dimensions and with the environment. A trained team may still be unable to deliver when technology, capacity, and financing assumptions are mutually inconsistent. A systems view justifies looking for such cross-dimensional bottlenecks instead of treating six favorable ratings as six independent guarantees.

Coaching, Motivation, and Change

Coaching research links structured developmental conversations with learning and performance outcomes, while emphasizing context and the quality of practice (Grant, 2017; Jones et al., 2016). Self-determination theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness

as conditions relevant to motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). RBM defines coaching readiness as the capacity to use feedback, reflection, and follow-up in support of a specified initiative. This is distinct from providing coaching sessions or assuming that coaching alone changes performance. Coaching is proposed as a mechanism for examining disconfirming evidence, assigning action, and reassessing assumptions without punishing those who surface problems.

This process depends on what people can safely disclose. If staff expect negative consequences from identifying weak workflows, the assessment will be biased toward reassuring answers. Edmondson (2019) offers a basis for examining whether members can raise concerns and ask questions in work settings. RBM consequently treats confidentiality, voluntariness, and separation of developmental assessment from personnel evaluation as conditions for interpreting survey and interview evidence. A high response rate cannot by itself correct a setting in which respondents avoid stating concerns.

Literature Gap, Synthesis, and Integration

The literature offers well-developed constructs but different focal questions. Readiness studies emphasize beliefs and commitment concerning change (Holt et al., 2007; Weiner, 2009). Systems thinking examines relationships among components (Senge, 2006); dynamic capabilities explain resource reconfiguration in changing environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). Coaching scholarship examines developmental conversations and performance (Grant, 2017; Jones et al., 2016). Business-model research considers value creation and adaptation (Foss & Saebi, 2017). The gap addressed here concerns the explicit combination of these insights in a preimplementation decision procedure that retains conflicting internal and external evidence. It does not imply that no prior author has examined organizational diagnostics or environmental fit.

Synthesis requires more than placing six constructs beside one another. RBM links leadership decisions to behavioral expectations, links behavior to the reliability of processes, and links processes to the resources and assumptions needed for a particular initiative. The model expects a constraining dimension to alter the practical value of strengths elsewhere. For example, leadership agreement on expansion may facilitate decision making, but neither agreement nor coaching can create capacity that an unsupported staffing model lacks. The integrated prediction concerns fit among dimensions, not the independent sum of favorable ratings.

Integration also requires distinguishing types of uncertainty. An internal conflict can arise because leaders and staff observe different parts of the organization; an external conflict can arise because internal demand forecasts and independent indicators concern different populations or dates. RBM does not define all disagreement as failure. Instead, it specifies a process for testing the scope, timing, and credibility of each observation. This permits a substantive explanation of convergence, complementarity, divergence, or insufficient evidence, followed by a decision and a plan to reassess unresolved assumptions.

The diagnostic contribution is therefore a boundary condition for readiness claims. A claim about readiness is incomplete until the initiative, unit of analysis, timeframe, evidence quality, and operating context are identified. This formulation can be tested against existing change-readiness instruments and planning practices. It can also fail: if adding records and external data does not improve prediction, decision quality, or stakeholder understanding, the claimed value of the integration would not be supported.

The RBM Framework

The unit of analysis is an organization considering a named initiative, with the assessment bounded by an observation period and operating context. RBM proposes six internal

dimensions. Leadership alignment concerns the consistency of decisions, priorities, and resource commitments. Coaching readiness concerns mechanisms for constructive feedback and follow-through. Behavioral alignment concerns the fit among expected roles, actual practices, and accountability. Systems readiness concerns the capacity and reliability of processes, information flows, and technology. Operational alignment concerns staffing, dependencies, milestones, and resources. Business acumen concerns the quality of financial reasoning, value assumptions, and decision criteria. These dimensions are analytically distinct, but the model predicts interactions among them.

External conditions are assessed separately. A dated environmental scan examines evidence for customer or stakeholder demand, substitutes and competition, financing conditions, technology dependencies, and applicable regulatory constraints. This is not a seventh internal trait or a claim that external conditions can be controlled by managers. Its purpose is to test assumptions underlying the decision and to expose uncertainty. The six internal dimensions are also not claimed to be an exhaustive taxonomy. Additional context-specific domains may emerge during empirical evaluation.

Dimensions and Observable Indicators

Leadership alignment can be assessed by comparing strategic statements with dated approvals, spending decisions, and role assignments. An assessment should ask whether disagreements have been resolved or merely omitted from the official plan. Coaching readiness can be assessed through documented feedback routines, development goals, and follow-up, while interviews examine whether those processes are used. Behavioral alignment requires comparison of stated values and roles with accountability records and accounts of practice. None of these observations alone identifies causation; they are indicators for a specific decision.

Systems readiness concerns the capacity, interoperability, resilience, and failure points of the processes and technologies on which the initiative depends. Workflow maps, incident reports, access requirements, and vendor dependencies can make the relevant constraints visible. Operational alignment asks whether staffing, capacity, milestones, procurement, and budget timing are mutually consistent. A process can be technically functional yet lack the capacity required by a new workload. The distinction prevents a general satisfaction rating from obscuring a specific implementation bottleneck.

Business acumen concerns the explicit reasoning behind value, costs, pricing, cash flow, and resource tradeoffs. For some initiatives, a valuation or investment appraisal can be considered within this dimension, but a calculated valuation is only as credible as its assumptions and method. The external scan asks whether forecasts of demand, financing, competition, and regulation are compatible with independent and current evidence. Financial sophistication cannot substitute for market evidence, and market evidence cannot substitute for a viable operating model.

Evidence Mapping

Each dimension receives evidence from different sources where available. A structured survey asks participants about perceived practices and preparedness; interviews examine why respondents perceive these conditions; internal documents and logs test whether decisions and practices are traceable; external sources test assumptions about the operating environment. An evidence register records the date, source, organizational unit, observation, limitations, and any contradictory account. Sources are assessed for relevance and quality before interpretation. Independent corroboration can increase confidence, while contradictory evidence can identify a bottleneck, a time lag, a measurement problem, or a difference among stakeholder groups.

For example, managers may rate systems readiness highly, but an incident log could show repeated failures at a critical handoff. RBM does not infer that the managers are dishonest or that the log proves the whole system unready. It asks whether the survey referred to the same process and period, whether failures affect the intended initiative, and whether frontline participants provide a different account. This preserves the diagnostic value of disagreement.

The evidence register must distinguish a primary source from a summary and a recent observation from an older one. It should identify who supplied a record, what it covers, how it was obtained, and whether another interpretation is plausible. External sources require attention to geography, sampling, methodology, and possible commercial interests. Where proprietary data cannot be disclosed publicly, a methods report should still describe the source class and analytic rule sufficiently for readers to assess the inference. A single public statistic about a national sector cannot automatically validate demand for a specific organization's offering.

Propositions

Proposition 1. For a specified initiative, the association between perceived organizational readiness and subsequent implementation performance will be weaker when documented capacity constraints contradict perceived readiness than when the two sources converge. The rationale follows from the difference between collective confidence and the resources needed for execution (Weiner, 2009; Teece, 2007). The proposition requires prospective data and should not be treated as an established RBM finding.

Proposition 2. The relationship between leadership alignment and implementation performance will depend on operational and systems fit. Aligned decisions should be more useful when workflow dependencies and resources can support those decisions. Conversely, favorable leadership perceptions may be undermined by a bottleneck in a critical process. This is

a systems-level prediction, not a claim that every dimension contributes equally (Senge, 2006; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

Proposition 3. Coaching readiness will be associated with faster resolution of identified contradictions when feedback processes allow stakeholders to discuss unfavorable evidence, assign corrective action, and revisit assumptions. Psychological safety and developmental conversations may support this process (Edmondson, 2019; Grant, 2017), but the direction and size of the proposed association need to be tested against other explanations such as managerial competence and resource availability.

Proposition 4. The predictive value of an internal readiness judgment will be lower when external assumptions about demand, financing, or constraints are weakly supported or rapidly changing. External uncertainty may alter the relevance of internal capacity, even when the organization's six dimensions appear favorable. This proposition distinguishes internal preparedness from the viability of the particular initiative (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Teece, 2007).

Proposed Assessment Protocol

Scope and Sources

An assessor first specifies the initiative, decision date, relevant units, implementation horizon, and observable outcomes. The organization then identifies eligible respondents and obtains permission to use internal records. The proposed survey measures perceptions for each dimension using multiple items drafted from the operational definitions. Follow-up interviews investigate high, low, and discordant responses. A structured checklist collects dated strategy decisions, development and feedback processes, role and accountability records, workflow maps, incident logs, capacity plans, budgets, cash-flow assumptions, and other records relevant to the

initiative. An external scan documents independent sources concerning demand, substitutes, financing, technology, and rules in the applicable jurisdiction. The research protocol must obtain ethics approval where required and protect participants and proprietary records.

The survey should not assume that all respondents can evaluate every dimension. Respondents should be permitted to indicate that an item is outside their knowledge; missingness and nonresponse should be reported rather than coded as poor readiness. Interview sampling should include divergent and unexpected survey patterns instead of selecting only the most supportive participants. A record checklist should identify required documents prospectively so that an assessor cannot favor sources after seeing the desired conclusion.

Integration and Decisions

For each dimension, an assessment matrix records the survey pattern, interview explanation, internal evidence, external context, evidence quality, and unresolved contradiction. The assessor classifies the combined evidence as convergent, complementary, divergent, or insufficient and records the reason. A low-quality or missing source remains an explicit uncertainty. Decision makers may then proceed with documented conditions, run a limited pilot, revise the initiative, or defer it pending a named corrective action and reassessment date. These are proposed decision categories, not validated score thresholds. The framework should not produce an overall numerical readiness label until an empirical basis for weighting and cutoffs is established.

A transparent decision record should state the strongest supportive evidence and the strongest contrary evidence for each dimension. It should identify which uncertainty could reverse the decision, who owns the action to resolve it, and when reassessment will occur. A limited pilot may be warranted when uncertainty can be reduced at modest cost; deferral may be

warranted when a critical dependency lacks evidence. These are provisional judgment rules, not empirically established RBM cutoffs. The assessor should document overrides and reasons so that later studies can examine how decisions were actually made.

The external scan and internal checklist are assessment tools, not evidence that any particular organization has already met a readiness threshold. Likewise, a portfolio of prior work can document implementation experience but cannot by itself establish RBM reliability or causal effectiveness. Evidence about model performance requires a defined sample, comparison against alternatives, and prospective outcomes.

Research Agenda and Boundary Conditions

Content validity should be examined through independent expert review of definitions and items, followed by cognitive interviews with intended respondents. Pilot work should test comprehension, record availability, burden, and interrater agreement for checklist judgments. A larger multisite sample could assess factor structure, internal consistency, measurement invariance across organization types, and convergence or discrimination relative to established readiness measures. Test-retest reliability is relevant if the organization is expected to remain stable over the interval. A sequential mixed methods design can then explain divergent cases and refine the proposed mechanisms (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Predictive validity demands prospective observation. Before outcomes occur, investigators should specify the initiative, follow-up period, implementation outcomes, candidate covariates, and decision rules. RBM judgments could be compared with perception-only readiness scales and conventional planning checks. Outcomes might include milestone completion, rework, cost variance, or discontinuation, with interpretation sensitive to changes in market conditions. The claim that diagnostic use improves performance would require an

intervention or credible comparison design; an association between baseline readiness and outcomes would not establish a causal effect of RBM.

An implementation study should also test feasibility: the time required to collect records, the proportion of cases with usable external evidence, participant burden, and disagreement among independent raters. A model that makes better predictions but requires inaccessible records may have limited practical value. Conversely, a simple checklist that changes decisions without improving outcomes might justify further study of its mechanisms. Reports should separate instrument refinement, feasibility, construct validity, and predictive performance rather than use the term validation for all four.

Mixed methods integration can examine whether interviews explain unexpected survey and record patterns. Investigators should preserve an audit trail for coding decisions and contradictory cases, specify when and why the qualitative sample was selected, and present a joint display or equivalent narrative showing what each evidence type contributes. If the same researcher designed and administered RBM, independent coders or assessors could provide a check on interpretive bias. Future replication should include organizations and settings beyond those connected to the framework developer.

RBM may work differently across small ventures and established organizations. Small samples within an organization constrain aggregate perception estimates, and records may be sparse in new ventures. External data may be dated, geographically mismatched, or commercially biased. Leaders might manipulate scores if assessment results affect access to funding or staff evaluation. Assessors should disclose their relationship to any RBM products or consulting services, separate developmental use from personnel decisions, and preserve an audit

trail for coding and revisions. The present article proposes a model; it reports no participant data, reliability coefficients, validation results, or observed improvements.

Discussion

The proposed contribution of RBM is a decision-focused bridge between readiness perceptions, systems and resource fit, developmental response, and externally tested assumptions. Its key inference is conditional: a favorable internal assessment supports implementation only to the extent that the evidence fits the specific initiative and its context. The model also treats contradiction as information. A survey, internal record, and market source can each be accurate within its scope while jointly revealing a weakness in the decision premise.

The propositions give researchers falsifiable claims rather than a guarantee of venture success. The protocol gives practitioners a way to document uncertainty and corrective action before committing resources, but its scoring, transferability, and predictive performance require independent evaluation. Until then, RBM should be described as a conceptual diagnostic framework whose usefulness remains an empirical question.

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