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# RECAP Analysis: A Novel Analytical Tool for Strategic Diagnosis in Dynamic Environments

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## ABSTRACT

Strategic diagnosis remains a persistent challenge for managers operating in dynamic environments. Existing frameworks—from SWOT to VRIO—have been criticized for being either analytically shallow or theoretically inaccessible as practical tools. This study introduces the *Resources*, *Embeddedness*, *Capabilities*, *Appropriability* and *Positioning* (RECAP) analysis: a conceptual diagnostic framework that integrates insights from the Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities View and positioning theory into a single, operationalizable instrument. Operationalized through a diagnostic matrix and radar chart, RECAP has the potential to enable managers to systematically assess strategic alignment across five interdependent dimensions, identify gaps between internal assets and external demands, and derive targeted improvement priorities. An illustrative application to a technology-based SME in the solar energy sector demonstrates the framework's evaluative and prescriptive utility. RECAP advances strategy research by bridging fragmented theoretical perspectives into a coherent, actionable tool, while offering practitioners a structured means to enhance organizational adaptability and sustained competitive advantage.

## 1 | Introduction

Strategic management has long relied on diagnostic tools to guide firms in assessing their internal and external environments (Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022). Among the most enduring is the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which offers a simple framework to map internal strengths and weaknesses against external opportunities and threats. Its appeal lies in its accessibility and intuitive structure, making it widely adopted in both academic and managerial contexts. However, scholars have criticized SWOT for its largely descriptive nature, limited analytical rigor and weak guidance for actionable strategy development (*cf.* Gürel and Tat 2017).

To overcome these limitations, the Resource-Based View (RBV) introduced a more theoretically rigorous approach (Barney 1991; Teece et al. 1997). Through the Value, Rarity, Imitability and Organization (VRIO) framework, RBV directs attention to resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and organized in a manner that yields sustained competitive advantage (Barney 1991; Barney et al. 2021; Ferreira and

This study introduces the RECAP analysis: a strategic diagnostic framework that provides a structured, intuitive tool to enhance decision-making, adaptability and sustained competitive advantage.

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**Key Points**

- The RECAP analysis is introduced as a novel strategic diagnostic framework integrating *Resources* (R), *Embeddedness* (E), *Capabilities* (C), *Appropriability* (A) and *Positioning* (P).
- The framework bridges the Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV) and positioning theory, combining theoretical rigor with practical applicability.
- The RECAP analysis provides a structured and visually intuitive tool, including diagnostic matrices and radar charts, for evaluating strategic fitness.
- The framework supports actionable decision-making to enhance adaptability, resource alignment and sustained competitive advantage.
- An illustrative application to a technology-based firm demonstrates how RECAP guides strategic assessment and improvement.

Ferreira 2025). While VRIO advanced the strategic toolkit by highlighting the sources of enduring competitive advantage, it has been criticized for its static orientation and limited capacity to account for environmental turbulence or rapid market changes (Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022). The emergence of the Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV) addressed these shortcomings by emphasizing a firm's ability to sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources to maintain competitive advantage in fast-changing environments (Chen et al. 2021; Teece et al. 1997; Teece 2018). Despite its conceptual influence, DCV has proven challenging to operationalize, often remaining abstract, fragmented and difficult for managers to translate into concrete diagnostic practices (Helfat and Martin 2015). Hence, a tension persists. Current diagnostic approaches either oversimplify strategic complexity, as in SWOT, or remain theoretically rich but operationally inaccessible, as with DCV (*cf.* Murcia et al. 2022). This gap underscores the pressing need for integrative tools that combine analytical depth with practical usability to guide managerial decisions in dynamic and uncertain contexts (*cf.* Lacaze et al. 2025).

In response, this study introduces the RECAP analysis: an integrative diagnostic framework that evaluates the internal stock of resources, their embeddedness in organizational routines, dynamic capabilities, value-capture mechanisms and market positioning. Unlike existing models, RECAP emphasizes both evaluation and prescription, helping firms identify alignment gaps between internal strengths and external demands while offering actionable guidance for improvement. Two research questions guide this study: How can RECAP systematically identify gaps between a firm's internal resources and capabilities and its external market demands? And, to what extent can RECAP inform actionable strategic decisions that enhance adaptability and long-term competitiveness in dynamic environments?

In environments shaped by technological disruption, global competition and shifting consumer preferences, RECAP's diagnostic matrix and radar chart enable managers and researchers to assess performance across the five dimensions in a clear, analytically grounded manner, thereby supporting actionable pathways for sustaining competitive advantage. Beyond operational utility, RECAP also advances theory by operationalizing an integrated lens across RBV, DCV and positioning, and carries societal relevance by promoting organizational resilience and the capacity to navigate uncertainty (Augier and Teece 2007, 2009; Furr and Eisenhardt 2021; Ramos et al. 2025). Importantly, the contribution of RECAP extends beyond the integration of existing strategic perspectives. By enabling the simultaneous and configurational assessment of resources, embeddedness, capabilities, appropriability and positioning, the framework reveals cross-dimensional asymmetries, structural tensions and alignment patterns that may remain invisible when existing strategic frameworks are applied independently. This configurational perspective generates new strategic insights regarding organizational strengths, vulnerabilities and sources of competitive advantage.

This paper is organized into six sections. Section 2 presents the theoretical foundations of RECAP, reviewing relevant literature from RBV, DCV and strategic diagnostics. Section 3 introduces the RECAP framework in detail, explaining its five dimensions, operationalization through a diagnostic matrix and visualization via radar chart. Section 4 presents an illustrative application to a technology-based firm, highlighting the practical insights generated by the framework. Section 5 discusses the theoretical, managerial and societal implications of the findings. Section 6 concludes by summarizing the study's contributions, limitations and avenues for future research.

## 2 | Literature Review

### 2.1 | Literature Review and Research Gap

Strategic diagnosis in dynamic environments requires understanding how firms leverage internal resources to respond to external opportunities and challenges (Agrawal et al. 2025; Cao and Duan 2024; Chen et al. 2021). The Resource-Based View (RBV) has long provided a foundational lens, positing that resources—tangible or intangible—constitute the basis of sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, inimitable and organized (Barney 1991; Barney et al. 2021; Teece et al. 1997).

Over the years, RBV has been extended to incorporate strategic actions, human capital, stakeholder relationships and network capabilities, emphasizing that resources only create advantage when effectively deployed and aligned with broader organizational and environmental conditions (Burt and Soda 2021; D'Oria et al. 2021; Ferreira and Ferreira 2025; Freeman et al. 2021; Gerhart and Feng 2021).

However, despite its explanatory power, RBV has been criticized for its relative static orientation and limited attention to environmental turbulence, often offering little guidance for actionable strategy under rapidly changing conditions (Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022; Walsh et al. 2023). Frameworks such as VRIO



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operationalize RBV insights but can remain insufficient for guiding managerial decision-making in dynamic contexts, particularly when resources evolve or become paradoxical—that is, where strengths may generate vulnerabilities and weaknesses may open new opportunities (Miller and Le Breton-Miller 2021; Murcia et al. 2022).

In response to these limitations, some studies have sought to operationalize and quantify VRIO assessments by integrating the traditional framework with multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) techniques. Rather than relying solely on qualitative managerial judgments, these approaches enable the structuring, weighting and aggregation of multiple criteria associated with the VRIO dimensions of resources. For example, the application of methods such as the Choquet Integral allows researchers to capture potential interactions and synergies among VRIO attributes, acknowledging that the strategic contribution of a resource may depend on the combined influence of multiple dimensions rather than their independent effects (Murcia et al. 2022). Similarly, the use of techniques such as DEcision MAking Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) facilitates the identification and visualization of causal relationships among VRIO-related factors, helping to reveal influence patterns and feedback structures that shape the strategic relevance of resources (Lacaze et al. 2025). By embedding VRIO analysis within an MCDA-based modeling framework, these approaches offer a more systematic and transparent way to support strategic evaluation, enabling managers to move beyond purely descriptive assessments toward more structured and potentially actionable insights.

While these methodological advances strengthen the analytical rigor and operational usefulness of RBV-based tools, they do not fully overcome the theory's underlying limitation regarding the dynamic evolution of resources and capabilities in turbulent environments. In particular, even when quantified (e.g., Q-VRIO), VRIO-based assessments tend to emphasize the evaluation of existing resource configurations rather than the processes through which firms renew, recombine or transform them over time. It is precisely this gap that motivated the emergence of complementary perspectives in the strategic management literature.

To address these limitations, the Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV) emphasizes a firm's ability to sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources to maintain advantage in fast-changing environments (Cottam and Jha 2025; Teece et al. 1997; Teece 2018). DCV highlights the critical role of managers as orchestrators of resources, routines and processes that link internal strengths to external opportunities while preserving strategic coherence (Augier and Teece 2007, 2009; Helfat and Martin 2015). Yet, despite its conceptual appeal, DCV is often criticized for being difficult to operationalize, which limits its usefulness for managers seeking concrete diagnostic guidance (Greve 2021; Helfat and Martin 2015; Furr and Eisenhardt 2021). Notably, this “abstractness” critique has evolved in recent scholarship. Rather than reflecting a conceptual weakness, it is increasingly understood as a consequence of the level of analysis at which dynamic capabilities are examined. When treated at the firm level, dynamic capabilities may appear abstract and even tautological. However, when unpacked into micro-foundational elements, they become observable through managerial cognition, decision-making routines and organizational processes. This perspective reframes dynamic capabilities as enacted rather than abstract constructs, embedded in concrete behavioral and procedural mechanisms within firms.

Current diagnostic approaches thus face a persistent tension. Tools such as SWOT offer simplicity and accessibility but lack analytical rigor and actionable guidance (Gürel and Tat 2017). RBV-based frameworks such as VRIO and Q-VRIO provide theoretical depth but remain largely static and insufficiently responsive to environmental turbulence (Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022). DCV addresses dynamism conceptually but remains challenging to operationalize, limiting managers' ability to systematically assess strategic alignment and adapt resources effectively (Cottam and Jha 2025; Davis and DeWitt 2021; Helfat and Martin 2015). Moreover, while recent studies have explored network capabilities, managerial interventions and hybrid approaches that integrate RBV and DCV, these contributions often remain fragmented or focused on isolated dimensions of strategic performance, leaving a gap in comprehensive diagnostic tools that bridge theory and practice (Cottam and Jha 2025; Burt and Soda 2021; Furr and Eisenhardt 2021).

This study addresses this gap by introducing the Resources, Embeddedness, Capabilities, Appropriability and Positioning (RECAP) analysis, which integrates multiple perspectives into a single, actionable framework. By combining internal resource assessment, evaluation of embeddedness in routines, dynamic capability strength, mechanisms of value capture and market positioning, RECAP provides a holistic lens for understanding strategic fitness in uncertain and rapidly changing environments. Unlike existing models, RECAP emphasizes both evaluation and prescription, helping firms identify alignment gaps between internal assets and external demands while offering actionable pathways for improvement.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to advance both theory and practice. Theoretically, it bridges RBV, DCV and positioning theory into a unified analytical lens. Practically, it equips managers with a structured, visually intuitive tool based on diagnostic matrices and radar charts to systematically assess strategic strengths, vulnerabilities and opportunities for improvement. From a methodological standpoint, the development of RECAP should be understood as a conceptual construction process rather than an empirical induction. The framework was derived through theoretical synthesis and structural alignment across RBV, DCV and positioning theory, rather than through statistical inference or field-based coding. Accordingly, the logic of validation in this study is limited to internal coherence, theoretical consistency and practical interpretability, rather than empirical testing. Within this context, the central question is whether the framework offers a meaningful lens through which strategic phenomena can be diagnosed and interpreted. In this sense, RECAP should not be viewed merely as a synthesis of existing theories, but as a configurational diagnostic architecture capable of generating strategic insights that emerge from the interaction among dimensions rather than from any dimension considered in isolation.



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## 2.2 | Conceptual Theory-Building Approach

This study adopts a conceptual theory-building approach to develop the RECAP framework. Rather than proposing an entirely new theory, the objective is to integrate and operationalize existing theoretical perspectives into a coherent and actionable diagnostic tool. The development of RECAP follows a problem-driven logic, motivated by the persistent gap between theoretically rich but abstract frameworks and practically accessible but analytically limited tools in strategic management (*cf.* Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022). Accordingly, the contribution of RECAP lies not in theoretical novelty per se, but in the structured synthesis, alignment and integration of existing perspectives.

Conceptual theory-building in this study is grounded in integrative synthesis, whereby existing theoretical perspectives are systematically combined to address a clearly defined managerial problem: strategic diagnosis under environmental dynamism. As discussed in Section 2.1, this approach aligns with prior calls for more problem-driven and integrative contributions in strategy research (*cf.* Furr and Eisenhardt 2021; Lacaze et al. 2025).

The logic of synthesis underpinning RECAP draws on three complementary theoretical streams. First, RBV explains how firm-specific resources generate sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, inimitable and organized (Barney 1991; Barney et al. 2021; Teece et al. 1997). Second, DCV extends this logic by emphasizing how firms sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources in response to environmental change (Teece et al. 1997; Teece 2018; Helfat and Martin 2015). Third, positioning theory introduces an external lens, emphasizing industry structure, competitive forces and strategic positioning as determinants of firm performance (Porter 1980; Peteraf and Barney 2003). Importantly, the integration of these three perspectives is deliberately non-additive. RBV explains the internal sources of advantage, DCV explains how these advantages evolve over time and positioning theory explains how they are deployed and realized in competitive markets. Taken together, they provide a multi-level understanding of strategic fitness that none of the perspectives can achieve independently. This integration directly addresses well-documented limitations in each stream, including the static orientation of RBV (Lacaze et al. 2025), the operational ambiguity of DCV (Helfat and Martin 2015; Greve 2021), and the partial internal focus of positioning approaches.

The selection of the five RECAP dimensions (i.e., *Resources* (R), *Embeddedness* (E), *Capabilities* (C), *Appropriability* (A) and *Positioning* (P)) follows explicit theoretical and functional criteria derived from this synthesis. Each dimension corresponds to a distinct construct consistently emphasized in the strategic management literature as critical for competitive advantage. Specifically, *Resources* (R) reflect the firm's asset base (Barney 1991), *Embeddedness* (E) captures the degree to which resources are institutionalized in organizational routines and relationships (Teece et al. 1997), *Capabilities* (C) reflect the firm's ability to adapt and reconfigure resources over time (Teece 2018), *Appropriability* (A) captures mechanisms for value protection and capture (Teece 1986; Teece et al. 1997), and *Positioning* (P) reflects alignment with external competitive structures (Porter 1980). These five dimensions were selected because they jointly capture the full strategic cycle of value creation, value deployment and value capture. This design logic deliberately moves beyond partial diagnostic tools such as SWOT, which remain largely descriptive (Gürel and Tat 2017), and VRIO-based approaches, which focus primarily on static internal resource evaluation (Barney 1991). RECAP instead provides a multi-layered and integrated diagnostic structure that connects internal, dynamic and external dimensions of strategy.

The theoretical justification for combining these elements into a unified framework lies in their complementarity. RBV alone cannot explain how resources evolve under environmental turbulence; DCV does not specify how such capabilities can be systematically diagnosed in practice; and positioning theory does not explicitly integrate internal resource heterogeneity into external competitive analysis (*cf.* Murcia et al. 2022; Cottam and Jha 2025). RECAP addresses this fragmentation by offering a structured synthesis that links internal assets, organizational processes, value capture mechanisms and external positioning into a single analytical framework.

A further refinement of this conceptualization is provided by the micro-foundations perspective on dynamic capabilities, which emphasizes that organizational capabilities are ultimately rooted in individual-level cognition, managerial decision-making processes and interaction patterns within firms (Adner and Helfat 2003; Felin et al. 2012; Foss 2011; Gavetti 2005; Helfat and Peteraf 2015). From this perspective, the effectiveness of any diagnostic framework depends not only on its structural design but also on how managers interpret information, engage in collective sensemaking and negotiate shared understandings during decision processes. In particular, managerial cognitive capabilities and interpretive schemas shape how strategic situations are perceived and acted upon, thereby influencing how organizational capabilities are developed and deployed (Gavetti 2005; Helfat and Peteraf 2015). In the context of RECAP, this implies that the assessment of each dimension is inherently mediated by subjective interpretation, experiential knowledge and intra-organizational dialogue. Consequently, RECAP should be understood not only as a synthesis of macro-level strategic theories but also as a tool whose practical validity depends on micro-level managerial processes that enable meaningful interpretation and coordinated action.

This integrative conceptualization is consistent with emerging methodological efforts to operationalize strategic theories through structured analytical tools, including MCDA-based extensions of VRIO logic (Murcia et al. 2022; Lacaze et al. 2025). However, RECAP advances beyond these approaches by embedding theory directly into a multidimensional diagnostic architecture that is both analytically rigorous and managerially interpretable. Given its conceptual theory-building nature, RECAP does not specify a formal mathematical or econometric performance function. Instead, it adopts a structured diagnostic logic in which strategic outcomes emerge from patterns of alignment and misalignment across dimensions. The framework is therefore interpretive and configuration-based rather than functional or causal-estimation oriented. Accordingly, the propositions presented in the following section should be understood as theoretically grounded directional relationships intended to



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support future empirical modeling, rather than as estimable structural equations.

A key contribution of the RECAP framework lies not only in the integration of established theoretical perspectives, but in the emergence of new strategic insights derived from the simultaneous evaluation of interdependent dimensions. While existing frameworks such as VRIO, dynamic capabilities and positioning analysis typically assess resources, capabilities or market positioning in isolation, RECAP has the potential to enable a systemic diagnostic perspective in which the interaction among dimensions becomes analytically visible. This multidimensional structure reveals cross-dimensional asymmetries that are not observable when each theoretical lens is applied independently.

For example, firms may exhibit strong *Resources* (R) and high *Capabilities* (C), yet still fail to achieve sustainable advantage due to weak *Appropriability* (A), or they may possess strong internal capabilities but suffer from low *Embeddedness* (E), limiting scalability and durability. Accordingly, the novelty of RECAP lies in shifting the unit of analysis from individual constructs to the coherence among them, enabling the identification of structural tensions and fragility patterns not detectable through conventional frameworks.

Importantly, this architecture also reflects a micro-foundational operationalization of dynamic capabilities, in which managerial cognition, decision-making routines and organizational processes are not treated as abstract background conditions but are embedded as observable and assessable elements within the diagnostic structure of RECAP. In this sense, the framework translates the micro-foundations perspective into an applied analytical instrument, thereby directly addressing the long-standing challenge of operationalizing dynamic capabilities in empirical and managerial contexts.

## 3 | The Recap Framework

The RECAP framework was conceived as a synthesis of three major streams of strategy research: (1) RBV; (2) DCV; and (2) positioning theory (Barney 1991; Barney et al. 2021; Peteraf and Barney 2003; Porter 1980). By integrating these perspectives, RECAP aims to provide a more balanced strategic diagnostic lens. Firms are not only bundles of resources but also actors competing within shifting environments where relative positioning matters. Thus, RECAP captures both the internal depth of a firm's asset base and the external orientation required for long-term viability.

The framework is structured around five dimensions: (1) *Resources* (R); (2) *Embeddedness* (E); (3) *Capabilities* (C); (4) *Appropriability* (A); and (5) *Positioning* (P). Although the five RECAP dimensions are conceptually related, they capture distinct aspects of strategic diagnosis. *R* refers to the assets available to the firm; *E* reflects the extent to which those assets are integrated into routines and relationships; *C* concerns the firm's ability to mobilize and reconfigure resources; *A* addresses the mechanisms through which value is captured and protected; and *P* reflects the firm's competitive location within its market environment. Their simultaneous assessment enables a richer understanding of strategic coherence and misalignment.

Furthermore, the relationship between RECAP dimensions and strategic performance is not conceptualized as a linear or additive function. Instead, the framework assumes that strategic outcomes emerge from the configuration, coherence and interaction among the five dimensions. Accordingly, RECAP adopts a configurational logic in which performance is shaped by patterns of alignment and misalignment across dimensions, rather than by isolated or independent effects. This implies that similar levels in individual dimensions may lead to different outcomes depending on how they are jointly configured within the overall strategic profile.

The configurational logic underlying RECAP also provides the theoretical basis for the propositions developed in this section. Rather than treating resources, capabilities, embeddedness, appropriability and positioning as independent determinants of performance, the framework emphasizes how strategic outcomes emerge from their interactions and combined effects. Accordingly, the propositions focus on cross-dimensional relationships and on the strategic consequences of alignment and misalignment across dimensions, illustrating how established theoretical insights can be examined through the integrated lens of the RECAP framework.

Each dimension is assessed using a diagnostic matrix in which firms rate themselves on a standardized scale, typically from "1" (very weak) to "5" (excellent). The score assigned to each dimension should then be justified with supporting evidence, such as expert knowledge, interviews or key performance indicators (KPIs). In the baseline configuration, RECAP adopts an equal-weighting assumption across dimensions in order to preserve interpretive neutrality and avoid imposing ex ante theoretical hierarchies among constructs. However, based on prior work by Lacaze et al. (2025) and Murcia et al. (2022), the framework allows for context-specific weighting adjustments when justified by domain expertise or empirical calibration in applied settings. Table 1 shows a RECAP matrix.

According to Table 1, the first dimension, *Resources* (R), follows the RBV tradition by assessing the availability and distinctiveness of tangible and intangible assets, such as technological expertise, human capital, brand reputation and financial strength (Wernerfelt 1984; Barney 1991). Resources constitute the raw materials of strategy, but their potential depends on the ways they are embedded and mobilized.

*Embeddedness* (E), the second dimension, captures the degree to which resources are integrated into organizational routines, processes and culture. This concept draws on insights from organizational learning and path dependence, suggesting that resources yield sustained competitive advantages when they are deeply anchored within the firm's unique historical trajectory and relational networks (Dyer and Singh 1998; Teece et al. 1997). High embeddedness reduces imitation risks and enhances resource durability. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**Proposition 1.** *Firms with higher Resource (R) scores achieve greater sustained competitive advantage when Embeddedness (E) is also high, as deep integration into organizational routines reduces the risk of imitation and enhances resource durability over time.*



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**TABLE 1** | Example of a RECAP matrix.

| Dimension | Key questions | Examples of indicators |
|---|---|---|
| R—Resources | What are the VRIO resources? | Patents, know-how, brand, etc. |
| E—Embeddedness | Are they well integrated into the culture, structure and processes? | Routines, internal systems, culture, etc. |
| C—Capabilities | Does the company have the capability for adaptation and learning? | Innovation, response to changes, agility, etc. |
| A—Appropriability | Is able to retain and protect the returns from its resources/capabilities? | Patents, customer loyalty, trade secrets, etc. |
| P—Positioning | Is the market positioning consistent with its resources and environment? | Differentiation, segmentation, fit with the Z forces. |

The third dimension, *Capabilities* (C), extends beyond the stock of resources to encompass the firm's dynamic capability to sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure assets in response to change (Teece 2018). While resources may be static, capabilities are inherently processual and adaptive, enabling organizations to remain competitive in turbulent environments. This dimension assesses the agility, innovation potential and absorptive capacity of the firm (Zahra and George 2002).

*Appropriability* (A) reflects the mechanisms that allow firms to capture the value generated by their resources and capabilities. As Teece (1986) highlights, innovation does not automatically translate into returns unless supported by complementary assets and protective regimes such as intellectual property, contracts or strategic alliances. Appropriability thus ensures that value creation translates into value capture, securing competitive advantage rather than dissipating it to rivals or collaborators. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**Proposition 2.** *The strategic value of Capabilities* (*C*) *is contingent on Appropriability* (*A*): *firms that sense and seize opportunities through strong dynamic capabilities but lack adequate value-capture mechanisms will experience competitive advantage erosion, as innovation benefits accrue to rivals or partners rather than to the innovating firm*.

Finally, *Positioning* (P) addresses the firm's external stance in relation to competitors, markets and institutional environments. Drawing on industrial organization economics and strategic positioning theory (Porter 1980), this dimension highlights how effectively the firm leverages its internal resource base to differentiate itself or pursue cost leadership, and how it adapts to shifts in customer needs, industry structures or regulatory landscapes. Positioning anchors the framework in the external reality, ensuring that internal strengths are strategically deployed where they matter most. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**Proposition 3.** *Misalignment between Embeddedness* (*E*) *and Positioning* (*P*), *where internal routines and processes are not adapted to external market demands, generates strategic rigidity, reducing organizational adaptability in dynamic environments*.

**Proposition 4.** *Appropriability* (*A*) *moderates the relationship between Capabilities* (*C*) *and long-term Positioning* (*P*): *firms with strong dynamic capabilities but weak appropriability regimes are unable to translate operational agility into durable market positions*.

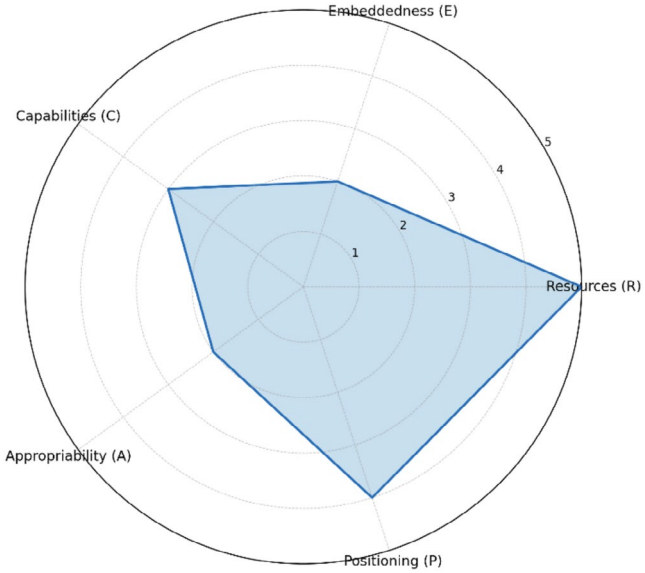



**FIGURE 1** | Illustrative example of a RECAP radar chart. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Together, the five dimensions form a coherent structure that operationalizes RBV, DCV and positioning theory. In practice, managers or researchers apply the RECAP framework by conducting structured assessments—individually or in facilitated workshops—where stakeholders evaluate performance across the five dimensions. The scoring process not only generates diagnostic profiles but also fosters dialogue, surfacing divergent perceptions and guiding collective sensemaking. Notably, aggregation across evaluators follows a structured consensus-based protocol that can combine independent scoring, facilitated discussion and explicit resolution of divergence thresholds, rather than relying exclusively on statistical averaging procedures. These scores are then represented in a radar chart (see Figure 1), providing a visual profile of strategic strengths and weaknesses across dimensions. Consistent with the configurational logic of RECAP, the overall pattern of alignment across dimensions may be as important as the strength of any individual dimension. Therefore, it is proposed that:



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**Proposition 5.** *Firms exhibiting a balanced RECAP profile demonstrate greater strategic resilience than firms with uneven profiles, as alignment across all five dimensions reduces systemic vulnerability to environmental disruption.*

Beyond the graphical representation, the framework is intended as a reflective process, encouraging decision-makers to interrogate not only the absolute level of each dimension but also the coherence and alignment among them. The visual radar chart produced at the end serves as both a communication tool and a strategic roadmap, pointing to areas of imbalance or misalignment that warrant managerial attention. It should be noted, however, that the illustrative application presented in this study is intentionally simplified and serves only to demonstrate the mechanics of the framework. Real-world applications may involve ambiguous evidence, overlapping dimensions, evaluator disagreement and competing strategic priorities, all of which may affect the assessment process and interpretation of results. Examining how RECAP performs under such conditions represents an important avenue for future research.

Overall, RECAP may offer several distinctive advantages. It translates abstract theoretical constructs into a user-friendly diagnostic tool that is both academically solid and managerially actionable. By integrating the internal focus of RBV with the external orientation of positioning theory, it bridges a persistent gap in the strategy literature. Its structured scoring mechanism is intended to promote transparency and consistency in strategic assessments and may facilitate comparability across different contexts, subject to future empirical validation. Most importantly, RECAP encourages strategic reflection as an ongoing process rather than a static assessment, making it particularly valuable for firms operating in dynamic and uncertain environments.

## 4 | Step-By-Step Illustrative Application

The following application draws on a purposefully constructed illustrative case rather than empirical field data. This methodological choice is deliberate. At this stage of the framework's development, a fictional firm offers greater pedagogical clarity: it allows the logic of each RECAP step to be demonstrated in an unambiguous, controlled setting, free from confidentiality constraints, contextual noise and data gaps that characterize real organizational cases. As such, this application should be understood as a protocol demonstration of the RECAP framework rather than an empirical validation exercise. Its purpose is to illustrate how the framework is operationalized in practice, how the five dimensions are assessed and how diagnostic outputs are generated. No inferential claims regarding causality, predictive validity or performance explanation are made. The goal is strictly procedural and illustrative: to show how RECAP works as a diagnostic instrument, not to test its empirical validity.

GreenTech Solutions is a fictional technology-based small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) operating in the residential solar energy sector. The company holds several patents related to smart sensors, has established a reputation for fast design-test cycles and is now planning international expansion. This context offers an opportunity to demonstrate how RECAP provides an integrative and structured diagnosis of strategic strengths and vulnerabilities. The process unfolds through seven structured steps.

*Step 1*—Scope and unit of analysis. The analysis begins by defining the unit of interest as the residential solar business in the European market over a 24-month horizon. This boundary setting is essential to avoid conceptual drift and ensures that stakeholders, evidence and scores are consistently aligned with the defined scope.

*Step 2*—Evidence collection. Evidence is gathered from multiple sources, including internal documents such as intellectual property portfolios, product roadmaps and financial statements; semi-structured interviews with heads of R&D, operations, partnerships and finance; and external sources such as installer network coverage and competitor offerings. This triangulation ensures robustness and mitigates the biases inherent in relying on a single data source. In situations where relevant data is incomplete or unavailable, RECAP adopts a principle of "structured inference". Rather than excluding a dimension or postponing evaluation, assessors may rely on proxy indicators, benchmarking against comparable firms and informed managerial judgment. All assumptions underlying such estimations must be explicitly documented to ensure transparency and enable future revision when additional data becomes available.

*Step 3*—Scoring protocol. Each RECAP dimension is rated on a standardized scale ranging from "1" (very weak) to "5" (excellent). As a general guideline, a score of "1" indicates severe deficiencies that significantly constrain strategic performance; "2" reflects important weaknesses requiring managerial attention; "3" denotes an adequate but unexceptional position; "4" indicates a clear strength relative to competitors; and "5" represents an outstanding and strategically distinctive condition supported by strong evidence. These anchors are intended to guide evaluators while preserving the flexibility required to accommodate different organizational and industry contexts. Importantly, scoring is not a purely numerical exercise. Each assessment must be supported by evidence-based justifications and potential disagreements among evaluators are resolved through a facilitated consensus workshop. In this sense, the RECAP scoring system should be understood as a structured expert-judgment and evidence-based diagnostic protocol rather than a psychometrically validated measurement scale in the strict statistical sense. According to the MCDA literature (e.g., Gonçalves et al. 2026; Lacaze et al. 2025), scores are interpreted as ordinal diagnostic signals that support comparative analysis and strategic reflection, rather than interval-level measurements intended for econometric estimation. This protocol helps transform subjective impressions into collective judgments grounded in data.

In terms of facilitation, the RECAP process can be led either by an internal strategic manager (e.g., strategy officer, planning director or senior project manager), by an external facilitator (e.g., academic researcher or consultant) or through a hybrid arrangement combining both roles. Internal facilitation enhances



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contextual knowledge and organizational buy-in, whereas external facilitation may reduce cognitive and political bias. In practice, the choice of facilitator should be guided by the level of internal methodological maturity, the sensitivity of the strategic issues under analysis and the availability of neutral expertise.

To strengthen the reliability of the scoring process, several safeguards are recommended. First, assessors should be selected to represent functionally diverse perspectives, including operations, finance, R&D and strategy, so that no single viewpoint dominates the evaluation. Second, an initial independent scoring round, conducted before the consensus workshop, enables inter-rater agreement to be assessed. Where divergence across evaluators exceeds one point on the five-point scale, the underlying evidence should be revisited and the rationale for the score made explicit before consensus is reached. When disagreements persist after workshop discussion, a structured resolution process is applied: (1) divergent scores are re-examined against the underlying evidence to distinguish interpretation differences from information gaps; (2) anonymized re-scoring may be conducted to mitigate anchoring and conformity effects; and (3) if divergence remains, the final score may be derived through weighted aggregation of expert judgments or, where appropriate, privileging domain-specific expertise relevant to the dimension under assessment. This sequential resolution logic is designed to progressively shift decision-making from opinion-based disagreement to evidence-weighted convergence, while preserving transparency in how final judgments are produced. In doing so, it constitutes a structured RECAP workshop protocol for guided strategic diagnosis.

All scores should be accompanied by written justifications referencing specific evidence (e.g., KPI data, interview excerpts or documentary sources), creating an auditable record that enhances transparency and allows the assessment to be reproduced or updated over time. While no scoring protocol eliminates subjectivity entirely, these steps move RECAP from impressionistic judgment toward a structured and defensible evaluative process. It is important to note that the RECAP scoring process should not be interpreted as a fully rational or purely consensus-driven decision model. In practice, organizational decision-making, particularly in SMEs operating under environmental uncertainty, often reflects ambiguity, time pressure and political negotiation, consistent with non-linear perspectives such as the Garbage Can Model of decision-making (Cohen et al. 1972). Within this context, RECAP functions as a structured sensemaking and boundary object rather than a deterministic optimization tool. It provides a shared diagnostic language that supports dialogue among stakeholders, while allowing for interpretive flexibility and adaptation in line with organizational realities.

As previously discussed in *Step 2*, in situations where relevant data is incomplete or partially unavailable, RECAP explicitly allows the use of triangulated proxy indicators, expert elicitation and iterative updating of scores as new information becomes available. In other words, where data limitations are substantial, assessors should explicitly document the level of confidence associated with each score and revise assessments as additional evidence emerges. Thus, rather than treating missing data as a blocking constraint, the framework accommodates it as part of the iterative and adaptive nature of strategic diagnosis in real organizational contexts.

### 4.1 | *Step 4*—Populate the RECAP Matrix

Table 2 presents the diagnostic matrix for GreenTech Solutions. The company scores 4 on *Resources* (R) due to its distinctive sensor patents, skilled engineering team and adequate capital base. *Embeddedness* (E) receives a score of 3, reflecting well-integrated local routines but limited international process alignment. *Capabilities* (C) emerge as a key strength, with a score of 5, underpinned by rapid prototyping cycles, customer-feedback integration and strong organizational learning. *Appropriability* (A), however, is rated 3, since international industrial property (IP) coverage is incomplete and customer switching costs remain moderate. Finally, *Positioning* (P) is scored at 4, as the firm has achieved a clear differentiation niche in residential solar and has taken initial steps toward scaling.

### 4.2 | *Step 5*—Visualization

Figure 2 presents the RECAP radar chart, which translates the diagnostic scores into a visual profile. The chart reveals a pronounced peak in *Capabilities* (C), solid performance in *Resources* (R) and *Positioning* (P), and relatively weaker scores in *Embeddedness* (E) and *Appropriability* (A). The asymmetry in the radar profile makes the firm's vulnerabilities visible at a glance, signaling areas where strategic renewal is required.

*Step 6*—Interpretive diagnosis. The RECAP profile suggests that GreenTech is highly capability-driven, but its ability to sustain advantage is threatened by gaps in value capture and routine integration. In other words, while the firm can innovate quickly and engage customers effectively, it risks losing ground if it cannot secure stronger protection of its innovations or build more scalable operational processes. This interpretive diagnosis does not rely on a formal performance function but rather on pattern

**TABLE 2** | Recap diagnostic matrix for GreenTech Solutions.

| Dimension | Score (1–5) | Examples of indicators |
|---|---|---|
| R—Resources | 4 | Proprietary patents, skilled engineering team, adequate capital base. |
| E—Embeddedness | 3 | The local network with suppliers and installers is strong, but still weakly connected to international partners. |
| C—Capabilities | 5 | Rapid prototyping, customer-feedback integration, organizational learning. |
| A—Appropriability | 3 | Partial international IP coverage, moderate switching costs. |
| P—Positioning | 4 | Differentiated niche, initial scaling underway. |



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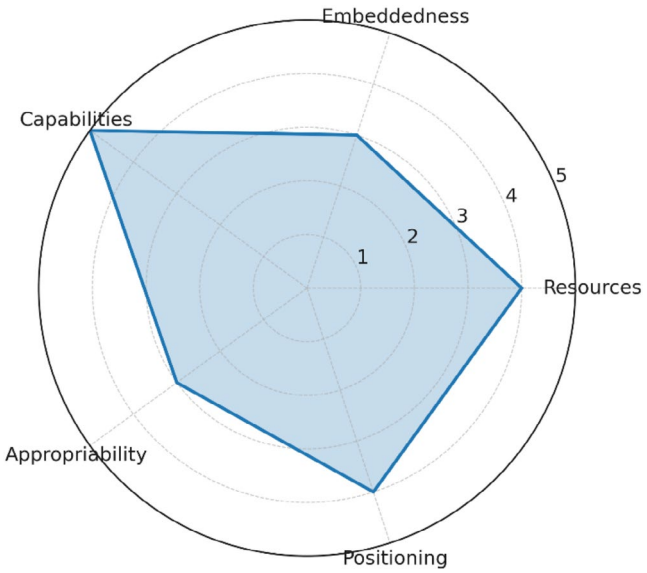



**FIGURE 2** | RECAP radar chart for GreenTech Solutions. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

recognition across dimensions and goes beyond descriptive scoring by providing direction for strategic action. In fact, RECAP intentionally avoids weighted aggregation or the calculation of a composite performance index. The objective is not to optimize a single score but rather to preserve the visibility of strengths, weaknesses and cross-dimensional asymmetries that support strategic diagnosis and managerial reflection.

*Step 7*—Action plan and monitoring. The final step translates diagnostic insights into a forward-looking agenda. For GreenTech, the priorities include reinforcing appropriability through international patenting and contractual safeguards and deepening embeddedness by codifying processes and strengthening partner integration. Progress should be monitored through KPIs such as the number of international patents filed, the percentage of partners under exclusivity agreements and the lead time from prototype to market. RECAP can then be reapplied periodically (e.g., during quarterly or annual planning cycles) to track how interventions reshape the firm's strategic profile over time.

Overall, this illustrative example demonstrates the practical value of RECAP as a novel diagnostic and developmental tool. By combining structured evidence collection, transparent scoring and visual representation, the framework not only surfaces current strengths and weaknesses but also generates actionable pathways for sustaining competitiveness in dynamic environments. A structured Excel-based RECAP toolkit is available as Supporting Information for the interested reader to support replication of the scoring process and facilitate its practical application in managerial settings.

## 5 | Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

RECAP addresses a longstanding gap in strategic management by bridging the fragmented perspectives of RBV, DCV and positioning theory (Barney 1991; Peteraf 1993; Porter 1980; Teece et al. 1997) into a single, operationalizable diagnostic instrument. This integrative orientation responds directly to recent calls for more pluralistic and problem-driven strategy research (Lacaze et al. 2025; Murcia et al. 2022).

### 5.1 | Addressing a Gap in the Literature

Existing approaches such as the RBV provide a valuable foundation for identifying valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources (Barney 1991). However, they often fall short in operationalizing diagnostic processes that managers can systematically apply in practice (Lacaze et al. 2025). Similarly, the dynamic capabilities literature emphasizes the ability to integrate, build and reconfigure resources (Teece 2007), yet empirical applications frequently remain abstract or retrospective (Di Stefano et al. 2014; Murcia et al. 2022). By contrast, RECAP operationalizes these insights into a forward-looking and evidence-based diagnostic tool, accessible both to scholars seeking analytical clarity and to practitioners in need of actionable guidance. This contribution is aligned with recent attempts to bridge the theory-practice divide in strategy (Davis and DeWitt 2021; Greve 2021; Lacaze et al. 2025; Whittington 2019). Importantly, RECAP does not introduce new theoretical constructs; rather, its contribution lies in integrating and operationalizing established perspectives into a coherent and usable diagnostic framework. Its novelty further resides in providing a structured mechanism through which the five dimensions can be assessed simultaneously, allowing researchers and practitioners to examine how they interact, reinforce or constrain one another. In this sense, the framework shifts attention from the isolated evaluation of strategic constructs toward the diagnosis of their collective configuration, enabling the identification of strategic inconsistencies, latent vulnerabilities and cross-dimensional tensions that may remain obscured in standalone analyses. Furthermore, it conceptualizes strategic performance as a configurational outcome emerging from the interaction and coherence among dimensions, rather than as the result of a formal predictive or econometric model.

### 5.2 | Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, RECAP can serve as a platform for cumulative research. By generating structured diagnostic profiles across diverse firms and industries, future studies could advance comparative analyses of strategic strengths and weaknesses. Over time, such studies may contribute to theory refinement by identifying systematic patterns (e.g., how particular RECAP profiles are associated with different performance trajectories or innovation outcomes). Furthermore, the explicit inclusion of dimensions such as *Appropriability* (A) and *Embeddedness* (E) highlights domains that are often under-theorized in traditional strategy frameworks, offering opportunities for new conceptual development. Importantly, the configurational logic underpinning RECAP suggests that strategic outcomes should be understood as emerging from patterns of alignment and misalignment across dimensions. Although the present study does not seek to establish a formal typology of such patterns, the framework provides a foundation for future research to identify recurring strategic profiles and examine their association with organizational



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outcomes. This perspective opens new avenues for investigating whether particular combinations of strengths and weaknesses systematically influence organizational resilience, innovation capacity and long-term competitive advantage.

### 5.3 | Managerial Implications

For managers, RECAP is intended to provide an intuitive yet rigorous learning tool. By visualizing the asymmetries of an organization's strategic profile, it allows executives to identify blind spots that might otherwise remain hidden. For example, a firm with strong technological capabilities but weak appropriability may realize that its innovations risk being captured by competitors, thereby informing corrective actions. Moreover, the framework fosters collective reflection by encouraging multi-stakeholder input into the scoring process, which enhances transparency and organizational alignment (Gonçalves et al. 2026). In this way, RECAP serves not only as a diagnostic device but also as a facilitation instrument for strategic dialogue and decision-making (Ramos et al. 2025). While RECAP introduces structure into strategic diagnosis, it does not assume fully rational or coordinated decision-making processes. Instead, it acknowledges that managerial interpretation, negotiation and political dynamics shape how diagnostic outputs are translated into action. In this sense, RECAP is best understood as an enabling instrument for sensemaking rather than a prescriptive decision algorithm.

### 5.4 | Societal Implications

The societal implications of RECAP lie in its potential to enhance organizational sustainability and resilience. Firms that adopt a more holistic diagnostic perspective are better positioned to align their strategies with societal challenges, including those captured by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, by explicitly considering *Embeddedness* (E), RECAP highlights how firms' routines and networks can be leveraged to strengthen collaboration with local communities and stakeholders. Similarly, the *Positioning* (P) dimension encourages organizations to reflect not only on competitive differentiation but also on their broader societal role in promoting sustainability, inclusivity and responsible innovation.

### 5.5 | Limitations and Recommendations

RECAP is still in its early stages of development and should not be interpreted as an optimal solution for strategic diagnosis. Instead, it is best understood as a learning tool, a structured method that stimulates evidence-based reflection, generates dialogue and uncovers areas of vulnerability and opportunity.

Three specific limitations deserve attention. First, the scoring process, while structured, remains partially subjective and its reliability depends on the quality of evidence and the diversity of evaluators involved. Even if scoring inevitably involves some degree of judgment, the reliability safeguards outlined in *Step 3* mitigate this risk and provide a foundation for inter-rater testing in future empirical applications. Second, the framework's simplicity, which is also one of its strengths, may underrepresent the complexity of some industries or multinational operations. Third, although RECAP incorporates a capabilities dimension that reflects organizational adaptation and reconfiguration, the framework itself is primarily intended as a diagnostic tool providing a structured assessment at a particular point in time. Repeated applications may support the analysis of strategic evolution by allowing changes in RECAP profiles to be tracked over time. Such longitudinal use could help identify emerging patterns of alignment and misalignment across dimensions and provide insights into how firms adapt to changing competitive conditions. However, the framework does not currently model temporal dynamics, causal feedback mechanisms or path dependencies explicitly. Extending RECAP to incorporate such dynamic features represents an important opportunity for future research. Finally, more empirical validation is needed to establish robust links between RECAP profiles and long-term performance outcomes.

Despite these limitations, RECAP should be seen as a promising addition to the methodological repertoire of strategic management. By offering a structured yet flexible lens for diagnosing alignment between internal and external factors, it provides fertile ground for future research and practical experimentation. As the framework matures and is tested in diverse organizational settings, further empirical research will help clarify its practical usefulness and its contribution to strategic management theory and practice.

## 6 | Conclusion

This study set out to address two questions: how a diagnostic framework can systematically surface gaps between internal resources and external market demands, and how it can translate that diagnosis into actionable strategic priorities. The RECAP analysis responds to both. Through a structured seven-step application to the illustrative case of GreenTech Solutions, the framework demonstrated that firms could move beyond descriptive inventories of strengths and weaknesses toward a dynamic, evidence-based assessment of strategic alignment—one that is simultaneously rigorous and accessible to practitioners.

Three specific contributions follow from this work. First, RECAP operationalizes the theoretical integration of RBV, DCV and positioning theory into a structured diagnostic framework that provides the basis for a potentially replicable assessment process, addressing a longstanding gap between conceptual richness and practical utility. Second, the diagnostic matrix and radar chart provide a transparent scoring mechanism that enables cross-firm and cross-industry comparability—a foundation that existing qualitative tools have lacked. Third, the explicit inclusion of *Embeddedness* (E) and *Appropriability* (A) as distinct diagnostic dimensions surfaces two domains consistently under-theorized in classical frameworks, offering strategy research a more granular lens for analyzing competitive durability.

The applicability of the RECAP framework is contingent on specific environmental and organizational boundary conditions. The framework is particularly suited to dynamic and



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moderately turbulent environments, where firms face ongoing pressure to reassess the alignment between internal resources, capabilities, embedded routines, appropriability mechanisms and external positioning. In highly stable environments, where strategic conditions remain relatively unchanged over time, simpler diagnostic tools may be sufficient. Conversely, in extremely high-velocity environments characterized by rapid and discontinuous change, RECAP should be used as a structured sensemaking instrument and complemented with real-time analytics and data-driven decision-support systems.

In terms of organizational context, RECAP is designed to be scale-flexible. In SMEs and startups, it is typically applied as a collective strategic reflection tool involving core decision-makers, enabling rapid alignment and shared understanding. In multinational organizations, RECAP can be deployed in a more distributed manner across business units or subsidiaries, supporting cross-unit comparison and portfolio-level strategic diagnosis. This flexibility makes the framework adaptable across organizational sizes, while preserving its core diagnostic logic.

Looking ahead, three avenues for future research are particularly pressing. Longitudinal studies tracking RECAP profiles over time would test whether improvements in specific dimensions translate into measurable performance gains. Cross-industry applications would assess the framework's generalizability and identify whether certain RECAP configurations are systematically associated with particular competitive outcomes. Finally, integration with digital and data-driven decision-support systems—including real-time KPI dashboards—could automate periodic reassessment, transforming RECAP from a periodic diagnostic exercise into a continuous strategic monitoring tool.

RECAP is not a finished product; it is a starting point. As it is tested, refined and extended across diverse organizational and institutional contexts, it has the potential to become a valuable addition to the strategic management toolkit—one that equips both scholars and practitioners to navigate the persistent challenge of aligning internal strengths with an ever-shifting external landscape.


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### Ethics Statement

The authors confirm their unwavering commitment to the highest ethical standards. All the information used will be available upon request, and all funding sources have been declared. Any reproduced material is appropriately credited. All authors have directly participated in the planning and execution of the study and have read and approved the final version submitted. The contents of this manuscript have not been previously published.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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**Supporting Information**

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Supplementary Data 1.** Step-by-step illustrative example of a RECAP application for prospective users. The supplementary Excel file provides a practical, step-by-step illustration of the application of the RECAP approach, guiding prospective users through its implementation and illustrating the main stages of the proposed methodology.



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