

2 CONVENTIONAL PRACTICE

If the normal abduction approach of creating a new “what” doesn’t help, the organization may need to go into “design abduction” mode, which also requires them to create a new “how.” The organization might simply use one of the other frames that it already has in its repertoire, in its internal “discourse.” In doing so, it largely stays within its comfort zone and just applies a different existing practice to a specific case. The need to build a rich professional discourse to draw from is the reason designers often have material from old projects pinned to their office walls, as a constant peripheral-vision reminder of the frames and solutions they might want to build on in projects to come. Designers often draw on pretty far-flung associations and metaphors to enable the transfer of frames from one project to the next, imaginative bridges that enable the reuse of the old material within a new context. As discussed in chapter 3, leaders of design agencies spend a major amount of effort and time strategically elaborating on their repertoire of frames, making sure these frames are expressed and present in the practice of the firm, and that they are developed in a continuous evolution of the discourse. If this stack of frames is not shaken up periodically, the conventional practice of an organization might become hard to change.

3 FRAME ADOPTION

Alternatively, the organization might hire an external party that uses his or her experience to bring a new frame to the problematic situation. That frame could be employed by the organization for this particular project as a one-off application, or it might prove to be of significant worth and enter the organization’s own discourse as an integral part of its problem-solving capability. When the frame becomes integrated in this way, it extends the problem-solving repertoire of the organization, and might be reapplied at a later date. This is often what designers and other external consultants hope for, because once a new frame has been successfully adopted and integrated, it becomes an avenue to extend the conversation with the organization to a strategic level. Adopting frames from outside parties is a key renewal strategy for organizations: the application of a new and different frame will lead to new experiences and, on reflection, to new lessons that can be learned. This is an important (though often implicit) learning mechanism for many organizations. But equally, the superficial adoption of an externally offered frame can be a strategy that keeps real change at bay, as the organization reaps the benefits from the one-off