

problem-solving. These deeper principles capture the core of this approach, and can be applied in processes of many shapes and sizes. For ease of use, the principles of frame creation have been expressed as ten “golden rules” (see figure 5.1).

The first four of these golden rules deal with the general principles that underlie the frame creation approach to problem-solving. The next three describe what “quality” is in the most important frame creation stages. The final three are strategies for applying frame creation in the broader context of organizational transformation.

1 ATTACK THE CONTEXT

The key principle of frame creation lies in its approach to a problem situation. Expert designers have shown us that open, complex, dynamic, and networked problems often cannot be solved directly, at least not in the terms in which they are presented. The problem and its formulation have their roots in a specific context that needs to be critically appraised and altered before the problem itself can be attacked. As we saw in case 6 on the independent living of the mentally handicapped, the problem as originally presented to the Young Designers foundation was described in terms of loneliness and isolation. The designers broke this mold in two consecutive steps: first, they realized that the “mentally handicapped” are a group that is defined by what they cannot do. Therefore, they are inadvertently seen as completely passive members of their new neighborhoods—a position that in itself contributes to their isolation. The designers escaped from this original frame of reference by looking at the possible ways these mentally handicapped people could contribute to local society, for example by creating appropriate jobs in the community. This would be a first step toward being recognized and valued, and to bring the mentally handicapped into contact with the people around them. In a second step, the designers realized that not only had the problem been framed in the wrong terms, but that a much deeper issue lurked underneath: because the organizations that care for the mentally handicapped felt they could only accept this responsibility by isolating the handicapped from their environment, they unwittingly contributed to the problem. It is important to realize that these deceptively simple insights can be achieved only by a thorough investigation of the problem context. If the designers had just taken on the problem in the terms in which it was presented (the mentally handicapped are lonely), their solutions probably would not have gone much beyond organizing occasional