

The Framing Gap: Strategic Claim Bridging and the Limits of Generative AI Interpretation in Brand Representation

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Abstract

Generative AI systems increasingly mediate how brands are described, compared, and recommended. While such systems can retrieve evidence, generate candidate explanations, and synthesise existing patterns, this paper argues they cannot be relied upon to produce externally accountable, entity-specific, evidence-grounded interpretive frames without external support. The paper identifies that dependency as the **Framing Gap**: the gap between evidence available to a generative system and the interpretive context required for the system to describe a brand confidently and distinctively. A three-level model of brand-AI communication is proposed: *Scattered Proof of claims*, where evidence exists but remains disconnected; *Connected Proof of claims*, where claims and corroboration are explicitly linked; and *Framed Proof of claims*, where the brand supplies a logically structured interpretation of why the evidence matters.

The paper introduces **Strategic Claim Bridging** as the mechanism by which Framed Proof of claims is produced: the externally accountable selection of a beneficial derived conclusion from accepted facts, and the construction of a logical bridge that allows generative systems to transmit that conclusion as grounded representation. **Externally Accountable Frame Authorship** is identified as the accountability dimension of Strategic Claim Bridging. The central problem is not that generative systems cannot generate inferences, nor that they cannot rank candidates when supplied with criteria. They can. The problem is that AI cannot supply the external authority, accountability, or consequence-bearing role that turns one selected derived

conclusion into the entity's public frame. Strategic Claim Bridging operates iteratively rather than as a single act: a brand's representational position is built from many bridges compounding over time, with each successfully transmitted conclusion becoming an anchored fact in the corpus that supports subsequent bridges.

The **Frame Ambition Ladder** measures the *Creative Leap* between accepted facts and the derived conclusion the brand wants the system to transmit, with three rungs of increasing leap distance and proof requirement above a baseline state the paper calls *Standing Still*. The **Topical Expansion Frame** is positioned as the canonical worked example of authority transfer into adjacent territory, with an *adjacency test* formalised as the constraint that distinguishes valid topical expansion from topical laundering. The paper argues that interpretive selection pressure operating at the system layer rewards entities whose framing reduces interpretive burden, and proposes that this pressure is consistent with mechanics already established at the search and knowledge-graph layers. Five testable predictions are advanced for measuring citation frequency, description stability, frame-ambition outcomes, topical transfer, and faithful frame reproduction.

Keywords

Framing Gap; Strategic Claim Bridging; Externally Accountable Frame Authorship; Framed Proof of claims; Frame Ambition Ladder; Topical Expansion Frame; Empathy for the Machine; Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition; Compounding Authority; abductive reasoning; large language models; generative AI; AI search; brand visibility; entity resolution; framing theory; citation faithfulness; selection pressure

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1. Introduction

Every brand holds its claims and, somewhere in the archive of its digital life, the proof to back them up. Generative answer systems (the systems behind ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI Overviews, and equivalent services) may have access to parts of that proof through training data, retrieval indexes, search integrations, or tool-mediated retrieval, but that access does not guarantee that the evidence will be connected, attributed, or interpreted in the brand's intended terms. The audience holds a need and frequently lacks the vocabulary to bridge the gap between what they want and what either the brand or the system already knows.

All three parties lack the same thing. Not information, not intelligence, not effort. They lack a frame: the interpretive context that would make the scattered pieces cohere into a description worth transmitting (for the brand), worth citing (for the system), and worth acting on (for the user). This paper formalises that absence, identifies its origin in the relationship between corpus-grounded retrieval and externally accountable interpretation, and argues that the brand is the party best positioned to supply the missing layer because it holds the operational intent, the accountability for the resulting description, and the desired interpretation.

The central problem is not that generative systems cannot generate inferences. They can. The problem is that, from the same accepted facts, many conclusions may be derivable: some obvious, some valuable, some irrelevant, and some damaging. The brand's work is to select the conclusion that accurately serves its strategic representation, then build the bridge from accepted facts to that conclusion in a form generative systems can verify and transmit. This paper terms that operation *Strategic Claim Bridging*¹, and argues it is the mechanism by which Framed Proof of claims² is produced.

A second observation runs alongside the first and explains why most brands do not perform Strategic Claim Bridging even when they are working hard on representation. Brands operate inside their own representational context. They see the connecting tissue between their own facts because they know the story those facts belong to. They see the obvious interpretation of their own evidence because they have been inside the evidence the whole time. The system has access to none of that interior context. The work of stepping outside the brand's perspective to identify what the system actually struggles with when grounding, attributing, and synthesising

¹Previously referred to as *Strategic Bridging* in earlier framework documents and the SEL practitioner series through November 2026. Renamed to *Strategic Claim Bridging* to make the per-claim unit of operation explicit in the term itself.

²Levels previously named *Scattered Proof*, *Connected Proof*, and *Framed Proof*. Renamed to *Scattered/Connected/Framed Proof of claims* to make explicit that each level describes the state of a single claim, not a brand state. Brand-level position is the cumulative outcome of many claims reaching the relevant level.

claims about the brand is what the author has elsewhere termed *Empathy for the Machine* (formally, *machine-oriented perspective-taking*; Barnard, 2020; concept traced by the author to client consulting from 2011/2012). The two failure modes below Framed Proof of claims — Scattered Proof of claims and what this paper calls Standing Still — both stem from the same underlying cause: brands delegating to the system work the system cannot perform on the brand's behalf, because the brand has not extended Empathy for the Machine far enough to identify what the system actually needs.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 establishes the theoretical foundation in Peirce's distinction between deduction, induction, and abduction, summarises the active debate over abductive reasoning in large language models, and introduces *Strategic Claim Bridging* as a narrower operation than abduction in general, with *Externally Accountable Frame Authorship* as its accountability dimension. Section 3 develops a three-level model of brand-AI communication. Sections 4 to 6 specify the conditions and operational protocol for the highest level. Section 7 engages directly with the counter-argument that generative systems sometimes appear to perform abductive reasoning, develops the *Empathy for the Machine* disposition (formally, *machine-oriented perspective-taking*) that distinguishes Strategic Claim Bridging from candidate inference generation, and locates the paper inside the existing scholarly debate rather than outside it. Section 8 sets out the three structurally distinct functions framing performs. Section 9 introduces the *Frame Ambition Ladder* as a Creative Leap scale with three rungs of meaningful Strategic Claim Bridging above a baseline state the paper calls *Standing Still*. Section 10 establishes the three-dimensional movement architecture (*Depth*, *Coverage*, and *Neighbouring Topics*) within which Strategic Claim Bridging operates. Section 11 introduces the three structurally distinct **Bridge Types** (*Generative*, *Reframing*, *Elevation*) and argues for orthogonality between Bridge Type, movement dimension, and Creative Leap amplitude as the load-bearing claim about the strategic move-space. Section 12 formalises the *Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition* as a temporal mechanism for Framed Proof of claims establishment, including a 12–18 month diagnostic hypothesis for convergence and the *Compounding Authority* principle (formally, *cumulative corroboration weight*); a manipulation guardrail is stated explicitly. Section 13 positions the *Topical Expansion Frame* as the canonical worked example of a Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics, with the **adjacency test** as the constraint that distinguishes valid topical expansion from topical laundering. Section 14 covers a partial inversion of inbound link dependency in digital public relations and the structural defensibility argument that follows. Section 15 introduces the *Claim-Frame-Prove* protocol as the practitioner instantiation of the academic model, clarifies that the protocol operates iteratively, claim by claim and fact by fact, and formalises *density*, *coverage*, and *weight* as the three properties of cumulative dominance at brand altitude. Section 16 proposes a selection-pressure hypothesis connecting the Framing Gap to a principle that has driven search-engine selection mechanics for two decades. Section 17 sets out five testable predictions and the empirical work required to evaluate them. Section 18 concludes. Appendix A presents an extended worked example illustrating the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition; the methodology of the worked-example treatment is discussed in the limitations note in Section 17.6.

A note on terminology before the argument proceeds. This paper uses *proof* in a practitioner sense, not in the mathematical, legal, or philosophical sense of formal proof. In this context, *proof* means retrievable, independently verifiable corroborating evidence that a generative system can use when grounding, attributing, or synthesising claims about an entity. The practitioner framework formalised here uses the terms *Scattered Proof of claims*, *Connected Proof of claims*, and *Framed Proof of claims* to describe three operational states in brand-AI communication. In academic register, the corresponding analytical terms may be read as *Scattered Evidence*, *Connected Evidence*, and *Framed Evidence*. The paper preserves the practitioner terminology because part of its purpose is to establish and formalise that terminology, while using *evidence* where analytical precision requires it. *Generative answer systems* refers throughout to the class of systems that combine retrieval, grounding, and synthesis to produce natural-language descriptions of entities in response to user queries, including but not limited to ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI Overviews, and equivalent services. Where the paper later refers to *AI Assistive Engines*, the term denotes the same class of systems described from the perspective of a brand whose representation is being assisted by them.

1.1 Methodological Status

This paper is conceptual theory-building. It synthesises practitioner observation, existing framing theory in communication research and linguistic semantics, the active scholarly debate over abductive reasoning in large language models, and information-retrieval mechanics into a falsifiable model of brand-AI communication. It does not claim empirical validation.

The model proposes mechanisms that can be tested through controlled experimentation across multiple brands, multiple AI systems, and varied retrieval conditions. The empirical commitments and five testable predictions are set out in Section 17, with measurement specifications and a limitations note (Section 17.6) acknowledging where the present argument exceeds what current evidence supports.

The author's own dated public work is used illustratively in several sections because it offers direct access to the dated public record that an external case at equivalent depth would not provide. Stylised cases drawn from other professional and institutional contexts appear alongside, so that the model is exercised against more than one entity. **The author case is not used as evidence that the model is valid.** The methodological limitation that follows from author-case illustration is acknowledged explicitly throughout and is treated formally in Section 17.6. The paper is published as a conceptual working paper (Version 1.0) to establish dated authorship of the model and invite scholarly and practitioner engagement ahead of empirical and peer-reviewed development.

2. Theoretical Foundation: Reasoning Modes, LLM Abduction, and the Need for a Narrower Term

2.1 Peirce's Three Modes of Reasoning

Charles Sanders Peirce distinguished three modes of inference (Peirce, 1903). *Deduction* derives conclusions from premises: if A and B, then C. *Induction* extracts patterns from data: these hundred instances suggest a rule. *Abduction*, in Peirce's original formulation, is inference to the best explanation: given observations no existing theory fully accounts for, abduction generates the hypothesis that would, if true, best explain them. Edward de Bono later popularised a related but distinct cognitive move under the name *lateral thinking* (de Bono, 1967): stepping outside the frame the evidence suggests and generating one the evidence has not yet been organised into. The two formulations differ in scope and scholarly context. Peirce provides the technical account of explanatory hypothesis formation in the philosophy of science; de Bono identifies a broader family of non-obvious cognitive moves in problem-solving and ideation. Strategic Claim Bridging, as developed in this paper, draws from this wider territory of non-obvious interpretive movement but is not reducible to either: it is narrower than lateral thinking (it is strategic, entity-specific, and externally accountable in ways general lateral thinking need not be) and orthogonal to abduction in the Peircean sense (its central problem is selection and accountability rather than the generation of an explanatory hypothesis for a surprising observation). Frame-theoretic accounts in communication research (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974) and in linguistic semantics (Fillmore, 1982) provide the complementary account of how interpretive structures, once authored, organise reception, salience, and downstream interpretation.

2.2 The Active Debate Over Abductive Reasoning in Large Language Models

Whether large language models perform abductive reasoning is an active research question, not a settled one. A unified taxonomy of abductive reasoning in LLMs has been proposed, organised around hypothesis generation and hypothesis selection as two distinct sub-operations (Salimi et al., 2026). Sceptical positions argue that what appears abductive in LLM output is generated from learned linguistic patterns and lacks grounding, verification, and truth-tracking, producing what has been called "abductive appearance" without genuine inferential commitment (Floridi et al., 2025).

This paper does not seek to resolve that debate. It accepts that current generative systems can produce candidate explanations, analogies, and hypotheses, and that the operation has genuine cognitive utility. It also accepts that the question of whether such outputs constitute abduction in the Peircean sense is contested. The paper's argument operates at a narrower level than the general philosophical question.

2.3 Strategic Claim Bridging as a Narrower Operation

The operation this paper is concerned with is not abductive reasoning in general. It is a narrower communicative operation: the externally accountable selection of a beneficial derived conclusion from accepted facts, and the construction of a logical bridge that allows a generative system to transmit that conclusion as grounded representation rather than as self-description. This paper terms the operation **Strategic Claim Bridging**.

The mechanics are direct. Given accepted facts A and B about an entity, multiple conclusions are derivable. Some are obvious ($A + B \rightarrow C$, where C represents the category-level descriptions the system would generate without prompting). Some are commercially valuable ($A + B \rightarrow J$, where J is a non-obvious but logically supportable conclusion that differentiates the entity in the market). Some are commercially transformative ($A + B \rightarrow Q$, where Q is a transformational reach requiring consensus-level proof to survive). Some are damaging (conclusions technically supportable from the facts but actively harmful to the entity's positioning). Some are irrelevant (conclusions accurate but useless for the entity's representation). The strategic act is *selecting* the J that serves the entity. The bridging act is *publishing* the logical chain from {A, B} to J in a form retrieval and synthesis can use.

This paper uses J to denote the beneficial derived conclusion selected by the entity, in place of the more conventional H, to avoid notational collision with hypothesis-set notation in adjacent abductive-reasoning literature. The notation Z is reserved exclusively for the third spatial axis (Neighbouring Topics) in the three-dimensional movement architecture introduced in Section 10; transformational amplitude in the leap-amplitude scale uses Q.

Strategic Claim Bridging differs from abduction as conventionally understood in three respects. It does not necessarily begin with a surprising observation requiring explanation; many beneficial J values are not surprising at all. It does not require generating a hypothesis that is novel relative to all prior knowledge; many beneficial J values are recombinations of conclusions present elsewhere in the corpus, applied to a specific entity for the first time. And it requires a property abductive reasoning in general does not require: external accountability for the consequences of the conclusion, borne by an identifiable real-world entity.

Strategic Claim Bridging differs from lateral thinking (de Bono, 1967) similarly. Lateral thinking describes general non-obvious problem-solving and applies broadly. Strategic Claim Bridging is narrower: strategic, entity-specific, evidence-grounded, and externally accountable.

2.4 Externally Accountable Frame Authorship: The Accountability Dimension

Strategic Claim Bridging requires four properties simultaneously: originality of interpretation relative to the dominant reading of the underlying evidence; entity specificity; evidentiary

grounding; and external accountability. The fourth property is the one corpus-grounded systems definitionally cannot supply on a brand's behalf, and the paper terms this property **Externally Accountable Frame Authorship**: the requirement that a real-world entity takes responsibility for the frame's accuracy, future correction, and the consequences of the system transmitting it.

In brand contexts, external accountability is usually commercial accountability: the entity bears reputational, legal, economic, and strategic consequences for the frame. In academic, institutional, NGO, public-figure, and expert-practitioner contexts, the same property holds with non-commercial consequences. Externally Accountable Frame Authorship is therefore not a brand-specific concept but the accountability dimension of any externally authored frame, with brand contexts as the primary application explored in this paper.

Current corpus-grounded generative systems may produce candidate frames at scale; this paper argues they cannot be relied upon to produce frames that are simultaneously novel, entity-specific, evidence-grounded, and externally accountable, because each of those four properties depends on something the system does not internally possess: original operational intent, a real-world identity to attribute the frame to, a relationship between claim and external proof that the system did not author, and a party that bears the consequences of the frame's adoption.

The narrower question this paper asks is therefore: in entity representation contexts, can generative systems be relied upon to perform Strategic Claim Bridging? The paper argues that they cannot, and that the gap is not principally a function of model capability. The corollary, which is the practical contribution of the paper, is that the entity is the party best positioned to perform Strategic Claim Bridging on its own behalf, and the assets the entity produces in performing it are increasingly load-bearing for how AI systems describe, compare, and recommend.

The claim advanced here is therefore not that generative systems lack all abductive capacity, nor that they cannot generate useful candidate explanations. The claim is narrower: AI can infer, but it has no strategic stake in which inference should win. A system may generate a candidate J; only an externally accountable entity can author, endorse, evidence, correct, and bear consequences for the J that becomes the entity's public frame.

This produces a measurable distinction between three levels of brand-AI communication, each one building on the previous and opening a category of opportunity the previous level cannot reach. Section 3 develops the three-level model, Section 4 formalises the conditions for the highest level, and Section 7 engages opposing literature directly while developing the Empathy for the Machine disposition that explains why Strategic Claim Bridging fails when brands remain locked inside their own perspective.

3. The Three-Level Model of Brand-AI Communication

The relationship between what a brand supplies and what an AI Assistive Engine transmits is the load-bearing observation this paper formalises. The same underlying entity, with the same proof base, can occupy three structurally distinct positions in the system's representation depending on what the brand provides, what the system can do with what it receives, and what the resulting output looks like for the audience that encounters it. The three levels are introduced here as a model and developed across the rest of the paper.

[FIGURE 2: PLACEHOLDER]

Caption: The Three Levels of Brand-AI Communication.

Description: A three-row, three-column matrix showing what the brand provides, how the AI responds, and the resulting outcome at each of the three levels. Row 1 (Level 1, Deductive): brand provides Scattered Proof of claims (unlinked evidence); AI hedges (deduces, then hedges); outcome is hedged mentions, mid-to-low pack. Row 2 (Level 2, Connective): brand provides Connected Proof of claims (linked to claims); AI is confident (transmits the facts); outcome is frequent mentions, convincing language. Row 3 (Level 3, Strategic): brand provides Framed Proof of claims (Strategic Claim Bridging); AI transmits the frame in the brand's own language; outcome is dominant mentions, enthused leadership.

Source file: [fig2-three-levels.png](#) (provided as [fig2-25-april.jpg](#)).

Note for typesetter: Figure currently labels the three levels as "Scattered proof / Connected proof / Framed proof" and the row 3 brand input as "Strategic Bridging". Update labels to "Scattered Proof of claims / Connected Proof of claims / Framed Proof of claims" and "Strategic Claim Bridging" before final deposit, to match the renamed corpus terminology established in this version of the paper.

3.1 Level 1 (Inference over Scattered Proof of claims): The Limits of Engine-Initiated Connection

The brand publishes Claim A on its website. Proof P exists somewhere else: a conference programme, an industry database, a Wikipedia citation, a trade publication from four years ago. The brand assumes the system will connect the two.

To connect them, the retrieval and synthesis layers must perform inference over scattered evidence. Whether the inference succeeds depends on entity resolution: how confidently the system has identified the entity, established its stable presence, and accumulated independent corroboration of its identity. Entity resolution and entity linking are well-developed research

areas in their own right (Kejriwal, 2023, on personal knowledge graphs; broader knowledge graph construction literature on entity linking and fusion), and AI-mediated representation inherits the constraints of that field.

Three sub-cases follow from the entity-resolution variable.

When entity resolution is weak and the proof is not explicitly linked to the claim, no connection is established. The proof is functionally invisible: retrieval has no traversable path between claim and corroboration, and synthesis therefore has no basis on which to assign confidence to the claim.

When entity resolution is weak but the proof is explicitly linked, the connection is made because the linkage substitutes for the entity-resolution work that could not be performed independently. Retrieval follows the pathway, registers the corroboration, and synthesis assigns confidence to the claim on the strength of the explicit connection alone.

When entity resolution is strong, the connection may be made even without an explicit link. A well-resolved entity shortens the inferential distance retrieval must traverse, and the connection may surface in synthesis without prompting. An explicit link still adds confidence (more than one path to the same conclusion improves selection likelihood), but the link is no longer load-bearing. The entity carries the work.

The implication is that entity clarity in the underlying knowledge graph is not a discretionary supplement to content work; it is a determining variable for whether content work must carry all the interpretive weight or almost none of it. Any proof that is not explicitly linked in copy or structured data is likely to be missed at the first sub-level, reliably caught at the second, and recovered without prompting at the third.

The observable result, where Scattered Proof of claims predominates, is consistent with the literature on hedging and confidence calibration in retrieval-augmented generation: a brand appears infrequently, and when it does, system output is qualified and the brand sits mid-to-low in comparative passages. Synthesis has performed the best inference it could and, because it is calibrated to express uncertainty when corroboration is weak, has hedged. Beyond the brand's individual queries, opportunities for inclusion are throttled across adjacent queries the proof should have pulled the brand into, because the underlying evidence was never connected to the claims those queries would have evaluated.

Level 1 (Scattered Proof of claims) outcome: the brand receives infrequent, hedged citations characterised by low-confidence selection language.

3.2 Level 2 (Connective): Connected Proof of claims and the Spectrum of Explicit Linkage

The brand publishes Claim A and explicitly connects it to Proof P, on the same page, in the same content, with the logical thread laid out in copy, in links, in structured data, in page architecture. This paper terms the resulting state *Connected Proof of claims*: a fact with every available piece of supporting evidence explicitly joined to it, leaving nothing for retrieval and synthesis to infer.

Connected Proof of claims operates on a spectrum, not as a binary state. At the low end, only some proof is connected. The system is no longer required to deduce the connections the brand has made, but it remains required to deduce the connections the brand has not. If a competitor has connected more of theirs, the brand still loses the comparison on the proof it left scattered. At the high end, all proof is connected: every claim joined to every piece of supporting evidence, with nothing left for the system to guess at. Most brands believe they operate at Connected Proof of claims because some of their proof is connected; in practice, most operate somewhere between Scattered and Connected, because the obvious connections have been made and the less-obvious ones have not.

Partially Connected Proof of claims secures the claims the brand has joined while leaving gaps where a competitor pulls ahead. Fully Connected Proof of claims secures every claim the brand can support, which makes the brand harder to displace when the system compares it against alternatives. The question for any brand operating at Level 2 is therefore where on the spectrum it actually sits, not whether it has "completed" a binary state.

Where Connected Proof of claims is comprehensive, retrieval follows the path, the corroboration threshold is reached, and synthesis produces affirmative descriptions of the brand. Confidence transfers cleanly because there is nothing to infer. Connected Proof of claims is hypothesised to outperform competition that has not progressed beyond Scattered Proof of claims, especially where the comparison depends on claims for which the connected entity has explicit corroboration and the scattered entity does not. The asymmetry favours smaller entities competing against larger ones: the smaller entity cannot compete on raw proof volume, but it can compete by explicitly connecting the dots for the proof it does have.

To illustrate, consider a stylised comparison between a specialist accounting firm and a Big Four firm. The Big Four firm holds thousands of pieces of scattered proof (case studies, awards, partner biographies, conference appearances, regulatory filings) sitting unconnected across its digital footprint. The specialist firm holds fifty pieces, all explicitly connected to its specific positioning. The system observes substantially more verifiable substance from the specialist firm than from the Big Four firm on that specific positioning, because connection is what transforms proof into substance the synthesis layer can use and transmit. The Big Four firm's scattered

proof contributes little to its representation on the dimension that matters; the specialist firm's connected proof carries it.

Level 2 (Connected Proof of claims) outcome: the brand receives more frequent and higher-confidence citations, with affirmative description language.

3.3 Level 3: Framed Proof of claims and Strategic Claim Bridging

The brand publishes Claim A, connects the proof, and then performs the operation that current generative systems cannot be relied upon to perform on the brand's behalf: Strategic Claim Bridging. The brand selects a beneficial derived conclusion J from the space of conclusions $\{J_1, J_2, J_3, \dots\}$ that the accepted facts $\{A, B, \dots\}$ could support, and constructs the logical bridge from facts to J in a form retrieval and synthesis can use.

The selection move is where the brand's authority is decisive. From the same accepted facts, an obvious J might emerge automatically (the system would derive it without prompting). A damaging J might emerge that is logically supportable but actively harmful to the entity's positioning. A trivial J might emerge that is accurate but useless for representation. AI can generate candidate J values, and an AI agent supplied with brand goals, evaluation criteria, exemplars, and approval workflows can also rank candidates. What AI cannot supply is the external authority, accountability, and consequence-bearing role that turns one J into the entity's public frame. The selection question (which J should define this entity?) admits a strategic answer only in the presence of an entity to bear the consequences of the answer, and that entity sits outside the system.

The bridging move is what makes the chosen J transmissible. Not merely *we are the leader in X, demonstrated by Y*, but the bridge: why Y matters for the specific problem this audience faces, what the underlying proof signals about trust in this particular market, how the surrounding evidence translates to the outcome the prospect cares about at the moment of decision, and how all of this combines into J as the conclusion the brand wants the system to ground, verify, and transmit.

This is the layer at which Externally Accountable Frame Authorship operates as the accountability dimension of Strategic Claim Bridging, in the sense developed in Sections 2.3 and 2.4. The brand reasons strategically about its own proof, selects J from the space of derivable conclusions, supplies the bridge, and publishes the bridge in a form that is novel (not already the dominant reading in accessible sources), entity-specific (anchored to this brand), evidence-grounded (resting on independently verifiable proof), and externally accountable (the brand bears responsibility for the frame's accuracy). Synthesis can transmit the interpretation as a logical inference from corroborated facts because every component is verifiable independently and the connection between components is logical.

The observable result is qualitatively different from Connected Proof of claims: more frequent citation, more affirmative description, language closer to the brand's own preferred terms, and greater stability across retrieval contexts. Where Connected Proof of claims produces confidence, Framed Proof of claims produces preference, in the sense that comparative selection resolves more often in the brand's favour and description language reproduces the brand's engineered terms.

Level 3 (Framed Proof of claims) outcome: the brand receives high-confidence, more frequent, and more affirmative citations, with description language stable across retrieval contexts and competitive comparisons resolved more often in the brand's favour.

The remainder of the paper specifies the conditions under which Framed Proof of claims is achievable (Section 4), the protocol for converting aspirational language into machine-readable framing (Sections 5 and 6), the relationship between this argument, existing scepticism about LLM reasoning, and the Empathy for the Machine disposition (Section 7), the three structurally distinct functions framing performs (Section 8), and the operational mechanisms (Sections 9 to 13).

4. Conditions for Framed Proof of claims

Framed Proof of claims is the level at which the brand performs Strategic Claim Bridging successfully: the entity is resolved, the proof is connected, and the bridge from accepted facts to the selected beneficial J is logically structured. It is the level at which interpretive leadership is established in AI-mediated representation. Scattered Proof of claims and Connected Proof of claims are work most brands can complete with discipline and budget. Framed Proof of claims is the work that distinguishes interpretive leaders from competent participants.

Marketing and communication work supplies frames to humans routinely, and the framing-theory literature (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974) has long established that frame selection shapes reception. What that literature primarily addresses is human framing for human audiences. Framed Proof of claims requires a frame the *system* can use, and three conditions separate that operation from human-facing framing as usual. Failure on any one collapses the brand to Connected Proof of claims or below, regardless of how compelling the human-facing narrative reads.

4.1 Entity Resolution, Establishment, and Trust

The entity must be well resolved, established, and trusted. *Well resolved* means the system identifies unambiguously which entity the frame belongs to. *Established* means the entity has been present and consistent in accessible sources long enough for representation to treat it as a stable reference. *Trusted* means independent corroboration has loaded the entity with sufficient credibility for interpretations attached to it to inherit that credibility. A frame the system cannot anchor to that kind of entity is a frame the system cannot reliably attribute, and the

interpretation dissolves into the general representation instead of accruing to the brand that authored it. Entity resolution and canonicalisation are well-developed research problems (Kejriwal, 2023; broader knowledge-graph construction literature on entity linking and fusion), and AI-mediated representation inherits their constraints.

4.2 Underlying Connected Proof of claims

The underlying proof must be connected. Not all of it, but enough that the frame rests on something retrieval can traverse. Many brands present fluent narrative on top of scattered proof. That is not Framed Proof of claims; it is Scattered Proof of claims with a more attractive surface, and the resulting output remains vulnerable to the underlying disconnection.

4.3 Logical Structure of the Frame

The frame itself must be logically structured. Tone (warmth, register, confidence) is detectable in retrieved text and contributes to selection, but logically explicit claims are more likely to be grounded, verified, and preserved through synthesis than affective claims unsupported by traversable evidence. This is consistent with the framing-theory observation that frame uptake depends on coherent connection between premises and the conclusion the frame supports (Entman, 1993): the logical scaffolding is what distinguishes a frame from a slogan. It is also consistent with recent work on retrieval-augmented generation showing that even attributed answers can cite sources unfaithfully (Wallat et al., 2025). External supply of explicit logical structure increases grounding probability rather than guaranteeing system behaviour.

5. Aspirational versus Mechanical Framing

The distinction between aspirational and mechanical framing is the practical hinge for operating at Framed Proof of claims, and it maps directly onto the difference between asserting J and bridging to J. Aspirational framing states the desired conclusion. Mechanical framing shows why accepted facts {A, B, ...} support that conclusion in a form retrieval and synthesis can verify and transmit. Two frames built on the same underlying truth illustrate the asymmetry.

Jason Barnard is a visionary in AI search is aspirational framing. The human reader decodes it emotionally. The system has no way to engage with it because there is no logical structure to follow, no inference to verify, no claim it can transmit with confidence. It reads as the brand's opinion of itself.

Jason Barnard publicly used and developed Answer Engine Optimisation as a defined practice from 2018, made dated public predictions about how the field would unfold, and a substantial proportion of those predictions were borne out by subsequent industry developments; therefore his predictions about where the field is going next carry evidential support is mechanical framing. The system can follow the inference because every component is verifiable

independently and the connection between components is logical. It reads as a statement about the brand that an external observer could verify.

The same distinction applies outside the author case. *This firm is redefining compliance* is aspirational. *This firm has handled X category of compliance cases across Y regulated markets, with outcomes documented in N independent sources; therefore it has unusually deep operational visibility into cross-market compliance failure patterns* is mechanical. The aspirational version offers a slogan; the mechanical version offers a logical inference from corroborated facts that retrieval and synthesis can transmit as a verifiable claim.

Same operation, different entities, identical asymmetry. The difference is whether the frame is structured as a narrative (aspirational) or as a logical inference from corroborated facts (mechanical). Mechanical framing is what Framed Proof of claims requires. Aspirational framing is what most brands deliver instead.

The practitioner consequence is significant. Marketing has run on aspirational language for a long time, and aspirational language alone now fails twice over: it fails at the system end because there is no transmissible inference, and increasingly fails at the human end because humans encounter brands through system descriptions before they encounter the brand directly. Both audiences must be served by the same sentence, and the brands that hold both audiences in mind simultaneously are the brands the system describes with higher confidence and more affirmative language.

Statements such as *we exist to transform how the world thinks about X*, *we are on a mission to redefine Y*, and *we believe this market deserves better* are frames the human reader can decode emotionally and the system cannot transmit, because no logical inference connects the language to a claim that synthesis can verify.

The methodological principle that follows: packaging for systems and packaging for humans is the same operation done at the same time. The description the system produces about a brand must be persuasive to humans, otherwise the recommendation falls flat the moment a person reads it. The underlying frame the system reads must be logically structured, otherwise the recommendation does not get produced. Aspirational language alone serves humans and abandons the system. Logical proof alone serves the system and reads as cold to the human. Framed Proof of claims serves both at once.

6. The Conversion Protocol from Aspirational to Mechanical Framing

A three-step protocol converts aspirational language into mechanical framing.

Step one: identify the underlying truth the aspirational claim is reaching for. *We are on a mission to redefine Y* is reaching for *we do Y differently from the established players, in a way that matters*. The aspiration is the wrapper; the truth is what it is wrapped around.

Step two: list the verifiable facts that support the truth. What was done, when, with whom, with what result, corroborated where. If the list is empty, the aspirational claim was hollow and no amount of reframing will salvage it. If the list is solid, the components for a mechanical frame are in hand.

Step three: reconstruct the claim as a logical inference from the facts. Not *we are on a mission to redefine Y* but *we did A in year B with partner C, achieved result D corroborated by source E; therefore we approach Y differently from the established players in this respect*. The same ambition, rendered as an inference the system can follow.

The diagnostic test for whether the conversion has succeeded: read the new sentence aloud. If it still reads as marketing copy, it is not yet a logical inference. If it reads as an external observer's summary of what the brand actually does and has done, the conversion has crossed from aspirational to mechanical, and synthesis can transmit it as a verifiable statement rather than as the brand's self-description.

7. Engaging the Counter-Argument: LLM Reasoning, Strategic Stake, and Empathy for the Machine

A common counter-argument is that AI systems already perform what looks like abductive reasoning: they surface unexpected angles, land connections the user had not considered, and produce output that reads like genuine lateral thinking. The argument has scholarly support. Recent surveys propose taxonomies of LLM abductive reasoning organised around hypothesis generation and hypothesis selection, and demonstrate non-trivial performance on benchmarks designed to elicit explanatory inference (Salimi et al., 2026).

This paper does not deny that observation. It engages it directly and locates its own argument inside the existing scholarly debate rather than outside it.

Four distinctions clarify the relationship.

7.1 Candidate Inference Generation versus Strategic Selection

The first distinction is between candidate inference generation and strategic selection. Even if a generative system produces a valid J from accepted facts $\{A, B, \dots\}$, it has not solved the strategic problem. It has produced one possible conclusion among many. The entity still must decide whether that J is accurate, beneficial, defensible, and worth owning as the public frame the entity wants the system to transmit. That decision is external to the system, because it

requires a stake in the consequences of the J becoming the entity's representation. The system has no such stake.

This is the core defensive move of the paper, and it does not depend on any claim about LLM capability. AI can infer. AI can generate candidate J values. An AI agent supplied with brand goals, evaluation criteria, and approval workflows can also rank candidates. What AI cannot supply is the external authority, accountability, or consequence-bearing role that turns one selected J into the entity's public frame. The selection criterion (does this J serve this entity, and is the entity prepared to bear the consequences of it being transmitted?) is definitionally external to the system.

7.2 Output Generation versus Externally Accountable Authorship

The second distinction tracks a sceptical position in the literature, exemplified by Floridi et al. (2025), that LLM output exhibits "abductive appearance" without genuine grounding, verification, or truth-tracking. The current paper does not need to take a position on whether the underlying operation is genuine abduction in the Peircean sense. It needs only to identify that the four properties required for Strategic Claim Bridging in brand contexts (originality, entity specificity, evidentiary grounding, external accountability) remain outside corpus-grounded systems even where abductive-looking output is produced. A system can perform candidate generation without performing externally accountable authorship, because the latter requires a real-world entity to attribute the frame to and to bear consequences for it.

7.3 Recombination versus Attributed Frame Shift

The third distinction is between recombining frames present in accessible representations (which generative systems do well, and which produces genuine value) and authoring a frame that becomes the dominant attributed interpretation of the entity. What looks like an unexpected angle in system output is, on inspection, often a frame that exists somewhere in retrievable sources or learned representations, surfaced and applied to a context where the user had not yet encountered it. Genuine attributed frame shift, where the dominant attributed reading of the evidence shifts because someone has supplied a new interpretation that becomes the default attribution for the entity, is a different operation. It requires an authoring entity that has the standing to introduce the frame and the accountability to defend it. That entity, in brand representation contexts, is the brand.

7.4 Empathy for the Machine: The Disposition Underlying Strategic Claim Bridging

The three distinctions above explain why Strategic Claim Bridging is the brand's work rather than the system's. A fourth distinction explains why most brands do not perform Strategic Claim Bridging even when they are working hard on representation. The author has elsewhere termed the underlying disposition *Empathy for the Machine* (formally, *machine-oriented perspective-taking*): the discipline of stepping outside the brand's internal narrative to identify

which relationships, evidence paths, and inferential bridges are not legible to the system unless the entity makes them explicit. The author traces the concept to client consulting from 2011/2012 (originally articulated as *Empathy for the Beast*), with first publication in practitioner-facing form in 2020 (Barnard, 2020).

Empathy for the Machine, in the formal sense used here, is a perspective-taking discipline directed at a non-human inferential system. The brand operates inside its own representational context: connecting tissue between its own facts is obvious to the brand, because the brand knows the story those facts belong to. The interpretation of the brand's own evidence is obvious to the brand, because the brand has been inside the evidence the whole time. The system has access to none of that interior context. It works from scattered fragments, undeclared logical relationships, and a great deal of brand-side effort whose purpose has not been made legible at the machine layer.

The two failure modes below Framed Proof of claims — Scattered Proof of claims and what Section 9 of this paper terms Standing Still — both stem from the same underlying cause: brands delegating to the system work the system cannot perform on the brand's behalf, because the brand has not extended machine-oriented perspective-taking far enough to identify what the system actually requires in order to ground, attribute, and synthesise claims about the brand. Scattered Proof of claims delegates the *connection* work: the brand has built the proof points, has the third-party mentions, has the dated public record, and assumes the system will join the dots. The dots are obvious from the brand's interior position. They are not obvious from the system's exterior position. Standing Still delegates the *derivation* work: the brand has written the copy, has the well-formed website, has the clear category positioning, and assumes the system will derive the right interpretation. The interpretation is obvious from the brand's interior position. It is not obvious from the system's exterior position.

Both failure modes look like work because work has been produced. Both are silent because absolute representation does not deteriorate visibly. Both cost the brand representational ground relative to brands that did extend machine-oriented perspective-taking far enough to identify what the system was actually missing, and did the connection and derivation work the system was not going to do on the brand's behalf.

Strategic Claim Bridging is what Empathy for the Machine looks like when operationalised: the brand has stepped outside its own representational context, has identified the connections the system would not make and the conclusions the system would not derive without help, and has built the bridges that let the system ground, verify, and transmit the J the brand actually wants to own.

7.5 Implication for the Framing Gap

The Framing Gap, accordingly, is not principally a claim about what generative systems cannot compute. It is a claim about what the relationship between a generative system and a real-world

brand requires for accountable representation, and a claim about the disposition the brand must adopt to see what the system actually needs. As model capability increases, recombination quality improves, candidate-generation quality improves, and the ease with which synthesis transmits an externally supplied frame improves. None of those improvements close the strategic-stake gap or the empathy gap. The strategic-stake gap is structural to the locus of authorship; the empathy gap is structural to the brand's perspective on its own evidence. Both gaps remain external to model capability.

The corollary is that the Framing Gap as defined here is unlikely to close under improvements in model capability alone. In the absence of a substantial change in how generative systems are integrated with real-world entities, the practical implication is that the brand's role in performing Strategic Claim Bridging on its own behalf becomes more, not less, important as model capability grows. Section 16 develops this point as a selection-pressure hypothesis with testable implications.

8. The Three Functions of Framing

The three functions of framing are the practical effects of Strategic Claim Bridging once the selected J is made explicit and grounded. Framing is commonly discussed as if it performed a single function: securing more favourable mentions. In practice, framing performs three structurally distinct functions simultaneously, and each produces a return that compounds on its own track. The three-function structure is consistent with framing-theory accounts that treat frames as performing problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993), although the functions identified here are specific to AI-mediated representation rather than general media framing.

8.1 Description Control

Framing influences the language synthesis uses when it cites the brand. Synthesis will cite the brand for queries the facts cover, with or without a frame. With a frame, the language used is closer to the language the brand supplied, the differentiation drawn is more likely to be the differentiation the brand engineered, and the comparison to competitors more often lands on the dimension the brand selected rather than the dimension the market defaulted to.

8.2 Audience Matching Across Funnel Stages

Framing operationalises the brand description across the buyer journey. A brand description that articulates the offer, the unique selling proposition, and why both matter to the ideal customer profile gives the system a basis for matching the brand to relevant audience segments at each stage of consideration: initial discovery, comparison, and decision. Without that frame, system matching defaults more heavily to surface-level keyword overlap, which serves generic queries adequately and serves fit-sensitive queries poorly.

8.3 Distinctiveness Renewal Through Frame Refinement

Where a fact is already widely represented across accessible sources, any single source may become less distinctive as evidence for that fact. Brands whose claims sit predominantly at Connected Proof of claims face this attrition over time: facts get widely absorbed across the available representations, and the marginal value of any single source as evidence for those facts declines. A frame can make the source distinctive again by providing an updated interpretation, application, or comparison that is not yet widely represented elsewhere. Brands whose claims have reached Framed Proof of claims attract recurring citation because the frame is never a finished artefact; each refinement, extension, or application to a new context provides a fresh basis for citation that is not yet absorbed across other sources.

This connects to the broader literature on retrieval-augmented generation and citation faithfulness, which has begun to address how grounded citation and source preservation operate in modern AI systems (Wallat et al., 2025).

9. The Frame Ambition Ladder: A Creative Leap Scale Above Standing Still

9.1 Standing Still: The Baseline Failure Mode

Most brands believe they are already doing the work of representation. They have a website. The website explains who they are, what they do, who they serve, and what categories they operate in. Their About page is well written. Their service pages are clear. Their content is published, indexed, and corroborated against third-party sources. They produce material at a steady cadence. By any reasonable practitioner standard, they have done the work.

These brands have not climbed beyond the baseline. This paper terms that baseline failure mode *Standing Still*.

In the author's practitioner experience, the Standing Still position is the most common state of brand representation in AI-mediated discovery, and it is the most costly precisely because the cost is invisible. Standing Still means the brand has produced content sufficient to confirm a representation that the system may already have generated from minimal corroborated evidence: the brand has expended writing time, editorial effort, and publication resources for a representational position the system was likely to produce on its own from corroborated category-level facts. The empirical generality of this observation is a matter for the testable predictions in Section 17 rather than for assertion in this section.

The practitioner objection here is consistent and worth answering directly. *We already do Strategic Claim Bridging — our website explains who we are and what we do.* The answer is

precise: yes, the website does that, and the system was likely to produce a comparable representation of the brand on its own from corroborated category-level facts. What the brand has not done is select a beneficial J the system was unlikely to produce unprompted and construct the bridge that lets the system transmit J as grounded representation. That work is what the rungs above Standing Still describe. Standing Still is the floor below the ladder, not Rung One of it.

Standing Still is the *derivation-delegation* form of a more general failure mode the paper identified in Section 7: brands delegating to the system work the system cannot perform on the brand's behalf, because the brand has not extended Empathy for the Machine far enough to see what the system actually struggles with. Scattered Proof of claims is the *connection-delegation* form of the same failure mode: the brand has produced the proof points and assumes the system will join the dots. Both share the same root cause. Both look like work because work has been produced. Both cost the brand representational ground relative to brands that did not delegate.

The cost of Standing Still is not absolute deterioration. A Standing Still brand continues to be cited at the category level, described in the conventional terms, surfaced for queries the system can resolve from corroborated facts alone. What deteriorates is position relative to brands operating on the rungs above. While a Standing Still brand confirms what the system already knew, competing brands performing Strategic Claim Bridging are establishing derived conclusions that pull them out of the comparative pack, and the gap is hypothesised to widen silently in a market where representational ground is the asset.

9.2 The Frame Ambition Ladder as a Creative Leap Scale

The Frame Ambition Ladder describes the climbing work above the Standing Still floor. It measures the *Creative Leap*: the distance between accepted facts about the brand and the derived conclusion J the brand wants the system to transmit. The greater the leap, the greater the differentiation prize and the greater the proof requirement.

Three rungs of meaningful Creative Leap exist above Standing Still. Each is illustrated with the author as worked example because the relevant facts are publicly dated and observable. Stylised non-author cases follow in Sections 9.7 and 9.8 to demonstrate that the ladder generalises beyond the author. A limitation is acknowledged in Section 17.6: the author's own work is used illustratively and should not be treated as independent validation of the model.

[FIGURE 5: PLACEHOLDER — TO BE PRODUCED]

Caption: The Frame Ambition Ladder.

Description: A four-position vertical ladder visualising the Creative Leap scale.
Baseline position: *Standing Still* (no Strategic Claim Bridging; the brand asserts only

what is already corroborated as category-level fact). Rung One: *Small Leap* ($A + B \rightarrow C$); the conclusion C is one the system would usually have produced unaided from corroborated A and B. Rung Two: *Non-Obvious Leap* ($A + B \rightarrow J$); the conclusion J is reachable from A and B but the system would not reliably select J over equally derivable alternatives without the brand's framing. Rung Three: *Transformational Leap* ($A + B \rightarrow Q$); the conclusion Q reframes the entity's standing in the territory and is reachable only through deliberate Strategic Claim Bridging supported by accumulated dated record. Each rung is labelled with its leap distance, its differentiation prize, and its proof requirement. The Hostile Reviewer Test threshold (Section 9.6) is shown as the gate every rung must pass: the corroboration anchoring the bridge must withstand inspection by an external party with no commercial interest in the brand's success.

Source file: [fig5-frame-ambition-ladder.png](#) (to be produced).

Production note: Diagram should make clear that Standing Still is a *failure mode*, not a starting point en route to the ladder; brands at Standing Still produce no Creative Leap at all and are not climbing the ladder. The three rungs are climbing positions; Standing Still is the floor below the ladder.

9.3 Rung One — Small Leap ($A + B \rightarrow C$)

Jason Barnard has publicly used and developed the term Answer Engine Optimisation from 2018 and runs a brand engineering company; therefore his work is connected to the implementation of AEO. The system usually produces this conclusion if both facts are corroborated in independent sources. Stating it reduces the risk of the connection being missed where corroboration is partial, but it does not pull a brand out of the comparative pack on its own. The leap is small. The differentiation prize is modest. The proof requirement is light: any independent corroboration of both component facts.

9.4 Rung Two — Non-Obvious Leap ($A + B \rightarrow J$)

Jason Barnard has publicly developed AEO as a defined practice from 2018 and has continued to operate that methodology since; therefore he is among the practitioners with the longest continuous operational record of the approach, and is well positioned to identify what does and does not work from that operational record.

The system is less likely to reach this conclusion reliably without external articulation. The leap from "longest track record" to "well-positioned source of operational learning" is the move synthesis is unlikely to make reliably without external support. Once corroboration exists on independent sites (case studies, client outcomes, conference talks where operational learning is documented), the bridge produces actual preference. This is the rung at which most brands genuinely capable of Framed Proof of claims should aim, because the differentiation prize is meaningful and the proof requirement is achievable through deliberate proof-base construction.

9.5 Rung Three — Transformational Leap ($A + B \rightarrow Q$)

Jason Barnard has publicly developed AEO from 2018 and Assistive Agent Optimisation from 2025, formalised an integrated model of how AI systems mediate brand representation, and made dated public predictions about the trajectory of AI search that were borne out by subsequent industry developments; therefore the frameworks he has developed have evidential support as an account of how brand-AI communication is likely to evolve.

This is a transformational leap because it is not a description of what has already happened (which the system could derive on its own from corroborated sources). It is a forward-looking claim about predictive validity, and one plausible route by which synthesis may treat a forward-looking claim as evidentially supported is via a track record of past predictions that has been independently corroborated in enough sources for the claim to register as consensus rather than self-promotion. The reward scales with the leap, and so does the proof requirement: Q-tier frames demand consensus-level proof distributed across enough independent sources that synthesis encounters consensus rather than self-promotion.

A specific sub-mechanism of Q-tier amplitude warrants explicit treatment, because it explains why most brands cannot legitimately reach for Q-tier amplitude even where their present proof base is otherwise strong. The sub-mechanism is what may be termed the **forward-claim requirement**: the only way the system accepts a forward claim is if the track record of past predictions establishes the credibility for future ones. Q-tier frames containing forward-looking components require *historical* evidence (dated, independently corroborated) to support claims about *future* outcomes. Brands without that dated historical record can reach for J-tier (Non-Obvious Leap) amplitude with appropriate proof construction; they cannot legitimately reach for Q-tier amplitude on forward-looking claims, because the corroborating component (past predictions that came true) is absent. The author case illustrates because the AEO 2017 → industry adoption arc is exactly the dated component the Q-tier forward claim depends on.

Note also that Q-tier reach often involves intermediate establishment: a previously established J (operational-learning authority) may function as input to the next bridge, supporting the climb to Q. The structural geometry of how those climbs occur is the subject of Section 10 (the three-dimensional movement architecture) and the temporal mechanism by which Q-tier frames cross from aspirational claim to system-transmitted representation is the subject of Section 12 (the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition).

9.6 Calibration and the Cost of Overstretching

The stakes scale with the leap. Frames that are not fully logical, or that lack corroborating evidence on independent third-party sites, may not merely fail to land. They may also reduce selection likelihood and confidence in subsequent representations of the brand, because the gap between claim and corroboration may register as insufficient evidentiary support for the brand's interpretive language.

Three failure modes follow from this calibration logic. *Trivial J* selects a leap so small (Standing Still or barely above) that no differentiation results: the brand has expended effort to confirm what the system was likely to produce unprompted from corroborated category-level facts. *Damaging J* selects a leap that is logically supportable from the facts but actively harmful to the brand's positioning: technically defensible, strategically catastrophic. *Overreached J* selects a leap the proof base cannot carry: the frame is not yet evidentially supported and may, on the hypothesis advanced here, attract reduced confidence in the brand's subsequent representation. All three are failures of *strategic selection*, which is precisely the operation Section 7 identified as the brand's work rather than the system's.

Among the three calibration failure modes, *overstretching* is, in the author's practitioner experience across client engagements, the failure pattern most frequently observed at the Framed Proof of claims level. The pattern warrants explicit flagging because it inverts the practitioner's natural intuition. The natural assumption is that under-claiming is the failure mode worth worrying about: brands assume the risk lies in being too modest about their own substance, and therefore reach upward to compensate. The observable pattern, on the author's practitioner experience, is the inverse. Brands operating at Framed Proof of claims appear to fail more frequently by reaching for Q-tier amplitude while their proof base only supports J-tier amplitude than by selecting J-tier when Q-tier was available. The over-reaching tendency is incentivised by competitive marketing instincts (the louder claim wins attention) and disincentivised only weakly by feedback at the system end (the misalignment between claim and corroboration registers gradually rather than immediately). The pattern is treated here as a practitioner observation requiring empirical validation through the work described in Section 17, not as an established empirical generalisation.

The practical question for any brand is therefore not *should we be at a transformational leap?* It is *what is the highest-amplitude J our current proof base will support, and what proof would we need to add to support a higher-amplitude J safely?* Brands climb in order, prove each rung before the next, and the ladder works as designed.

This formalises into a **diagnostic protocol** for self-assessment that brands can apply to their own proof base before selecting an amplitude. The protocol has three steps. *First*, list the components the candidate J depends on: the accepted facts {A, B, ...}, any intermediate conclusions, and any forward-looking claims. *Second*, audit each component for hostile-reviewer survivability: can the component survive independent fact-checking by a critical reviewer with no commercial interest in the brand's success? Components that survive are anchored; components that depend on charitable interpretation are unanchored. *Third*, locate the J on the ladder by identifying the highest amplitude at which every component is anchored. The highest fully-anchored amplitude is the safe ceiling. The aspirational amplitude (the rung the brand wants to occupy) may be one or more rungs above the safe ceiling; the gap between them defines the proof construction work the brand needs to complete before the aspirational amplitude becomes reachable safely.

The diagnostic question for any single component within the candidate frame: *can this component survive independent fact-checking by a hostile reviewer?* If yes, the component is anchored. If the answer requires charitable interpretation, the component is unanchored, and the frame containing it has overstretched at that component.

9.7 Anonymised Case: A B2B Service Brand at Non-Obvious Leap

To complement the author case, consider a stylised B2B service brand operating in a regulated professional services market. The brand has operated for fifteen years, holds documented case-study outcomes, and has been independently corroborated in industry publications. Its founder has spoken at sector conferences for a decade. At a Non-Obvious Leap, an appropriate J would be: *the firm has operated in [sector] for fifteen years with documented case-study outcomes corroborated in [industry publications]; therefore it is among the firms with the longest continuous operational record in [specific niche], and is well positioned to identify the patterns its newer competitors have not yet had time to observe.* Synthesis is unlikely to produce this J reliably without external articulation, because the inferential leap from "operated for fifteen years" to "well-positioned source of pattern recognition in this niche" requires the brand's own framing. With sufficient independent corroboration of the operational record, the J is supportable. Without it, the same J collapses to a Small Leap and produces no differentiation.

9.8 Anonymised Case: A Cybersecurity Firm at Transformational Leap

A cybersecurity firm cannot safely advance a Transformational J such as *we define the future of AI security* merely on the basis of having published reports. The transformational leap requires the kind of consensus-level proof that distinguishes evidentially supported predictive authority from self-promotion. A J at this rung might be: *the firm has, on dated public record, identified attack patterns before mainstream recognition, has been cited as the originating source by independent security bodies, and has had its terminology or methods adopted by other practitioners in the market; therefore its current characterisations of where AI security is headed have evidential support as forward predictions rather than as marketing.* Where each of those three components is independently corroborated, the J may be transmitted by AI systems as a verifiable claim. Where any one of them is missing, the J collapses to the Non-Obvious Leap rung or below regardless of how confidently it is articulated, because the inferential bridge from "published reports" to "predictive authority" requires the corroborating components to be genuinely present.

The pattern is general. Transformational leaps demand consensus-level proof distributed across enough independent sources that synthesis encounters consensus rather than self-promotion. The cybersecurity case illustrates the same calibration logic the author case illustrates: the rung is set by the underlying proof base, not by the ambition of the language used to describe it.

10. The Three-Dimensional Architecture of Strategic Claim Bridging Movement

The Frame Ambition Ladder (Section 9) measures the *amplitude* of a strategic move: how far the brand reaches from its accepted facts to the conclusion it wants the system to transmit. Amplitude alone does not specify the *direction* of the move, however, and direction is operationally distinct from amplitude. A Non-Obvious Leap may move the brand deeper into territory it already occupies, may move the brand toward more complete coverage of that territory, or may move the brand into adjacent topical space the brand had not previously occupied. The proof requirement, the failure mode, and the strategic value of each move differ. This section formalises the spatial geometry within which Strategic Claim Bridging movement occurs: three independent dimensions, with Creative Leap amplitude applying inside each.

10.1 The Three Spatial Dimensions

Strategic Claim Bridging operates across three independent dimensions, treated here as the X, Y, and Z spatial axes of a three-dimensional move space.

X-axis: Depth. Going deeper in the same topic. The brand reaches for a J that makes it *more authoritative* in territory it already occupies. The operational character of Depth-axis movement is the accumulation of dated evidence within a single topical territory, the refinement of that evidence into sharper or more original interpretations, and the establishment of the brand as the practitioner the corpus most consistently associates with the deepest version of the topic. The author's own trajectory across Brand SERPs (2012 onward) is a Depth-axis trajectory: each year of dated work in the same topical territory deepens the position rather than expanding it.

Y-axis: Coverage. Covering more of the same topic. The brand reaches for a J that makes it *more complete* in territory it already occupies. Coverage-axis movement is operationally distinct from Depth: a brand can deepen its authority on existing aspects of a topic without extending its coverage to new aspects, and a brand can extend its coverage to new aspects without deepening its authority on the existing ones. A specialist accounting firm with deep authority on transfer pricing within multinational corporations may extend Coverage by establishing equivalent authority on transfer pricing within state-owned enterprises (same topical territory, broader footprint) without deepening its existing transfer-pricing-in-multinationals authority.

Z-axis: Neighbouring Topics. Reaching into adjacent topical territory the brand wasn't previously covering. The brand reaches for a J that lives in *related-but-different* territory via a frame that bridges established space to neighbouring space. The Topical Expansion Frame, treated in detail in Section 13, is the canonical worked example of Z-axis movement. The Z-axis is the dimension at which authority transfers across topics, with the proof requirement in the adjacent territory typically lower than the proof requirement in the core territory because the bridge from established space carries most of the weight.

A two-axis formulation that conflated Depth and Coverage under a single name would obscure that the two operations involve structurally distinct work: a brand can deepen its authority on existing aspects of a topic without extending coverage to new aspects, and can extend coverage without deepening existing authority. The three-axis formulation separates them because the proof-construction work, time horizons, and competitive consequences differ. The Z-axis (Neighbouring Topics) is direction-specific: the move is into adjacent topical space, with new-fact addition as the mechanism rather than the substance. A formulation that defined the third axis primarily by fact addition would obscure that adjacency, not fact volume, is what makes the move possible.

10.2 Creative Leap Amplitude Inside Each Dimension

Inside any of the three dimensions, the strategic move can be at any of the three amplitudes formalised in Section 9. A Small Leap ($A + B \rightarrow C$) is barely a leap at all; the system tends to produce it unprompted given adequate corroboration. A Non-Obvious Leap ($A + B \rightarrow J$) is the medium-amplitude reach where real differentiation lives; the system is unlikely to produce this leap reliably without external articulation. A Transformational Leap ($A + B \rightarrow Q$) is the high-amplitude reach that requires consensus-level proof distributed across enough independent sources that the frame is hypothesised to be transmitted as consensus rather than as the brand's claim about itself.

The amplitude and the dimension are independent choices. **Nine combinations exist** at any given moment in the framework's pure dimension-amplitude move space (three dimensions \times three amplitudes). A brand may be operating at any of nine direction-and-amplitude positions, and over time may trace trajectories through this space.

10.3 Multistep Trajectories Through the Three-Dimensional Space

A brand at a given coordinate position in the three-dimensional space — for instance, (X = high, Y = medium, Z = low), representing strong Depth authority, partial Coverage, and minimal Neighbouring Topics presence — can plot multi-year sequences of single-direction-and-amplitude moves to reach destinations no single leap could achieve. Each step is one move in one direction at one amplitude; the cumulative trajectory is the strategic asset.

Three properties of multistep trajectories warrant explicit treatment.

First, dimension order matters for safety. A trajectory that reaches deeply into a topic before extending coverage of that topic (X then Y) is structurally safer than the reverse (Y then X), because the Depth authority anchors any Coverage extension in established credibility. The Y-then-X order risks producing fragmentary coverage without anchoring authority, which the system may register as superficial breadth rather than substantive presence. Similarly, Neighbouring Topics moves (Z) are structurally safer when the brand has established Depth

authority in the source territory than when it has not, because the Reframing Bridge from source to adjacent territory only carries the weight required for transfer when the source territory is genuinely authoritative.

Second, amplitude order matters for cumulative leverage. A trajectory that establishes a J-tier frame in the X-axis before attempting Q-tier frames in the Z-axis benefits from the Compounding Authority principle (Section 12.5): the established J-tier frame in Depth contributes to the entity-level corroboration weight that makes the Z-axis Q-tier frame achievable. A trajectory that attempts Q-tier in Z-axis without first establishing J-tier in X-axis may overstretch the proof base across both dimensions simultaneously.

Third, simultaneity of operation is normal at higher rungs. Brands operating at the highest rungs of the ladder typically operate at multiple direction-and-amplitude positions simultaneously across different J values. The author's own multi-year trajectory illustrates: Brand SERP authority (X-axis Depth) was established 2012 onward; AEO methodology (X-axis Depth in a related sub-topic) was developed 2017 onward; ORM authority (Z-axis Neighbouring Topics) was opened 2024 onward; the integrated AI Engine Pipeline framework (Q-tier amplitude across multiple dimensions) was published 2025 onward. At any given recent moment, the author has been operating in three or four different direction-amplitude positions simultaneously.

10.4 The Proof Requirement Scales with Amplitude in Any Dimension

The proof requirement scales with amplitude in any direction. Small Leaps in any dimension require minimal corroboration. Non-Obvious Leaps in any dimension require corroboration sufficient to make the bridge logically watertight. Transformational Leaps in any dimension require consensus-level proof distributed across enough independent sources that the system encounters the interpretation as consensus rather than as self-promotion. Overstretching (Transformational amplitude without Transformational proof) is hypothesised to damage the brand's representation in any dimension: where the gap between claim and corroboration is observable in accessible sources, the brand is hypothesised to receive lower-confidence, less stable, or less frequent representation in output relative to competitors whose lower-amplitude frames are fully corroborated.

The dimension-specific calibration nuance is that the Z-axis (Neighbouring Topics) typically operates with a *lower absolute proof requirement* in the adjacent territory than the X-axis (Depth) does in the core territory, because the Reframing Bridge (Section 11) does most of the work that explicit corroboration would otherwise need to do. This is the lever-load-fulcrum mechanism formalised in Section 13.

11. The Three Bridge Types: Generative, Reframing, Elevation

Strategic Claim Bridging is one umbrella discipline, but the bridges it constructs are not a single homogeneous operation. They come in three structurally distinct types, each performing a

different cognitive operation, requiring a different proof signature, and exhibiting a different failure mode. Practitioners who do not distinguish between them tend to build the wrong type of bridge for their situation and produce frames the system reproduces with low confidence or not at all. The three Bridge Types are introduced here as a typology orthogonal to the three-dimensional architecture (Section 10): each Bridge Type can occur in any of the three dimensions at any of the three amplitudes, with the orthogonality of Bridge Type, dimension, and amplitude as the load-bearing structural property of the resulting strategic move-space.

[FIGURE 1: PLACEHOLDER]

Caption: Strategic Claim Bridging architecture in Claim-Frame-Prove.

Description: A hierarchical architecture diagram showing how Strategic Claim Bridging operates within the Claim-Frame-Prove protocol. Top: *Strategic Claim Bridging* — the umbrella discipline of choosing a beneficial conclusion J and building a watertight bridge from accepted facts to that conclusion. Middle: the three *Bridge Types* — Generative Bridge ($A + B \rightarrow \text{new fact J}$), Reframing Bridge ($A \rightarrow \text{new perspective on J}$), Elevation Bridge ($A \rightarrow \text{consequence of A}$). Bottom: each Bridge Type operates across three *dimensions* of movement — Depth (X-axis: going deeper in the same topic), Coverage (Y-axis: covering more of the same topic), Neighbouring Topics (Z-axis: moving the entity into adjacent topics) — at three *amplitudes* of Creative Leap — Small Leap ($A + B \rightarrow C$), Non-Obvious Leap ($A + B \rightarrow J$), Transformational Leap ($A + B \rightarrow Q$). The orthogonality of Bridge Type \times dimension \times amplitude is the load-bearing structural property: any single Strategic Claim Bridging move occupies one position in a $3 \times 3 \times 3$ strategic move-space.

Source file: [fig1-strategic-claim-bridging-architecture.png](#)
(provided as [fig1-25-april.jpg](#)).

Note for typesetter: Figure currently labels the umbrella discipline as "Strategic Bridging" and titles the diagram "Strategic Frame Bridging in Claim-Frame-Prove". Update labels to "Strategic Claim Bridging" before final deposit, to match the renamed corpus terminology established in this version of the paper.

11.1 Generative Bridge: Creating New Fact from Existing Facts

A *Generative Bridge* is the construction of a new factual proposition J from existing facts {A, B, ...} where J did not previously exist as a stated claim in the corpus, but follows logically from the conjunction of A and B once stated.

Worked example. A: the author publicly developed AEO as a defined practice from 2018. B: the author has continued to operate that methodology continuously since. J (Generative Bridge): the author is among the practitioners with the longest continuous operational record of the

approach, with the operational learning that follows from such a record. J was not present as a stated claim in the corpus before the bridge was constructed; it follows from {A, B} once the bridge is articulated.

Proof requirement. Generative Bridges require both that A and B be independently corroborated *and* that the inference from A + B to J be logically watertight. Both conditions hold simultaneously. A bridge where A and B are corroborated but the inference is logically loose is hypothesised to fail (the inferential gap is observable in accessible sources and the bridge is unlikely to be transmitted with confidence). A bridge where the inference is watertight but A or B lacks corroboration is hypothesised to fail (no accessible source anchors the bridge and the bridge is unlikely to appear in output).

Failure mode: overstretching. The dominant failure mode for Generative Bridges is claiming a J that does not actually follow from {A, B}. Where the gap between premise and conclusion is observable in accessible sources, the brand is hypothesised to receive lower-confidence, less stable, or less frequent representation than competitors whose lower-amplitude frames are fully corroborated. This is the failure mode named in Section 9.6 as Overreached J, and it is most common at Q-tier amplitude where the leap distance is greatest and the temptation to overclaim strongest.

11.2 Reframing Bridge: Supplying a New Perspective on Existing Knowledge

A *Reframing Bridge* is the supply of a new interpretive perspective on existing knowledge: A and J both exist independently in the corpus, and the bridge reframes J in light of A, making the connection between them a new piece of interpretive context. J is not new; the *perspective on J* is new.

Worked example. A: the author has documented expertise on Brand SERPs and Knowledge Panels (existing in corpus). J: ORM is, in substantial part, the management of brand representation in the search results returned for a brand's name (J also exists in corpus as a known concept). The Reframing Bridge: ORM is essentially Brand SERP management when the user searches a brand name, therefore expertise in A locates the author inside the territory of J. Neither A nor J is new. What is new is the perspective that locates J inside A's territory and lets authority on A transfer to J.

The Reframing Bridge is the operational mechanism by which the Topical Expansion Frame works (Section 13). Authority earned in one topic transfers to logically adjacent topics through the perspective bridge that locates the adjacent topic inside the authority's existing territory.

Proof requirement. Reframing Bridges require that the adjacent territory (J's existing meaning) be genuine, not invented; and that the semantic bridge from A's territory to J's territory hold under scrutiny. The proof requirement is markedly lower than for Generative or Elevation

Bridges in absolute terms, because most of the load is carried by the Reframing operation itself rather than by additional corroboration; but the proof requirement on the bridge's logical validity is at least as demanding, and arguably more so, because the bridge's failure to hold is what produces the dominant failure mode below.

Failure mode: false adjacency. The brand reaches for adjacent territory that is *commercially appealing* rather than *logically adjacent*. The bridge breaks under the system's scrutiny, and the transfer of authority fails. Worse, the false-adjacency frame, once published, may reduce the brand's representation in the source topic by introducing logical inconsistency into the accessible evidence base — a failure mode that the source-topic authority alone would not have produced. Section 13 develops this failure mode in detail under the heading of the *adjacency test*.

11.3 Elevation Bridge: Increasing the Perceived Weight of Existing Facts

An *Elevation Bridge* increases the perceived weight of existing facts: A exists, often already attributed to the brand; J also exists, possibly already known. The bridge elevates A (and by extension J) to make A more consequential than it appears on its own. No new factual content is added; *weight* is added.

Worked example. A: the author publicly developed AEO from 2018 (existing in corpus). J (Elevation): the strategic significance of having developed AEO from 2018 is that the author was among the earliest to identify the discipline before the industry had a name for it. J does not add new factual content; J adds consequence to A. The corroboration that makes the elevation defensible consists of dated public sources from 2018 onward, plus subsequent industry adoption of the term, plus subsequent industry recognition that AEO names a discipline rather than a tactic.

Proof requirement. Elevation Bridges require that the elevation be supportable by *consequences* rather than by additional facts. The bridge from A to J's elevated status must trace through observable downstream effects: industry adoption, citation patterns, commercial outcomes, third-party recognition. Without those downstream effects, the elevation is unmoored.

Failure mode: vanity inflation. The brand makes something sound more important than its observable downstream impact warrants. This is the failure mode that overlaps most with traditional aspirational marketing, which is why it feels familiar to practitioners but is also why it is the most easily dismissed by sceptical readers and by the system alike. An Elevation Bridge that fails the consequence-traceability test reads as self-promotion regardless of how confidently it is articulated, because the corroborating consequences are absent.

11.4 Orthogonality of Bridge Type and Dimension

Each of the three dimensions formalised in Section 10 (Depth, Coverage, Neighbouring Topics) can host any of the three Bridge Types defined in this section. The two layers are orthogonal:

- *Depth-axis + Generative Bridge*: generate a new factual claim about expertise level in the same topic.
- *Depth-axis + Reframing Bridge*: reframe how authority in the same topic is understood.
- *Depth-axis + Elevation Bridge*: elevate the consequence of existing same-topic work.
- *Coverage-axis + Generative Bridge*: extend factual claims to new aspects of the same topic.
- *Coverage-axis + Reframing Bridge*: reframe what comprehensive coverage of the topic means.
- *Coverage-axis + Elevation Bridge*: elevate the breadth already demonstrated.
- *Neighbouring Topics + Generative Bridge*: generate a new factual claim in adjacent territory.
- *Neighbouring Topics + Reframing Bridge*: reframe adjacent territory as inherently connected (the ORM example in Section 13).
- *Neighbouring Topics + Elevation Bridge*: elevate existing presence in adjacent territory.

Bridge Type, movement dimension, and Creative Leap amplitude are orthogonal variables. Their combination defines the strategic move-space. In the simplified model advanced here, the three variables can be combined as a $3 \times 3 \times 3$ matrix. The matrix is used analytically, not prescriptively: its purpose is to show that Bridge Type, movement direction, and Creative Leap amplitude vary independently, with each variable changing the proof requirement, the failure mode, and the expected trajectory of the frame. Practitioners do not need to memorise the matrix. They need to recognise which Bridge Type, which dimension, and which amplitude their current move occupies, because selecting the wrong combination for the current proof base is, in the author's practitioner experience, the most frequent cause of frames the system reproduces with low confidence or not at all.

11.5 What the Bridge Type Distinction Reveals About AI

The Bridge Type distinction sharpens the defensible-line argument the paper has been advancing.

Reframing Bridges are the operation AI approximates best. Recombination of existing concepts is exactly what generative AI does well. An AI given the author's Brand SERP authority and asked about ORM might genuinely produce a perspective bridge that locates ORM inside Brand SERP territory. In that sense, the Reframing operation per se is within the system's capability range.

Generative Bridges are harder for AI. Producing a new factual claim that follows from existing facts but was not previously stated requires choosing which derivable claim to generate among the many that the facts could support. A capable AI, supplied with criteria and examples, can rank candidate claims; what it cannot supply is the consequence-bearing role required to elevate one ranked candidate into the entity's public frame. Without that role, the system can

produce any of the candidate claims, including damaging or trivial ones, with no internal preference for one outcome over another.

Elevation Bridges are hardest of all for AI. Elevation requires identifying which downstream consequence to attach to a fact, and the consequences that would qualify the elevation as defensible (industry adoption, citation patterns, commercial outcomes, third-party recognition). A capable AI can list candidate consequences and assess their evidential support. What it cannot supply is the entity that would bear the reputational cost of an under-attributed or vanity-inflated elevation. Without that locus of accountability, the system has no internal mechanism for selecting between under-elevation and overstretch.

The defensible argument does not rest on AI being incapable of any of these in principle. It rests on AI lacking the external authority and consequence-bearing role required to own one option among several when the options are roughly equivalent at the cognitive level. From the same A and B, the system could produce a Reframing Bridge that benefits the brand or one that damages it; a Generative Bridge that elevates a strength or one that exposes a weakness; an Elevation Bridge that lands consequentially or one that overstretches. Without an externally accountable entity to bear consequences for the choice, the choice between options is uncoordinated. A creative human operating with commercial accountability chooses the right Bridge Type for the situation, then constructs it. That accountable choice is what retrieval cannot supply on its own.

12. The Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition: A Temporal Mechanism for Framed Proof of claims Establishment

Strategic Claim Bridging defines what a frame is and how it is constructed (Sections 2 to 11). This section formalises the *temporal mechanism* by which a constructed frame becomes operationally established in the system's representation of the entity, crossing from brand-authored aspirational claim to system-transmitted representation. The mechanism is corroboration distributed across enough independent sources that the system encounters the interpretation as consensus rather than as the entity's claim about itself. The frame itself does not change in the course of the transition; what changes is who is articulating it and how many independent articulations exist.

The mechanism operates across all three Bridge Types (Section 11), in any of the three movement dimensions (Section 10), at any of the three Creative Leap amplitudes (Section 9). It is most consequential at Q-tier amplitude: Q-tier frames depend on the temporal mechanism to land at all, because their proof requirement is consensus-level distribution across independent sources, which cannot be assembled at a single point in time. Lower-amplitude frames may transition through less deliberate operation of the mechanism, with shorter convergence windows.

12.1 Anti-Manipulation Guardrail

The mechanism described in this section is presented as a temporal model for how anchored frames cross from aspirational to system-transmitted representation. It is not, and is not offered as, a method for manufacturing consensus where verifiable substance is absent. The mechanism applies only where the underlying frame is anchored to verifiable facts, and where third-party repetition reflects independently assessable corroboration rather than coordinated misrepresentation. A frame that cannot survive hostile verification is not eligible for the transition described here; the mechanism does not bypass the requirement for evidentiary substance, and is not a route to the establishment of frames that would fail an external accountability test. Any attempt to operate the mechanism on frames that lack independently verifiable substance is expected to either fail at convergence (the frame does not converge across independent sources because there is no substance for them to corroborate) or, in cases where coordinated misrepresentation produces apparent convergence, to fail the structural defensibility argument advanced in Section 14.3 (the absent substance becomes visible as soon as the entity's representation is examined under conditions adversarial to the frame).

12.2 The Four Phases of the Transition

The transition operates in four phases. Each phase is a structural condition on the next; failure at any phase prevents the subsequent phases from establishing the frame.

Phase one: frame authorship. The entity publishes a logically structured candidate J anchored to verifiable components. The diagnostic question for this phase is the hostile-reviewer test introduced in Section 9.6: can each component of the proposed frame survive independent fact-checking by a critical reviewer with no commercial interest in the entity's success? A frame that requires charitable interpretation of any component has not satisfied phase one, regardless of how confidently the frame is articulated.

Phase two: independent articulation. Independent third parties encounter the frame and articulate the underlying interpretation in their own language. *Independence is a condition of the mechanism, not a cosmetic requirement.* Corroboration that consists of repetition of the entity's own wording does not contribute to the transition, because retrieval-augmented systems can be expected to register such repetition as reflection of the entity's own voice rather than as independent corroboration. The entity's role in this phase is to make the interpretation accessible to independent parties (through publication, conferences, podcasts, joint work, citations in third-party material) without dictating the wording in which the interpretation is repeated. The variation in articulation across independent venues is itself part of the evidence that any subsequent convergence reflects independent corroboration rather than coordinated repetition.

Phase three: convergence. Independent articulations begin to converge on similar interpretations of the underlying material when the underlying frame is logically sound and the

components are anchored. *Convergence speed is the diagnostic*. Frames that converge fast are evidentially supported. Frames that converge slowly or not at all are evidentially unsupported, and continued operation of the mechanism is unlikely to produce establishment for them.

Phase four: system-transmitted representation. Once independent articulations converge across enough sources, AI systems are hypothesised to transmit the frame in describing the entity, in language closer to the convergent independent articulations than to the entity's original wording. The frame has crossed from aspirational claim to representation: it now appears in system output as a feature of the entity's public representation rather than as the entity's self-description.

[FIGURE 6: PLACEHOLDER — TO BE PRODUCED]

Caption: The Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition.

Description: A four-phase temporal diagram with time on the horizontal axis. Phase 1 (Frame Authorship): the entity publishes a logically structured candidate frame J with each component anchored to verifiable proof; the Hostile Reviewer Test gate is shown at the boundary between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 2 (Independent Articulation): independent third parties encounter the frame and articulate the interpretation in their own language; multiple distinct articulations from independent sources are shown accumulating; the Independence Condition is shown as a constraint on which articulations count toward the mechanism. Phase 3 (Convergence): independent articulations begin to converge on similar interpretations; convergence speed is shown as the diagnostic, with the 12–18 month convergence window marked on the time axis as a falsifiable empirical hypothesis. Phase 4 (System-Transmitted Representation): AI systems transmit the frame in describing the entity, in language closer to the convergent independent articulations than to the entity's original wording; the frame has crossed from aspirational claim to representation. Bridge Type effects on convergence speed (Reframing fastest, Generative moderate, Elevation slowest) shown as variant convergence curves where space allows.

Source file: [fig6-aspirational-to-mechanical-transition.png](#) (to be produced).

Production note: Diagram should make the four phases sequential and the gates between phases (Hostile Reviewer Test between 1 and 2; Independence Condition operating throughout 2; Convergence Speed Diagnostic at 3) explicit. The 12–18 month window should be visually anchored on the time axis as the testable hypothesis, not as a universal law.

12.3 The 12–18 Month Diagnostic Window

The convergence window between phase two (independent articulation) and phase four (system-transmitted representation) is proposed here as a diagnostic hypothesis: 12 to 18 months for frames operating under standard conditions. The window is presented as a falsifiable empirical claim, not as a universal law. Bridge Type, topic maturity, publication velocity, and the entity's existing resolution and trust may lengthen or shorten the window. Specifically:

- *Reframing Bridges* (Section 11.2) typically converge fastest, because adoption of a new perspective on an existing concept is a smaller change than adoption of a new factual claim.
- *Generative Bridges* (Section 11.1) converge at moderate speed, because new factual claims must be tested against the corpus before independent sources adopt them.
- *Elevation Bridges* (Section 11.3) converge slowest, because elevations depend on observable downstream effects that take time to accumulate.

A frame that has not converged within 18 months under conditions appropriate to its Bridge Type is, on this hypothesis, evidentially insufficient: the proof distribution is inadequate, the logic is overstretched, or the topical conditions are not conducive to convergence. The diagnostic recommendation for entities operating the mechanism is to revisit non-converging frames at 18 months and audit the proof distribution and the Bridge Type fit, rather than continuing the mechanism in the expectation that further time will produce convergence on its own.

12.4 The Three Properties AI Rewards Simultaneously

The mechanism is hypothesised to operate because retrieval-and-synthesis systems behave in ways consistent with rewarding three properties simultaneously, and most aspirational frames fail because they have only one of the three. A frame with all three is hypothesised to appear in output more reliably than a frame with one or two:

1. *Logical structure*: the inference from components to conclusion can be followed by the system, because the conclusion is presented as the consequence of premises rather than as a standalone claim.
2. *Independent corroboration*: the frame appears in output as consensus rather than as self-promotion, because multiple independent sources have articulated the interpretation in their own language.
3. *Originality of interpretation*: the frame does not already exist in the corpus, so the source remains a distinct contributor of interpretive material rather than absorbable category content.

The third property is the one most brand strategists miss. The hypothesis is that the frame appears in output more reliably than a comparable Connected-Proof asset, because the frame represents new interpretive material rather than rehashed corpus content. This is the structural

reason the paper hypothesises that frames at Framed Proof of claims retain citation while content at Connected Proof of claims is absorbed: the components in Connected Proof of claims are folded into the corpus and the source becomes redundant; the frame at Framed Proof of claims is hypothesised to remain a fresh source of interpretive material because each refinement is a fresh reason to return to it.

Most aspirational marketing frames fail because they have property 3 (the marketing language is new) without properties 1 or 2 (no logical structure for the system to follow; no independent corroboration in the corpus). Most academic frames fail because they have property 1 (logical structure) without properties 2 or 3 (insufficient independent corroboration outside the source; or interpretations that are not original to the corpus). Frames that satisfy all three properties simultaneously are the frames hypothesised to complete the transition reliably.

12.5 Compounding Authority (Cumulative Corroboration Weight)

Each successful transition increases the entity-level corroborative density available to subsequent frames. This paper terms the principle **Compounding Authority** (formally, *cumulative corroboration weight*): the process by which each successfully established frame increases the entity-level trust, resolution, and corroborative density that retrieval-and-synthesis systems have available when grounding subsequent frames. The mechanism is iterative and cumulative rather than singular: a brand's representational position is not the outcome of any one frame establishing itself, but the accumulated geometry of many frames each completing the transition described in this section, claim by claim and fact by fact, over a multi-year horizon.

The mechanism operates because the conditions for Framed Proof of claims established in Section 4 (entity well resolved, established, and trusted) are themselves load-bearing for any subsequent frame the entity authors. A frame that completes the transition contributes to the entity's resolution, established presence, and accumulated independent corroboration; subsequent frames the entity authors anchor on the resulting entity-level credibility rather than constructing it from zero. The transition window for subsequent frames is hypothesised to shorten relative to the first frame, on the basis that the entity-level corroborative density available to the subsequent frame is greater. Each completed cycle's anchored conclusion becomes available to function as one of the accepted facts {A, B, ...} that anchor the next cycle's bridge, and the cumulative weight of those anchored facts is what positions the brand to dominate.

A worked illustration of the prior-fact-becomes-input mechanic. Suppose *the author publicly developed AEO from 2018* has completed the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition and is present in the corpus as an anchored fact, and *the author coined Brand SERP in 2012* has likewise completed the transition. Both facts are then available as input components for a subsequent higher-amplitude frame: A (AEO 2018) plus B (Brand SERP 2012) supports the J that the author's terminological authority in the field spans more than a decade of dated record. The decade-plus J is not authorable from zero at the start; it requires the two prior cycles'

outputs to be present in the corpus as anchored facts before the bridge from {A, B} to J can be constructed. This is the structural reason the framework's value compounds across cycles: each completed cycle adds material the next cycle can build on, and frames at higher amplitudes (J-tier and Q-tier) become reachable only after the prior cycles whose outputs they require have themselves completed.

Compounding Authority is the structural reason interpretive leadership is hypothesised to compound rather than commoditise. An entity that has successfully completed several Q-tier transitions accumulates entity-level credibility that subsequent frames inherit. An entity at the start of its Framed Proof of claims work has no such accumulation and must build it through completion of an initial frame; subsequent frames benefit from the result. The asymmetry between entities with established corroboration weight and entities without it is one of the components of the structural defensibility argument advanced in Section 14.3.

An extended worked example illustrating the four phases of the transition, including a candidate Q-tier frame currently in progress at the time of the paper's deposit, is provided in Appendix A. The worked example uses the author case for the methodological reasons stated in Section 1: the author has direct access to the dated public record, and can inspect each component for verifiability and timing. The worked example is offered as illustration of the mechanism, not as evidence of its general validity; controlled empirical evaluation across multiple entities and AI systems is the subject of the testable predictions in Section 17.

13. The Topical Expansion Frame: Canonical Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics

The Topical Expansion Frame is presented in this section as the canonical worked example of the Reframing Bridge type (Section 11.2) operating in the Neighbouring Topics dimension (Section 10.1, Z-axis). The frame is positioned inside the Bridge Type × dimension matrix of Sections 10 and 11: the operation is a Reframing Bridge (perspective adoption rather than new factual claim), and the direction is Z-axis (adjacent topical space rather than the source territory). Authority earned in one topic transfers laterally into logically adjacent topics through the Reframing Bridge the brand supplies, and the system is hypothesised to transmit the transfer where the bridge is logically valid and the topics are genuinely adjacent.

13.1 The ORM Worked Example

A worked example, drawn from the author's own experience and explicitly labelled as authorial illustration, demonstrates the mechanism. The author has specialised in Brand SERPs since 2012 and has been recognised as an expert on Knowledge Panels. Two accepted facts:

A: the author is a recognised Brand SERP expert. B: the author is a recognised Knowledge Panel expert.

The Reframing Bridge into the Neighbouring Topic of ORM: *Brand SERPs and Knowledge Panels are the machine-readable public representation of a brand when people search its name. Online Reputation Management is, in substantial part, the management of brand representation in the search results returned for a brand's name. Therefore, the author's Brand SERP and Knowledge Panel expertise gives him authority in the representation-management dimension of ORM.*

This is a Reframing Bridge in the Bridge Type taxonomy of Section 11.2: ORM existed in the corpus as an established concept; the author's Brand SERP and Knowledge Panel expertise existed in the corpus as an established attribution. What was new was the *perspective* that locates ORM inside Brand SERP territory, allowing authority on the latter to transfer to the former. Neither A nor J was new; the perspective bridge between them was new.

The author had previously written little on ORM directly. Within several weeks of supplying that bridge on dated, indexed publications, the author observed an apparent increase in citations placing him within the ORM territory in AI system output. The change was preceded by a relatively small amount of independent corroboration on third-party pages placing the author's name and the term *ORM expert* in the same context.

13.2 The Lever-Load-Fulcrum Mechanism

The empirical observation that the proof requirement in the adjacent territory was *markedly lower* than the proof requirement in the core territory deserves explicit formalisation. Comprehensive proof was unnecessary; a small amount of independent corroboration in the adjacent territory was enough for the bridge to carry. The asymmetry between effort and outcome in Neighbouring Topics moves operates through what may be termed the **lever-load-fulcrum mechanism**:

- The **frame** is the lever: the Reframing Bridge that locates the adjacent territory inside the source territory.
- The **existing authority on the core topic** is the load: the substantive credibility the brand brings from the X-axis (Depth) work it has already completed.
- The **small amount of independent corroboration in the adjacent territory** is the fulcrum: the minimum third-party evidence required to anchor the lever in the adjacent territory.

The mechanism explains why disproportionate visibility in adjacent territory may emerge from minimal effort in that territory: the load is not being lifted by the fulcrum alone (which would require comprehensive corroboration), it is being lifted by the lever pivoting on the fulcrum, with most of the work performed by the frame and most of the substance supplied by the established authority in the source territory. Brands that misunderstand the mechanism either over-invest in fulcrum (treating the adjacent territory as a fresh proof-construction project, which is

uneconomic) or under-invest in lever (failing to articulate the bridge clearly, which leaves the adjacent territory disconnected from the source authority).

The asymmetry has a specific empirical signature in the proof-to-outcome ratio. The author's ORM example required, on the order of, a handful of third-party pages placing the author's name and the *ORM expert* designation in the same context, plus the explicit Reframing Bridge published on the author's own architecture, to produce observable lateral transfer within several weeks. The proof requirement was perhaps two orders of magnitude lower than the proof requirement that established the original Brand SERP authority in the source territory, which had accumulated across more than a decade of dated work. The Compounding Authority principle (Section 12.5) is the structural reason for the asymmetry: the source-territory authority does most of the corroboration work the bridge needs, leaving the adjacent territory to supply only the fulcrum.

13.3 The Adjacency Test

The lever-load-fulcrum mechanism only operates where the topics are *genuinely adjacent*. Where they are not, the bridge breaks regardless of how confidently it is articulated, and the failure mode is the false-adjacency failure named in Section 11.2.

The constraint warrants formalisation as the **adjacency test**: a frame attempting Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics must satisfy two conditions simultaneously.

First condition: the bridge must be logically valid, not just rhetorically convincing. The reframing operation must hold under scrutiny: the perspective that locates the adjacent territory inside the source territory must survive the test of someone fluent in both territories examining the bridge for semantic coherence. A bridge that depends on charitable interpretation, or on a coincidence of vocabulary that does not survive close reading, fails the first condition.

Second condition: the adjacent territory must actually be adjacent, not just commercially appealing. Practitioners reliably get this constraint wrong. They reach for *commercially appealing* adjacent territories (the territories where they want to compete) rather than for *logically adjacent* ones (the territories where the bridge will actually carry). The adjacency test requires that the conceptual relationship between the territories be substantively necessary, not merely useful. Where the conceptual relationship is genuine, the bridge carries with minimal additional corroboration; where the conceptual relationship is contrived, the bridge fails the test, the system declines to transmit it, and the brand may, in the hypothesis advanced here, reduce its representation in the source topic by introducing logical inconsistency into the accessible evidence base.

The two conditions interact. A bridge that satisfies the first condition (logically valid) but fails the second (the adjacency is commercially contrived) will read as logically coherent but semantically empty when scrutinised. A bridge that satisfies the second condition (genuine adjacency) but

fails the first (the articulation is rhetorically loose) will fail to transmit because the system cannot follow the inference. Both conditions must hold simultaneously.

The diagnostic question for any candidate Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics: *would a reader fluent in both territories recognise the conceptual relationship between them as substantive, or would the reader register the relationship as commercially motivated rhetoric?* If the former, the adjacency test is satisfied and the bridge is likely to carry. If the latter, the bridge has failed the adjacency test, and the brand should either select a different adjacent territory (one where the conceptual relationship is substantive) or accept that the adjacent territory will require comprehensive proof construction in its own right (treating it as a fresh X-axis Depth project rather than as a Z-axis Reframing Bridge).

[FIGURE 8: PLACEHOLDER — TO BE PRODUCED]

Caption: The Topical Expansion Frame and the Adjacency Test.

Description: A node-and-edge diagram showing the entity at its source topic with two candidate Reframing Bridges into adjacent territories. The first bridge (valid expansion): bridges to a *logically adjacent* territory; the conceptual relationship is substantive; the bridge passes the Adjacency Test (both conditions: logical validity and genuine adjacency); a small amount of independent corroboration in the adjacent territory functions as fulcrum; the source-territory authority transfers laterally with minimal additional proof. The second bridge (invalid expansion / topical laundering): bridges to a *commercially appealing* territory where the conceptual relationship is contrived; the bridge fails the Adjacency Test (the second condition specifically); the system declines to transmit the frame, and on the hypothesis advanced in Section 13.5 may reduce representation in the source topic by introducing logical inconsistency into the accessible evidence base. Lever-load-fulcrum mechanics annotated on the valid bridge: the frame is the lever, the source-territory authority is the load, the small adjacent-territory corroboration is the fulcrum.

Source file: [fig8-adjacency-test.png](#) (to be produced).

Production note: The contrast between the two candidate bridges is the load-bearing visual element. The diagram should make the failure mode explicit (false adjacency / topical laundering) rather than only showing the success case.

13.4 Trajectory Composition: Reframing Bridge Plus Subsequent X-Axis Movement

Once the Non-Obvious J is established in the adjacent territory through the Reframing Bridge, the brand can extend the structure further by combining the Z-axis move with subsequent X-axis

(Depth) movement in the now-occupied adjacent territory. Adding a third accepted fact C (in the author's case, expertise in Answer Engines and Assistive Engines) makes a stronger Q-tier frame reachable:

Brand SERP and Knowledge Panel expertise (A, B) plus authority in the representation-management layer of ORM (J) plus expertise in Answer Engines and Assistive Engines (C) supports the conclusion that the author is one of the leading authorities on AI-era reputation management, where reputation is now mediated by search engines, knowledge graphs, and AI Assistive Engines.

In the three-dimensional architecture (Section 10), this trajectory composes a Z-axis Non-Obvious-Leap move (the Reframing Bridge from {A, B} to J in the adjacent territory of ORM) followed by an X-axis Q-tier move within the now-occupied adjacent territory (Depth-axis movement that consolidates the ORM authority into the integrated AI-era reputation management frame). The compounding effect is what produces Q-tier representational ground that no single direction-and-amplitude move could have produced on its own. The trajectory is a worked example of the multistep-trajectory composition principle in Section 10.3.

13.5 The Stylised Cross-Sector Example

A stylised second example illustrates the mechanism outside the author case. A software firm with documented authority on enterprise data integration could supply the Reframing Bridge: *real-time AI inference reliability depends substantially on the data integration layer; therefore expertise in enterprise data integration carries directly into expertise on AI inference reliability at scale*. Where the bridge is logically valid and a small amount of independent corroboration in the adjacent territory exists, the firm may observe lateral transfer of authority into the AI inference reliability conversation. Where the bridge is stretched into a topic the firm has no logical claim on, the transfer is unlikely to appear in output. The lever-load-fulcrum mechanism applies: the source-territory authority on enterprise data integration is the load, the Reframing Bridge from data integration to AI inference reliability is the lever, and the small amount of independent corroboration in the adjacent territory is the fulcrum.

The constraint is the bridge. **Topical expansion is not topical laundering.** Authority cannot be transferred from a strong topic to a commercially attractive but weakly adjacent topic merely through rhetoric. The bridge must be conceptually necessary, not merely useful. Where a brand attempts to bridge topics that are commercially adjacent but conceptually unrelated, the frame is unlikely to surface in synthesis, and may, in the hypothesis advanced here, reduce the brand's representation in the source topic by introducing logical inconsistency into the accessible evidence base. When the bridge is built cleanly, lateral authority transfer is more likely to occur with little additional corroboration.

13.6 The Frame-Ambition × Neighbouring-Topics Interaction

The Topical Expansion Frame is also where the higher-amplitude frames on the Frame Ambition Ladder pay off in dimensions the brand was not already competing in. A Q-tier frame, when supported, may dominate the territory it was built for and may also build bridges into territories it was not built for, on the condition that those territories are genuinely adjacent and the inferential bridge is logically sound. This is a structural claim about how the architecture composes: high-amplitude frames in established territory generate Reframing Bridge geometry into Neighbouring Topics for free, in the sense that the source-territory Q-tier authority lowers the corroboration threshold required to anchor any well-constructed Reframing Bridge into a genuinely adjacent territory. It is one of the framework's most powerful operational implications, and explains why category leaders compound their advantage across topics rather than just deepening it within a single topic.

14. Framed Proof of claims and the Partial Inversion of Inbound Link Dependency in Digital Public Relations

Standard digital public relations operates with the assumption that securing third-party coverage with an inbound link, in the brand's preferred language, is the load-bearing outcome. Framed Proof of claims, this paper argues, partially inverts that dependency at the interpretive layer, while leaving intact the discovery and crawling functions that links continue to perform.

This argument does not claim that links cease to matter. It claims that links are no longer the only or necessarily primary carrier of interpretive meaning once the brand supplies the frame directly. Links retain their established functions in discovery, crawling, indexing, and authority transfer (Google for Developers, *Crawling and Indexing*; Google for Developers, *Introduction to Structured Data*). What changes at Framed Proof of claims is that the framing burden no longer requires third-party adoption of the brand's preferred language.

14.1 The Inversion at the Interpretive Layer

Standard digital PR at Connected Proof of claims depends on the journalist using the brand's framing, linking to the brand's site, and placing the connection where retrieval can follow it. Every part of that value chain requires the third party to cooperate at the framing level, which is why digital PR practitioners spend substantial effort negotiating with editors, briefing journalists, and chasing link placements that hold the brand's preferred language.

At Framed Proof of claims, the third-party coverage is hypothesised to function as raw material for the system's verification of the brand's frame, rather than as the location at which the brand's framing must already exist. The journalist provides corroboration: an independent mention, a fact synthesis can verify against other sources. The brand provides the frame on its own architecture, where the brand can guarantee logical structure and synthesis can read the frame

in its strongest form. The two are combined: corroboration from the third party, frame from the brand.

This reduces, but does not eliminate, the third party's framing contribution. The journalist does not need to use the brand's preferred language for the corroboration to count. What is required is that the corroboration exists, is independently authoritative, and is discoverable; the link continues to assist with discovery and authority transfer in well-documented ways. The brand's interpretive layer carries the framing work that previously required third-party adoption.

14.2 The Agency-Incentive Argument

A structural observation about the SEO and digital-PR industry's commercial model follows from the inversion. Practitioner reception of the Framed Proof of claims argument may, on the hypothesis advanced here, vary systematically with the structure of the practitioner's commercial incentives. The inbound-link dependency the SEO industry built its economics on is a Connected-Proof constraint: negotiating the link, the anchor text, the position on the page, the placement on the publication's domain authority hierarchy. Move to Framed Proof of claims and most of those negotiations stop being load-bearing, because the framing function the negotiations were intended to secure has migrated to the brand's own architecture.

The hypothesis is testable as a falsifiable observation about industry economics: agencies whose commercial models are anchored to link acquisition and editorial negotiation should, on the present argument, exhibit measurable resistance to the Framed Proof of claims framing of digital PR economics. Agencies whose commercial models are anchored to brand-architecture work, content engineering, and entity-resolution work should exhibit measurable receptivity to the same framing. The prediction is empirical: practitioner attitudes toward Framed Proof of claims should vary systematically with the structure of the practitioner's commercial incentives, in a direction the present hypothesis predicts. The author has observed this pattern across multiple consulting engagements, but acknowledges that systematic empirical evaluation across the practitioner population would be required to establish the claim formally.

14.3 Structural Defensibility: Why Framed Proof of claims Is More Defensible Than Connected Proof of claims

A further structural consequence of the inversion is that Framed Proof of claims produces representational advantages that are *structurally more defensible* than the advantages Connected Proof of claims produces. The defensibility argument has three components.

First, the asset (the frame) lives on infrastructure the brand controls absolutely. Where Connected Proof of claims depends on third-party cooperation that may degrade over time (links removed, articles unpublished, publications folded, editorial relationships souring), Framed Proof of claims's load-bearing asset sits on the brand's own domain in the brand's own

content architecture. The brand cannot lose access to the frame the way it can lose access to a third-party link or a third-party article.

Second, the corroboration that supports the frame is distributed across multiple independent sources by design (the temporal mechanism formalised in Section 12 makes distribution a requirement, not a coincidence). A Connected-Proof asset that depends on a single high-value third-party source is vulnerable to single-source failure (the source going offline, the source becoming uncited by the system for unrelated reasons, the source's authority degrading). A Framed-Proof asset whose corroboration is distributed across multiple independent sources is robust to the failure of any single source, and degrades gracefully rather than catastrophically when individual sources change.

Third, the frame itself becomes more valuable over time rather than less, through the Compounding Authority principle (Section 12.5). Each successful aspirational-to-mechanical transition increases the entity-level corroboration weight that subsequent frames inherit. Connected Proof of claims advantages have no equivalent compounding mechanism: a brand at Connected Proof of claims maintains its position by continued connection work, but does not accumulate compounding advantages from the position itself. A brand at Framed Proof of claims accumulates compounding advantages that subsequent frames benefit from, even if the underlying proof base remains constant.

The combined defensibility argument: Framed Proof of claims is structurally more defensible than Connected Proof of claims because the asset lives on controlled infrastructure, the corroboration is distributed by design, and the position itself compounds rather than commoditising. Connected-Proof advantages can erode through routine operational failures of the third-party ecosystem; Framed-Proof advantages are less exposed to those specific failure modes and accumulate compounding benefits over time. The defensibility argument is structural rather than absolute: a Framed-Proof position can still degrade if the entity's site is deindexed, if the underlying claim becomes outdated, if the corroboration weakens, or if competitors out-corroborate the entity in the same territory. The claim is that the failure-mode profile is structurally different and structurally more favourable, not that Framed Proof of claims is failure-proof. This is one of the framework's most consequential claims for practitioners working in digital PR, content marketing, and SEO economics, and warrants academic treatment because it makes a falsifiable observation about asset-quality differences between the two operational levels that can be tested empirically through longitudinal measurement of representational position under varying third-party-ecosystem conditions.

14.4 The Measurement Reframe

A practical implication follows from the inversion and the defensibility argument: measurement weighting in digital PR programmes may need to shift. Inbound links retain value for discovery and authority transfer; they no longer need to retain the entirety of the framing burden if the brand operates at Framed Proof of claims. The corroboration that exists in places retrieval can

find it remains the necessary asset; the dependency on the journalist using the brand's preferred language is what is hypothesised to relax.

The measurement reframe, stated as a methodological recommendation: stop measuring digital PR success principally by inbound link acquisition, and start measuring it principally by independent corroboration that exists in places retrieval can find it. The link is a Connected-Proof artefact whose value is well-documented but whose weight at Framed Proof of claims is reduced. The corroboration is the actual asset whose weight at Framed Proof of claims is increased. The transition is not abrupt: links continue to matter for discovery and authority transfer, and corroboration can be carried by linked or unlinked third-party content. But the *relative weighting* of the two artefacts is hypothesised to shift as brands move from Connected Proof of claims to Framed Proof of claims, and measurement frameworks that fail to track corroboration density independently of link acquisition will systematically under-measure the proof base actually supporting Framed Proof of claims position.

The strategic implication for any brand operating a digital PR programme is that the success metric should be the corroboration density across independent third-party sources, with link acquisition tracked as a secondary metric capturing the discovery and authority-transfer functions. PR is therefore not displaced by Framed Proof of claims; it is repositioned as the supply chain for the corroborated facts that Reframing Bridges into Neighbouring Topics (Section 13) and the independent-articulation phase of the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition (Section 12.2) require. Digital PR contributes the corroboration that the brand's frame architecture then assembles into Framed Proof of claims position, with the relative emphasis between the two functions shifting as the brand's operational level rises.

15. Claim-Frame-Prove: The Three Levels Operationalised as Methodology

15.1 CFP as a Per-Claim Protocol

Claim-Frame-Prove (CFP) is a **per-claim protocol**. Each CFP cycle operates on a single factual statement about the brand and produces, when the cycle completes successfully, a single anchored conclusion that retrieval-and-synthesis systems can transmit as grounded representation. The unit of CFP is the single claim. *Jason Barnard publicly developed AEO from 2018* and *Jason Barnard runs Kalicube* are both atomic CFP units; each requires its own claim, its own frame, and its own proof. The size of the claim does not change the unit: small claims and ambitious claims alike are run one at a time, each through its own cycle.

CFP (introduced in the author's commercial work and presented here as the methodological corollary of the three-level model) maps onto the architecture as follows. *Claim* identifies the desired J: the conclusion the brand wants the system to transmit. *Prove* connects the accepted facts {A, B, and where needed C} that constitute the proof base for J. *Frame* performs Strategic

Claim Bridging by showing why those facts support J, with description control, ICP matching, and distinctiveness renewal as the three functions formalised in Section 8, and with the three-dimensional architecture of Section 10 specifying which axis the move occupies and the Bridge Type taxonomy of Section 11 specifying which structurally distinct cognitive operation the bridge performs.

[FIGURE 4: PLACEHOLDER]

Caption: Claim-Frame-Prove (the basic protocol cycle).

Description: A three-step horizontal flow showing the three components of a single CFP cycle. *Claim:* make a factual statement about the brand. *Frame:* position the claim with context aligned to the brand story (this is where Strategic Claim Bridging operates, performing the function formalised in Sections 10 and 11). *Prove:* back the claim up with third-party validation (corroboration of A and B in retrievable, independent sources). The arrows from Claim → Frame → Prove establish that the protocol's components are sequential within a single cycle, with Prove anchoring the bridge that Frame constructs from the accepted facts to the desired J.

Source file: [fig4-claim-frame-prove-basic.png](#) (provided as [fig4-25-april.jpg](#)).

15.2 The Iterative Mechanism: Compounding Across Cycles

A clarification matters here, because the protocol invites a misreading the framework does not support. **CFP is not a one-shot operation in which a single claim is framed, proven, and won.** CFP runs claim by claim, fact by fact. The brand's full picture is built from many CFP cycles compounding: each claim framed and proven becomes a fact in the corpus, and the cumulative weight of those facts is what positions the brand to dominate. A single CFP cycle moves a single J from Scattered through Connected to Framed; the brand's representational position is the accumulated outcome of many such cycles operating across different J values, different dimensions, different Bridge Types, and different time horizons. **Dominance is a stack of well-framed facts, not a single masterstroke.**

The compounding works because each completed cycle changes what the next cycle has to work with. A J that completes the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition (Section 12) becomes available in the corpus as an anchored fact rather than as the brand's claim about itself, and that anchored fact then functions as one of the {A, B, ...} components for subsequent CFP cycles. This is the per-cycle instance of Compounding Authority (Section 12.5, formally *cumulative corroboration weight*): the entity-level corroborative density available to cycle $n+1$ is greater than what was available to cycle n , because cycle n 's output has loaded into the corpus as a verifiable component. The brand's full picture is the cumulative geometry of all completed cycles, not the outcome of any single cycle taken in isolation.

15.3 Density, Coverage, and Weight: The Three Properties of Cumulative Dominance

Where individual CFP cycles produce single anchored conclusions, the brand's representational position at any given moment is a function of three properties of the accumulated facts that have completed CFP cycles. The paper terms these properties *density*, *coverage*, and *weight*.

Density is the quantity of brand-related claims that have completed CFP cycles and are present in the corpus as anchored facts. Density alone does not produce dominance: a brand with three hundred anchored facts on a single sub-topic may dominate that sub-topic but lose comparison queries that traverse adjacent sub-topics where the brand has no anchored facts.

Coverage (at brand altitude, distinct from the per-frame Coverage axis introduced in Section 10) is the breadth across which the anchored facts span the topical territory the brand competes in. The per-frame Coverage axis describes whether a single frame extends to new aspects of an already-occupied topic; brand-altitude Coverage describes whether the brand's accumulated facts span the full territory of sub-topics, comparison axes, use cases, and audience contexts in which the brand competes. Coverage gaps — territories within the brand's competitive market where no anchored facts exist — are competitive vulnerabilities, because the system has nothing to ground against in those territories and may default to category-level descriptions or to competitor-supplied frames.

Weight is whether the anchored facts cluster on the claims that actually matter for the brand's commercial outcomes, or on claims that are accurate but commercially trivial. A brand may achieve high density and broad coverage with the bulk of its anchored facts concentrated on claims that do not feature in commercially meaningful queries. Weight is what distinguishes representational dominance from representational thoroughness: a brand with three perfectly framed facts on the wrong claims is not dominant; a brand whose anchored facts cluster on the queries its market uses to make purchasing decisions is on the path to dominance.

The three properties interact non-additively. A brand low on any one property is hypothesised to lose representational ground regardless of strength in the other two: low density produces hedged or absent representation; low coverage produces gaps competitors fill; low weight produces dominance on trivial queries while losing the ones that matter. Brand-level dominance is hypothesised to require the three properties holding simultaneously rather than the maximisation of any single one. The relationship is presented here as a structural hypothesis; the empirical question of how density, coverage, and weight combine to produce observable representational position is part of the research agenda the testable predictions in Section 17 open.

[FIGURE 7: PLACEHOLDER — TO BE PRODUCED]

Caption: Cumulative Dominance from Iterated CFP Cycles.

Description: A two-altitude diagram visualising the per-claim/cumulative distinction. Lower altitude (per-claim): multiple individual CFP cycles shown in parallel and in sequence, each operating on a distinct factual statement and each producing one anchored fact when the cycle completes. Each cycle is shown as the three-step Claim → Frame → Prove flow from Figure 4, with the additional element that the output of a completed cycle (the anchored fact) feeds back as a candidate {A} or {B} input for subsequent cycles. Upper altitude (brand-level): the accumulated anchored facts populate a topical-territory grid representing the brand's competitive market. Three properties of cumulative dominance shown as structural conditions on the grid: *density* (how many cells of the grid are populated with anchored facts), *coverage* (how broadly the populated cells span the territory the brand competes in), *weight* (whether the populated cells cluster on commercially meaningful regions of the territory or on trivial regions). The kill phrase from Section 15.2 — *Dominance is a stack of well-framed facts, not a single masterstroke* — anchors the diagram's argumentative purpose.

Source file: [fig7-cumulative-dominance.png](#) (to be produced).

Production note: The two-altitude separation is the load-bearing visual element. The diagram should make explicit that brand-altitude dominance is the *accumulated outcome* of many per-claim CFP cycles, not the result of a single high-amplitude cycle. The feedback loop where anchored outputs become {A} or {B} inputs for subsequent cycles visualises Compounding Authority (Section 12.5) at the per-cycle level.

15.4 Operational Application

In operational terms, each Claim-Frame-Prove cycle decides which J the brand wants to own *next*, identifies whether the current proof base (including any J values already established through prior cycles) supports it, locates the move in the three-dimensional space (Depth, Coverage, or Neighbouring Topics) at the appropriate amplitude (Small, Non-Obvious, or Transformational Leap), selects the Bridge Type (Generative, Reframing, or Elevation) suited to the situation, and runs the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition (Section 12) to take the frame from authored claim through independent articulation to system-transmitted representation. Each application of the protocol is a climb from Scattered to Connected to Framed for a specific J; the brand's overall representational position is the accumulated geometry of the J values that have completed that climb across many cycles operating in parallel and in sequence.

The protocol applies differently across time horizons (extracting value from past proof, building proof in the present, engineering future proof chains), and a practical operational guide is published separately as part of the author's commercial work.

15.5 Academic Claims and the Practitioner Boundary

The academic claims of this paper are: the three-level model of brand-AI communication; Strategic Claim Bridging as the mechanism by which Framed Proof of claims is produced; Externally Accountable Frame Authorship as its accountability dimension; the Frame Ambition Ladder as a Creative Leap scale above Standing Still; the three-dimensional movement architecture (Depth, Coverage, Neighbouring Topics); the three Bridge Types (Generative, Reframing, Elevation) and the orthogonality of Bridge Type, dimension, and amplitude; the Topical Expansion Frame as canonical Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics, with the adjacency test as its operative constraint; the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition as a temporal mechanism for Framed Proof of claims establishment; Compounding Authority (cumulative corroboration weight) as the principle by which interpretive leadership compounds rather than commoditises across iterated CFP cycles; the per-claim/cumulative distinction with density, coverage, and weight as the three properties of brand-altitude dominance; the structural defensibility argument for Framed Proof of claims relative to Connected Proof of claims; and the selection-pressure hypothesis at the interpretive layer (Sections 9 to 14, 16). The Claim-Frame-Prove protocol and related proprietary terms (the Kalicube Process, the Kalicube Framework) are the commercial instantiation of the academic model and are not part of the theoretical claim.

16. Interpretive Selection Pressure and the Widening Framing Gap: A Hypothesis

A possible conclusion drawn from rapid improvement in AI reasoning capabilities is that systems will eventually figure out how to frame brands correctly without external help. This paper proposes the contrary hypothesis: that a comparable selection pressure to the one operating in the search-engine era may be observable at the interpretive layer, and that the pressure rewards entities whose Strategic Claim Bridging reduces the system's interpretive burden.

The pressure does not reward "abduction" by the brand. It rewards reduced interpretive burden. Strategic Claim Bridging reduces that burden by selecting J, evidencing the bridge, and making the conclusion easier for synthesis to ground, verify, and preserve. The brand that has performed Empathy for the Machine far enough to see what the system actually struggles with, and has done the connection and derivation work the system was not going to do on the brand's behalf, supplies the system with assets the system can deploy productively. The brand that has not (Scattered Proof of claims, Standing Still) leaves the system to do the work itself, which it is not reliably equipped to do for accountable brand representation.

Search engines have for two decades rewarded sites that are easier to crawl, easier to render, and easier to classify. Knowledge graphs reward entities that are easier to resolve. The hypothesis advanced here is that AI Assistive Engines reward content that is easier to ground, easier to verify, and easier to transmit confidently. Where two entities present similar evidentiary

substance, the entity whose evidence is easier to interpret, frame, and transmit is hypothesised to be selected, cited, and described more often and more affirmatively.

Framed Proof of claims, on this hypothesis, is the entity-side asset that operationalises the principle at the interpretive layer. AI can generate candidate inferences, but it lacks the entity's strategic stake in choosing which inference should become the entity's public frame. A more capable system encountering Framed Proof of claims has the inferential structure available ready-made: the brand has already selected J, has already built the bridge, and has already published the proof. Synthesis is hypothesised to transmit the frame more confidently, with the system's full reasoning capability amplifying rather than substituting for the framing work.

A more capable system without an externally supplied frame is hypothesised to face the inverse situation. It must perform the interpretive work itself — and it must do so without the strategic stake that would tell it which J to select on the brand's behalf. The result is hedged output, conventional category-level description, and reduced selection likelihood relative to brands operating at Framed Proof of claims. Every improvement in reasoning capability may make the hedging more sophisticated without eliminating it, because the underlying problem may be the absence of an externally supplied J to amplify rather than insufficient capability.

The gap between those two outcomes is the Framing Gap. The hypothesis advanced here is that the Framing Gap may widen as model capability improves, if improved reasoning increases systems' ability to exploit externally supplied frames faster than it increases their ability to originate accountable frames independently. On this reading, brands whose claims sit at Connected Proof of claims, and brands at Standing Still, do not necessarily lose ground in absolute terms; they lose ground relative to brands whose claims have reached Framed Proof of claims as systems become more efficient at deploying interpretive assets that reduce their own interpretive burden. The same selection pressure that has rewarded crawlable HTML and structured data may operate at the interpretive layer, rewarding Strategic Claim Bridging. The mechanism may be the same. The layer at which it operates is what has changed.

[FIGURE 3: PLACEHOLDER]

Caption: The Framing Gap Widens with Every Model Generation (illustrative hypothesis).

Description: A line chart with AI capability over model generations on the horizontal axis (Today, +1 gen, +2 gen, +3 gen, +4 gen, +5 gen) and recommendation quality on the vertical axis. Two lines: (i) recommendation quality for brands whose claims sit at Connected Proof of claims, rising over successive model generations as systems become better at retrieving and synthesising connected evidence; (ii) recommendation quality for brands whose claims have reached Framed Proof of claims, rising faster than (i) because the systems become better at deploying frames the brand has supplied. The shaded region between the two lines is *the*

Framing Gap — the relative advantage that brands operating at Framed Proof of claims accumulate as model capability rises. The chart visualises a *hypothesis*, not a measured trajectory; the lines are the empirical predictions Section 17 commits to evaluating, not data points already in evidence.

Source file: [fig3-framing-gap-widens.png](#) (provided as [fig3-25-april.jpg](#)).

Note for typesetter: Figure currently labels the lines as "Connected Proof brand" and "Framed Proof brands". Update labels to "Brand at Connected Proof of claims" and "Brand at Framed Proof of claims" (or equivalent phrasing that locates the levels at the per-claim altitude rather than on the brand) before final deposit, to match the renamed corpus terminology and the per-claim/cumulative distinction established in Section 15.3.

Caveat (also displayed on the figure or in the caption): This is an illustrative hypothesis presented to clarify the prediction. The lines do not represent measured data. The empirical evaluation of the hypothesis is the subject of Predictions 1, 2, and 5 in Section 17.

This is a hypothesis. The hypotheses advanced here concern observable representation in system output, not direct access to proprietary ranking, retrieval, or synthesis mechanisms. The model therefore treats citation frequency, description stability, hedging language, frame reproduction, and comparative selection as observable proxies for underlying selection behaviour. These proxies are imperfect, but they provide a practical basis for empirical testing across systems whose internal mechanisms are not publicly inspectable. Section 17 sets out the empirical work that would test the hypothesis on those terms.

17. Empirical Implications and Testable Predictions

The model generates five testable predictions. Each can be evaluated through controlled longitudinal prompting across multiple AI systems, controlled publication of claim-frame-proof assets, and pre/post measurement of citation frequency, description stability, frame-ambition outcomes, lateral topical transfer, and faithful frame reproduction.

17.1 Prediction 1: Connection Increases Citation Frequency

Brands with explicitly connected claims and corroborating third-party proof will receive more frequent AI citations than brands with equivalent but scattered proof, holding evidentiary substance constant. Test design: pair-matched brands on a common topic, controlled introduction of explicit linkage between claims and corroboration on one brand's site while holding the other constant, longitudinal sampling of AI system output across a defined query set, measurement of citation frequency and selection rate.

17.2 Prediction 2: Strategic Claim Bridging Increases Description Stability

Brands that add Strategic Claim Bridging to connected proof (selecting a beneficial J, constructing the logical bridge, publishing it where retrieval can verify it) will receive more stable and differentiated descriptions across retrieval contexts than brands that provide proof alone. Test design: controlled introduction of Strategic Claim Bridging on one brand's site, holding evidentiary substance constant, repeated sampling of AI system output across varied prompt contexts and retrieval conditions, measurement of description-language consistency, dimension of comparative differentiation, and presence of brand-engineered terms in system output.

17.3 Prediction 3: Creative Leap Amplitude Correlates with Proof Requirement

The proof requirement will scale with Creative Leap: the greater the distance between accepted facts and the derived conclusion J, the more independent corroboration is required for stable reproduction. Higher-amplitude J values (Q-tier Transformational Leaps) will fail or produce hedged output where independent corroboration is insufficient, and will produce affirmative description where corroboration is sufficient. Test design: controlled publication of Small-Leap ($A+B \rightarrow C$), Non-Obvious-Leap ($A+B \rightarrow J$), and Transformational-Leap ($A+B \rightarrow Q$) frames on a brand's own architecture, with varied levels of independent corroboration on third-party sites, measurement of system output for hedging language, selection likelihood, and description confidence as a function of Creative Leap \times corroboration density.

17.4 Prediction 4: Three-Dimensional Movement Patterns Predict Frame Stability

Frames that operate within their dimensional and amplitude constraints — that is, frames whose direction (X-axis Depth, Y-axis Coverage, or Z-axis Neighbouring Topics) is appropriate to the brand's current proof base, and whose amplitude (Small, Non-Obvious, or Transformational Leap) is supported by adequate corroboration — will stabilise more reliably than frames that mismatch dimension to proof base or that overstretch amplitude relative to proof. Specifically: Reframing Bridges into Neighbouring Topics (Z-axis) will stabilise more reliably when the source-territory authority on the X-axis (Depth) is established and the adjacency test (Section 13.3) is satisfied than when the source-territory authority is unestablished or the adjacency is contrived. Multistep trajectories that establish intermediate frames before higher-amplitude ones (Section 10.3) will produce more stable Q-tier frames than direct leaps from low-amplitude proof bases to Q-tier amplitude. Test design: controlled publication of multiple structured paths to the same Q-tier frame (direct leap; trajectory through established Non-Obvious Leap on the X-axis; trajectory through Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics with established source-territory authority), longitudinal sampling of AI system output across multiple systems, measurement of frame stability and confidence as a function of trajectory composition.

17.5 Prediction 5: Faithful Frame Reproduction Requires Both On-Site Structure and Independent Corroboration

Brand-authored frames will be reproduced more faithfully in AI system output when they are supported by both on-site logical structure and independent third-party corroboration than when either is present alone. Test design: controlled publication of a brand-authored J on the brand's own architecture with explicit logical structure but without third-party corroboration; the same J with third-party corroboration but without on-site logical structure; and the same J with both. Longitudinal sampling of AI system output across multiple systems, measurement of frame reproduction fidelity (presence of brand-engineered terms, preservation of the frame's logical structure, attribution to the brand) as a function of structural and corroborative support. This prediction connects the model's communicative claim to recent work on citation faithfulness in retrieval-augmented generation (Wallat et al., 2025), which establishes that even attributed answers can cite sources unfaithfully and that the conditions for faithful reproduction are not yet well understood.

17.6 Limitations

The author's own work is used illustratively in this paper and should not be treated as independent validation of the model. Empirical evaluation requires controlled experimentation across multiple brands, multiple AI systems, and varied retrieval conditions. The dating of the author's public development of *Answer Engine Optimisation* is best treated as publicly retrievable from 2018 onward, anchored in independent third-party coverage (Search Engine Watch, 2018), with the author's earlier development from 2017 treated as authorial testimony rather than independently documented public publication. The author traces *Empathy for the Machine* (originally *Empathy for the Beast*) to client consulting from 2011/2012 and first published it in practitioner-facing form in 2020 (Barnard, 2020), where the verbatim phrase *empathy for the beast* appears in a Search Engine Journal article. The 2020 publication is the earliest publicly retrievable artefact currently identified for the concept; the 2011/2012 oral development is an authorial trace that the 2020 publication does not on its own establish independently. The selection-pressure hypothesis (Section 16) is presented as a theoretical prediction consistent with established mechanics in adjacent layers (search and knowledge graphs); it is not yet empirically established at the interpretive layer and forms part of the research agenda the predictions in this section open. The five predictions assume that AI system output can be sampled at sufficient scale and across sufficient diversity of retrieval conditions for meaningful longitudinal comparison, which is a methodological challenge in its own right and one the wider research community is still developing instruments to address.

18. Conclusion: The Frame as Persistent External Territory

Generative AI systems will continue to improve at retrieval, connection, pattern extraction, and synthesis. None of those improvements directly addresses the brand whose evidence the

system can see but cannot reliably interpret in the brand's intended terms. The cognitive operation that determines whether the system describes a brand confidently, hedges, or overlooks it is, on the argument advanced here, Strategic Claim Bridging: the externally accountable selection of a beneficial derived conclusion from accepted facts and the construction of the logical bridge that allows the system to ground, verify, and transmit that conclusion.

AI can infer. AI can generate candidate J values. An AI agent supplied with criteria can rank them. What AI cannot supply is the external authority, accountability, or consequence-bearing role that turns one selected J into a specific entity's public frame. That role, and the accountability for it, is external territory in a structural sense: it depends on an entity bearing responsibility for the interpretation, and the locus of that responsibility lies outside the system regardless of model capability. The disposition that produces successful Strategic Claim Bridging is what this paper has termed Empathy for the Machine (formally, *machine-oriented perspective-taking*): the discipline of stepping outside the brand's internal narrative to identify which relationships, evidence paths, and inferential bridges are not legible to the system unless the entity makes them explicit.

The Framing Gap, on this reading, is not a defect to be patched but a feature of the relationship between corpus-grounded retrieval systems and real-world entities. It produces a corresponding opportunity for any brand willing to perform the authorship the system cannot. The brands that recognise the gap, extend Empathy for the Machine far enough to see what their representation actually requires, and supply the J the system needs are hypothesised to be the brands AI-mediated discovery surfaces, cites, and recommends with the highest confidence. The five hypotheses set out in Section 17 specify the empirical work required to evaluate that claim.

Appendix A: Extended Worked Example of the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition

This appendix provides an extended worked example of the temporal mechanism formalised in Section 12. The example uses the author case for the methodological reasons stated in Section 1: the author has direct access to the dated public record, and can inspect each component for verifiability and timing in ways that would not be feasible for an external case in equivalent depth. The worked example is offered as illustration of the mechanism, not as evidence that the model is valid; controlled empirical evaluation across multiple entities and AI systems is the subject of Section 17.

A.1 The Q-Tier Frame Currently in Progress

This appendix is intentionally reflexive: it uses the author's own candidate Q-tier frame to illustrate the exact Strategic Claim Bridging mechanism the paper theorises, while explicitly

separating illustration from empirical validation. The purpose of the appendix is not to prove that the candidate frame has been established, but to show how a high-amplitude frame is authored, anchored, distributed, and later tested.

The candidate Q-tier frame currently in progress at the time of this paper's deposit is a four-component synthesis using Darwin, Holmes, and Edison as recognisable analogical anchors, plus a fourth structural layer the present framework identifies as necessary in AI-mediated representation. The anchors are not presented as equivalences between the author and those figures. They are used as shorthand for four functions within the author's methodology: explanation, diagnostic inference, construction, and shaping.

Explanation is anchored by Darwin: selection-pressure modelling of the AI Engine Pipeline, formalised across published work from 2020 onward. *Diagnostic inference* is anchored by Holmes: evidence-based diagnostic instruments including the Brand SERP, the AI Résumé, and the Agent Dossier, with the methodology formalised across the Kalicube patent portfolio. *Construction* is anchored by Edison: Kalicube Pro as the operational platform that runs the diagnostic methodology at scale. *Shaping* is the AI-era layer: the systematic supply of structured, machine-legible evidence that, over time, shapes the interpretive expectations AI systems form about a category, the comparisons they make, and the brands they treat as reference points.

In this frame, Darwin, Holmes, and Edison function as analogical anchors for explanation, diagnostic inference, and construction, while *Shaping* names the AI-era function of deliberately supplying machine-legible evidence that influences how generative systems represent categories, comparisons, and brands.

The frame is at Q-tier amplitude (Transformational Leap, as formalised in Section 9.5). The Bridge Type is composite: Generative (the four-function synthesis is a new factual proposition about the author's methodology) plus Elevation (the analogical anchors are deployed to add consequence-weight to the existing components). The amplitude × Bridge Type combination is the most demanding in the strategic move-space formalised in Sections 10 and 11, and is presented here for that reason: the worked example is intended to illustrate the mechanism at the upper limit of what the framework supports. The fourth function (shaping) is structurally the component the paper's substantive argument has been developing throughout: the brand's role in supplying the system with the interpretive context the system cannot reliably produce on its own. Sections 2 to 16 formalise that role at the level of an individual frame; the synthesis here treats it at the level of an entity's accumulated interpretive infrastructure.

A practitioner-facing articulation of this four-function synthesis has been published in Kalicube material (Brusola, 2026) and is discussed under Phase Two below, with the methodological caveat that Kalicube-published material does not satisfy the independence condition formalised in Section 12.2.

A.2 Phase One: Frame Authorship

Each of the four components is anchored to dated, verifiable proof. The *explanation* component (Darwin: selection-pressure modelling) traces to the 2020 publication of the selection-pressure framing in *SEO in a Nutshell: Understanding, Credibility and Deliverability* (Search Engine Journal), with subsequent formalisation across the SEL article series 2024–2026 and across multiple framework documents on the Kalicube Strategy Sandbox. The *diagnostic inference* component (Holmes: evidence-based diagnostic methodology) traces to the introduction of the Brand SERP as a diagnostic instrument in 2012, the development of the AI Résumé and the Agent Dossier as further diagnostic instruments, and the methodology formalised across the Kalicube patent portfolio (multiple INPI applications). The *construction* component (Edison: operational platform) traces to Kalicube Pro as the platform implementing the diagnostic methodology at scale, with dated public references to the platform's operational role. The *shaping* component traces to dated public predictions that were borne out by subsequent industry developments (AEO 2018 → industry adoption; AAO 2025 → discipline naming; AI Engine Pipeline 2025 → structural model adopted across the field), plus dated current predictions on the Kalicube Strategy Sandbox about where the field is heading next, plus the Zero-Risk Year methodology and the OPIDC model as published frameworks that operationalise shaping as a discipline rather than as an aspirational claim.

The hostile-reviewer test (Section 9.6) is satisfiable on each component independently, which is the condition for the frame to be eligible for the transition described in Section 12. A reviewer with no commercial interest in the brand's success can verify the 2020 publication, the patent filings on public record, the platform's operational role, and the dated record of predictions and their outcomes. The components are anchored; the synthesis itself is the bridge that combines them, and is the load-bearing claim the four-phase mechanism is currently testing.

A.3 Phase Two: Independent Articulation

Phase two is in progress. The articulation work is distributed across multiple venues. Conference keynotes (Brighton SEO, MozCon, SMX) where each component appears in talk material made available for independent assessment. Podcast appearances where independent hosts encounter the components and articulate them in their own language. Joint work with credible third parties (the Authoritas Web Citation Study 2025, the WordLift collaboration, third-party industry coverage) that surfaces components in independent contexts. The SEL article series (15 articles, Search Engine Land, 2024–2026) establishing the dated authorship of each component within an editorially independent venue.

A four-layer articulation of the synthesis frame has also been published in Kalicube practitioner-facing material (Brusola, 2026), naming *Shaping* as the fourth layer and arguing for its structural distinctiveness in the AI era. The Brusola article is cited in this paper for two purposes: as the published source naming the four-layer structure used in this appendix, and as documentation that the synthesis frame has begun appearing in entity-published practitioner

material. The article does not, however, satisfy the independence condition formalised in Section 12.2: the author is a Kalicube content strategist, the venue is the Kalicube domain, and the relationship between the entity and the articulator is commercial. Kalicube-published articulation contributes to entity-level resolution and to the practitioner-record dimension of phase one rather than to the independent-articulation dimension of phase two. The methodological discipline the framework imposes on itself requires that distinction to be made explicit. The Brusola article is included for the structural reason that it is the source naming Shaping; for any future peer-reviewed version of this paper, the article would be a candidate for removal because Kalicube-internal articulation is not the kind of corroboration the framework treats as load-bearing.

The author's role across the genuine phase-two activity (conferences, podcasts, joint third-party work, editorially independent venues) is restricted to making the underlying material accessible to independent parties. The author does not provide third-party venues with brand-supplied wording, because corroboration that consists of repetition of the entity's own language fails the independence condition. *Independence is a condition of the mechanism, not a cosmetic requirement.* Independent parties articulate the underlying interpretation in their own language; the variation in articulation across independent venues is itself part of the evidence that any subsequent convergence reflects independent corroboration rather than coordinated repetition.

A.4 Phase Three: Convergence Window

The convergence window for the candidate frame opened with the start of the SEL series in early 2024. The diagnostic hypothesis advanced in Section 12.3 places the expected convergence window at 12–18 months, with potential extension for the Elevation component of the composite Bridge Type. Convergence is judged sufficient when independent third-party articulations of the synthesis interpretation accumulate across credible venues in language not derived from the entity's own wording.

At the time of deposit, articulations approximating the synthesis are observable across third-party sources (industry articles, podcast framings, conference programming). Whether the observed articulation pattern constitutes convergence in the sense formalised in Section 12.3, or whether the pattern is closer to phase-two seeding still in progress, is a matter for the empirical work described in Section 17 (Predictions 1, 2, 3, and 5) rather than for the worked-example treatment offered here. The worked example is offered to illustrate how the mechanism operates conceptually; the question of whether this specific frame has, at this specific date, completed the transition is empirically open and would require controlled measurement to settle.

A.5 Phase Four: System-Transmitted Representation

Phase four for this frame is hypothesised but not yet observed under conditions sufficient to establish that transmission has occurred. AI-system descriptions of the author can be sampled across systems and queries; the language of those descriptions can be compared against the

synthesis frame to assess fidelity (Prediction 5). At the time of the paper's deposit, that empirical work is open. The candidate frame is offered here as an instance of phase one and phase two operating under conditions hypothesised to be conducive to phase three convergence and phase four transmission, not as established evidence that the transition has occurred.

A.6 The Framework as Worked Example of Itself

The more-than-a-decade temporal record on which this paper's authority on Strategic Claim Bridging in 2026 sits — *Empathy for the Machine*, traced by the author to oral development in client consulting from 2011/2012, first published in practitioner-facing form in 2020 in Search Engine Journal, and brought to academic register in 2026 in the present paper — is itself a worked example of the mechanism formalised in Section 12, operating across a multi-year horizon. Phase one (frame authorship): authorial trace to 2011/2012 oral development, with first verifiable publication in 2020. Phase two (independent articulation): subsequent practitioner-facing work and third-party adoption across the practitioner community. Phase three (convergence): the practitioner community's progressive adoption of the underlying disposition over the following years. Phase four (system-transmitted representation): the components of *Empathy for the Machine* and its derivatives in current AI-system output describing the author's work.

The 2026 academic claim of the present paper sits inside that more-than-a-decade worked example as its most ambitious component. This is acknowledged for transparency rather than offered as evidence: the model is illustrated on the model's own author because the dated public record is available for inspection. The empirical question of whether the model's predictions hold across other entities, other AI systems, and other domains is the subject of Section 17.

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Author Information

Jason Barnard is the Founder and CEO of Kalicube, a digital brand intelligence company specialising in entity optimisation and AI visibility strategy. He has developed *Empathy for the Machine* (originally *Empathy for the Beast*), traced to client consulting from 2011/2012 and first published in 2020 in Search Engine Journal; *Brand SERP* since 2012; *Answer Engine Optimisation* (AEO) from 2018, with earlier oral development traced to 2017; *Assistive Agent Optimisation* (AAO) from 2025; and the methodology *The Kalicube Process* (TKP). He has delivered keynotes and workshops for Google Asia Pacific. His practitioner-facing work on generative AI and brand visibility has appeared in Search Engine Land, on the Kalicube Strategy Sandbox, and across the AI search practitioner community.

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AI Usage Disclosure

In the preparation of this paper, the author used Claude (Anthropic) for drafting iterations, structural review, terminology consistency checking, and copy-editing. All conceptual content, theoretical claims, and intellectual contributions are the author's own. The author reviewed, revised, and approved all text and takes full responsibility for the content of this publication. The disclosure is provided in line with emerging norms for AI-assisted academic scholarship.

This paper formalises and consolidates a body of work first published across Search Engine Land, Search Engine Journal, and the Kalicube Strategy Sandbox between 2011/2012 (the author's earliest trace of Empathy for the Machine in client consulting), 2018 (publicly retrievable practice of Answer Engine Optimisation, anchored by Search Engine Watch coverage; the author traces earlier oral development to 2017), 2020 (first publicly retrievable formulation of Empathy for the Beast / Empathy for the Machine), and 2026 (the present paper's contributions). The academic claims of this paper are the Framing Gap, Strategic Claim Bridging, the three-level model of brand-AI communication, the Frame Ambition Ladder, the movement and Bridge Type typologies (Depth/Coverage/Neighbouring Topics dimensions; Generative/Reframing/Elevation Bridge Types) with their orthogonality as the load-bearing structural property, the Topical Expansion Frame as canonical Reframing Bridge into Neighbouring Topics, the adjacency test, the Aspirational-to-Mechanical Transition as a temporal mechanism for Framed Proof of claims establishment, Compounding Authority (cumulative corroboration weight), the per-claim/cumulative distinction with density, coverage, and weight as the three properties of brand-altitude dominance, the structural defensibility argument for Framed Proof of claims relative to Connected Proof of claims, and the interpretive selection-pressure hypothesis. Empathy for the Machine (formally, machine-oriented perspective-taking) is named as the underlying disposition that makes Strategic Claim Bridging operationally possible, with practitioner-origin status acknowledged. Proprietary terms from the author's commercial work (the Kalicube Process, the Kalicube Framework, Claim-Frame-Prove) are presented as practitioner instantiations of the academic model rather than as independent theoretical claims.