



# The quest for excellence in UX Leadership

Building company and team environments that foster inspiration and creativity

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Bosch

What is *leadership*?

# *Leadership*

Operates.... on the front lines



# *Leadership*

Provides insights.... that help transform vision into reality

# *Leadership*

Empowers others.... to fulfill the task(s) at hand



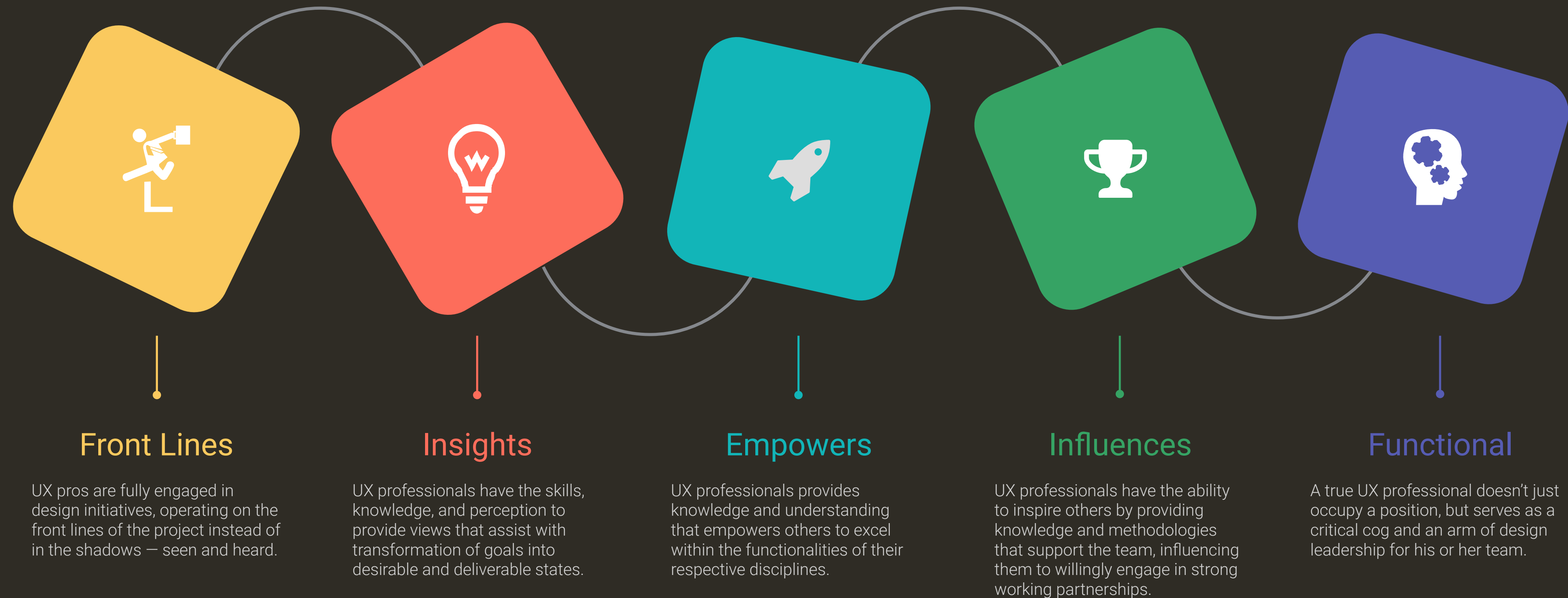
# *Leadership*

Influences others.... to willingly ascend

# *Leadership*

Is more of a function.... than a position

# UX Professionals ARE Leaders





# ***UX professionals ARE leaders by trade***

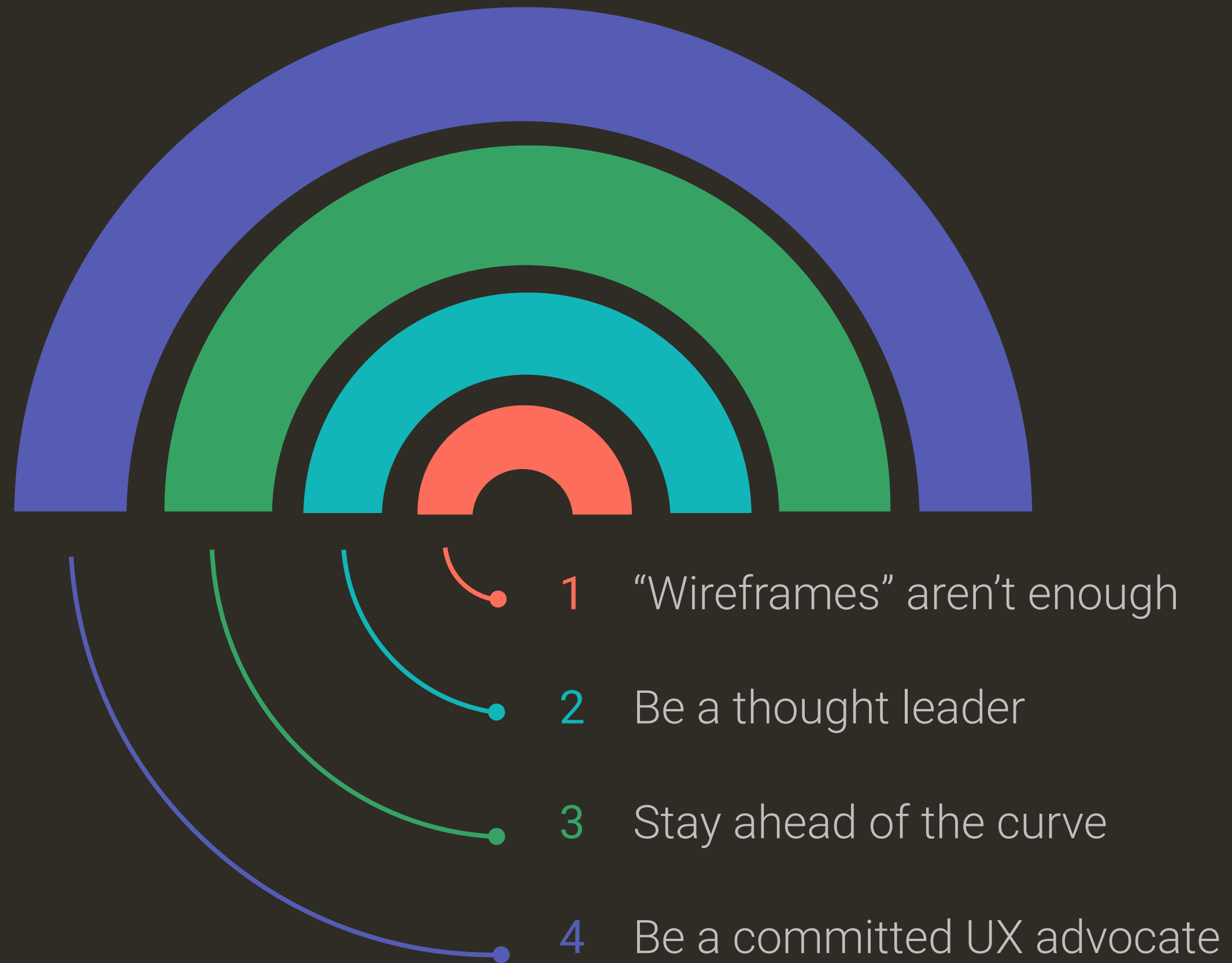
*(but in reality, we mature into such roles)*

# What Can We Do?

What mindsets, strategies, and methodologies can we employ to achieve and secure functioning as leaders?



# Extend Beyond the World of Deliverables



## "Wireframes" aren't enough

The entry-level person can supply deliverables, but to be a leader, we must be capable and willing to provide much more.



## Be a thought leader

Supply concepts and ideas that help drive project and design initiatives — demonstrating depth of insight..



## Stay ahead of the curve

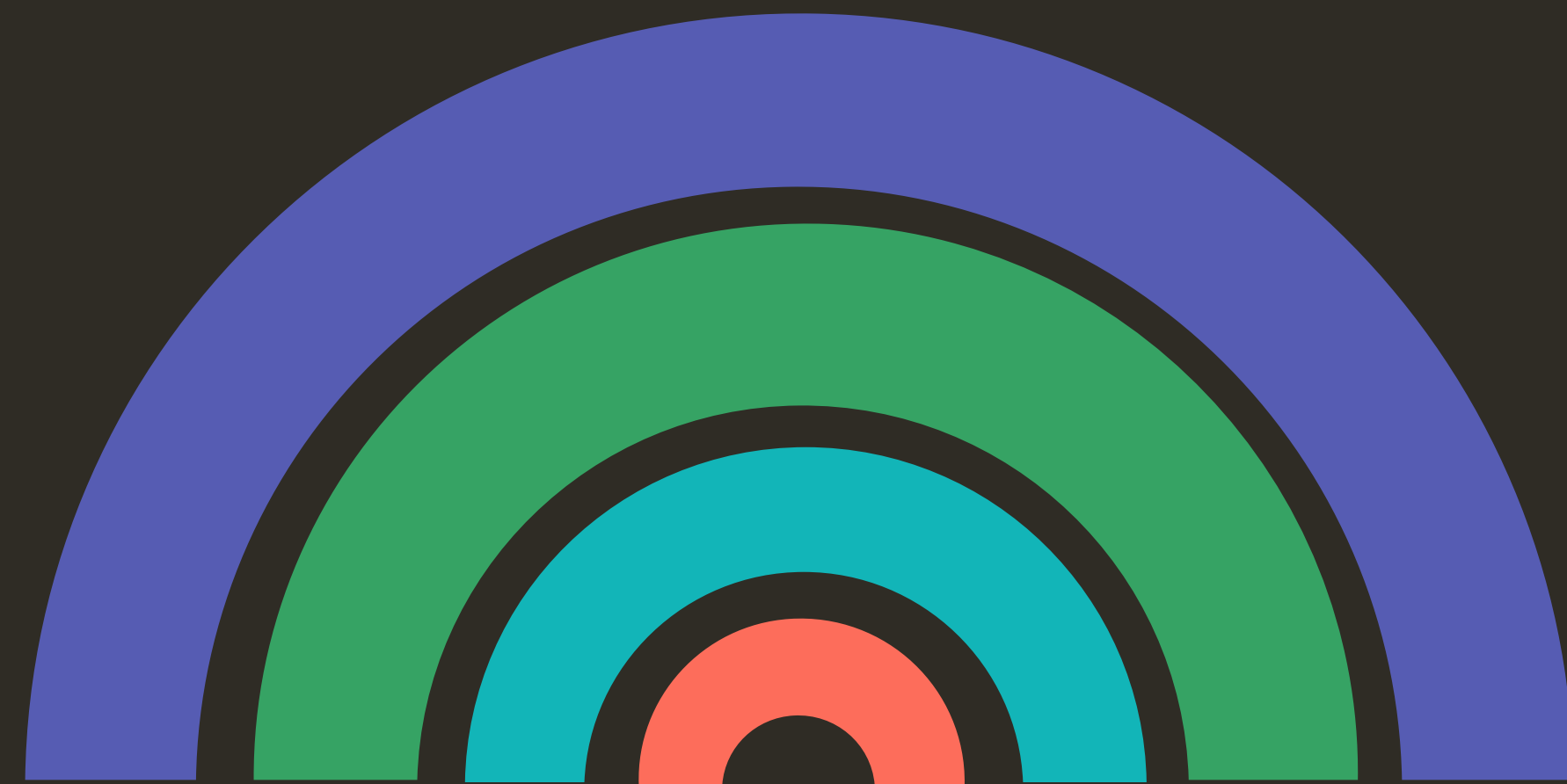
Failure to provide insight and counterpositions when the "article reader" seizes a thought leadership role can be costly; hence, make sure you are in a position to provide ample levels of guidance.



## Be a committed UX advocate

In addition to serving as the "go to person" when it comes to UX, strive to help people to understand our purpose and value — prove we belong and why!!

# Overcome the “UX vs Them” Mentality



- 1 The best minds know....
- 2 Be appreciative
- 3 Don't fear "healthy conflict"
- 4 Consistency in reflection



## The best minds know....

It takes the work of a team to deliver an optimal user experience. Even the best UX professionals need the skills and input of others. Remember, it takes a village!



## Be appreciative

Always make the effort to confirm appreciation for input towards the user experience and acknowledge those that contribute. This will help foster a strong community and relationships.



## Don't fear "healthy conflict"

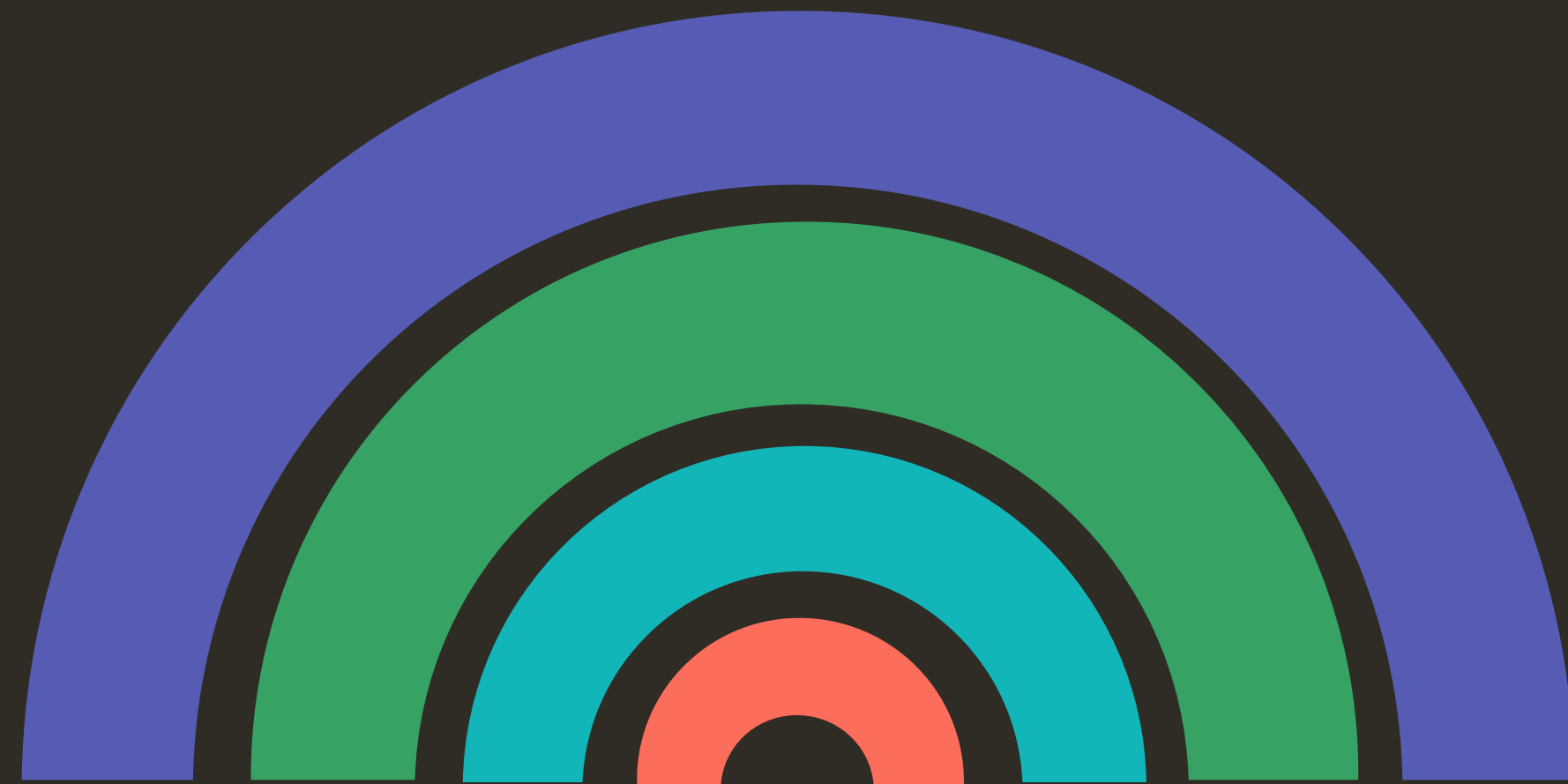
In every team scenario, there will likely be conflict, but don't allow the seemingly hostile scenario discourage or derail you. Embrace it, learn from it, and keep your head. Your team will appreciate it.



## Consistency in reflection

Your behaviors and attitude must ALWAYS reflect your commitment and belief in the team approach. This will help repel and offset opposition and cynicism.

# Cultivate a Strong Sense of Trust



- 1 Avoid the “vacuum”
- 2 Be candid, but respectful
- 3 Ears.... above the mouth
- 4 Strive for transparency



## Avoid the “vacuum”

Don't design in a vacuum. Including team members in the decision making process goes a long way to help build partnerships and strong, healthy lines of communication.



## Be candid, but respectful

It's critical to be honest, but there's no need to be brutally honest in most scenarios. Giving people respect, especially in trying situations, can help inspire others to give you the same.



## Ears.... above the mouth

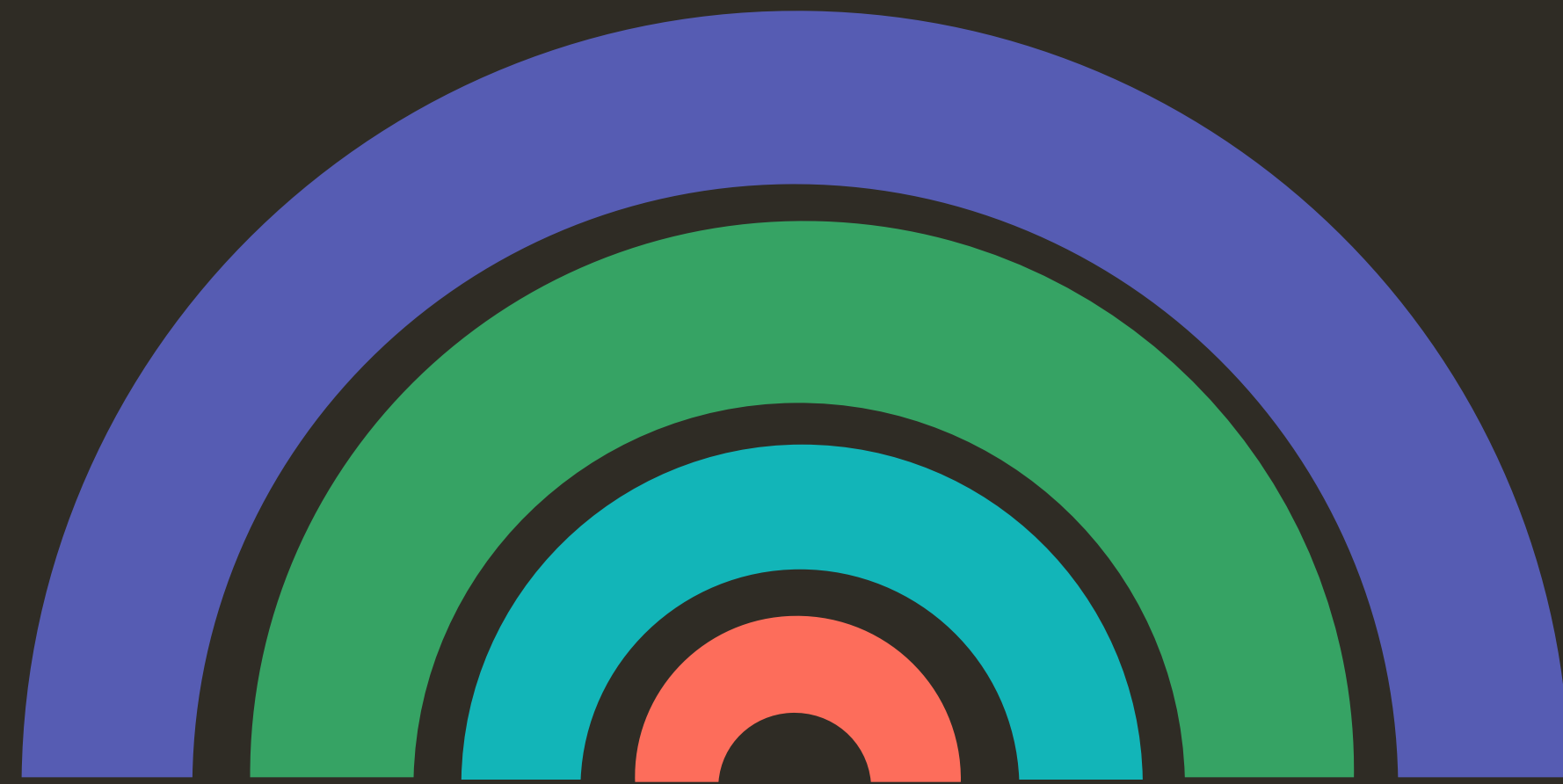
Our ears are above our mouth for a reason. In other words, make sure you are an excellent listener and an even better processor of what's heard. People are more likely to trust when they know they are being heard.



## Strive for transparency

Akin to the second point, make sure you are honest and direct with your words. If your word is your bond, people will remember and respond to you accordingly. Every leader needs this quality.

# Speak a Higher Language



- 1 Speak "UX" at leadership level
- 2 Design-led companies rock!!!
- 3 Incorporate SWOT analyses
- 4 Follow UX's evolution



## Speak "UX" at leadership level

Make sure you excel at saying what matters with as few words as possible, presenting what matters to leaders – not what matters to UX professionals!!!



## Design-led companies rock!!!

Design-led companies outperform their competitors financially by 228%. Sharing critically important info such as this will help provide UX leadership and prove very beneficial for your team.



## Incorporate SWOT analyses

In many circles, a SWOT analysis is a forgotten resource. By sharing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, you can be better equipped to communicate with leadership.



## Follow UX's evolution

By responding to and aligning with the CX and BX worlds, we will be better equipped to make valuable impact and will be more valued as leaders – not just designers.

# Empower Through Education



- 1 UXers MUST become educators
- 2 Enroll and inspire
- 3 Be known for your “helpful hand”
- 4 Seize the limelight



## UXers MUST become educators

While many are in the field, very few embrace the challenge of becoming/being an educator. When we educate others about the world of UX, we will empower them, build partnerships, and secure perception as leaders.



## Enroll and inspire

Seeking and identifying those who are candidates for entering the world of UX (or championing our cause) should always be on our docket, with enrolling such people and inspiring them serving as a constant mode of operation.



## Be known for your “helpful hand”

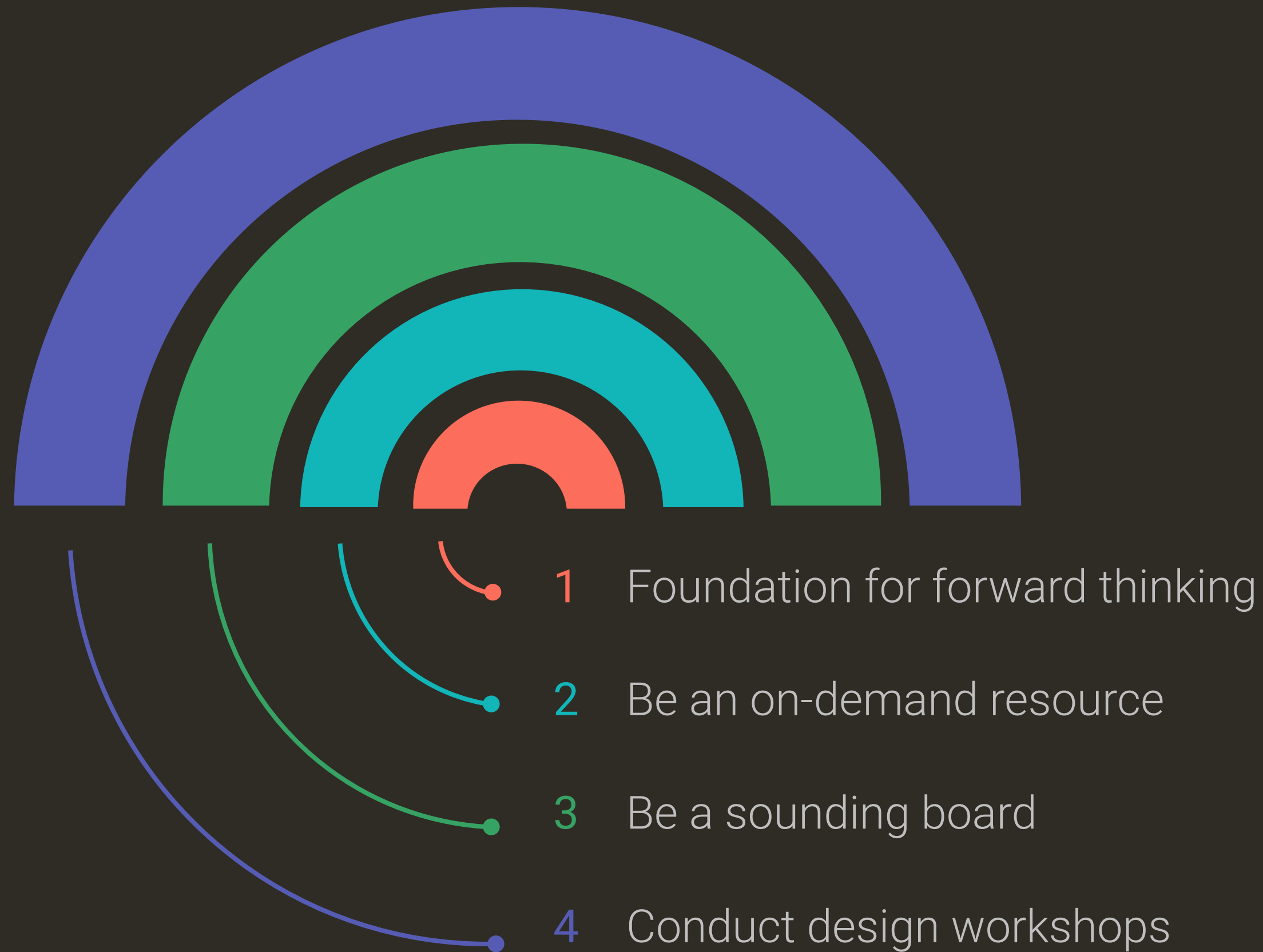
Being a successful educator includes a strong sense of vigilance – remaining in a ready state to aid those interested in learning, confirming reasons behind our recommendations, and giving ourselves to help foster the learners’ ongoing drive.



## Seize the limelight

If the resources are available and the opportunity presents itself, consider establishing Intranet- and/or blog-based learning and communication resources in your organization, where you can present blogs and educational videos.

# Encourage and Support



## Foundation for forward thinking

The UX professional should provide opportunities for people to engage in forward thinking dialogues and support such efforts accordingly.



## Be an on-demand resource

Instead of relying on a push-based mode of operation, make yourself available when clients identify what's considered to be a need. By supporting on-demand requests and inquiries, value would be optimized — on both sides.



## Be a sounding board

Allow yourself to be a person whom team members can share thoughts and obtain candid and constructive feedback. If it's beneficial to identify a flaw, make sure you substantiate and clarify (to maintain flow).

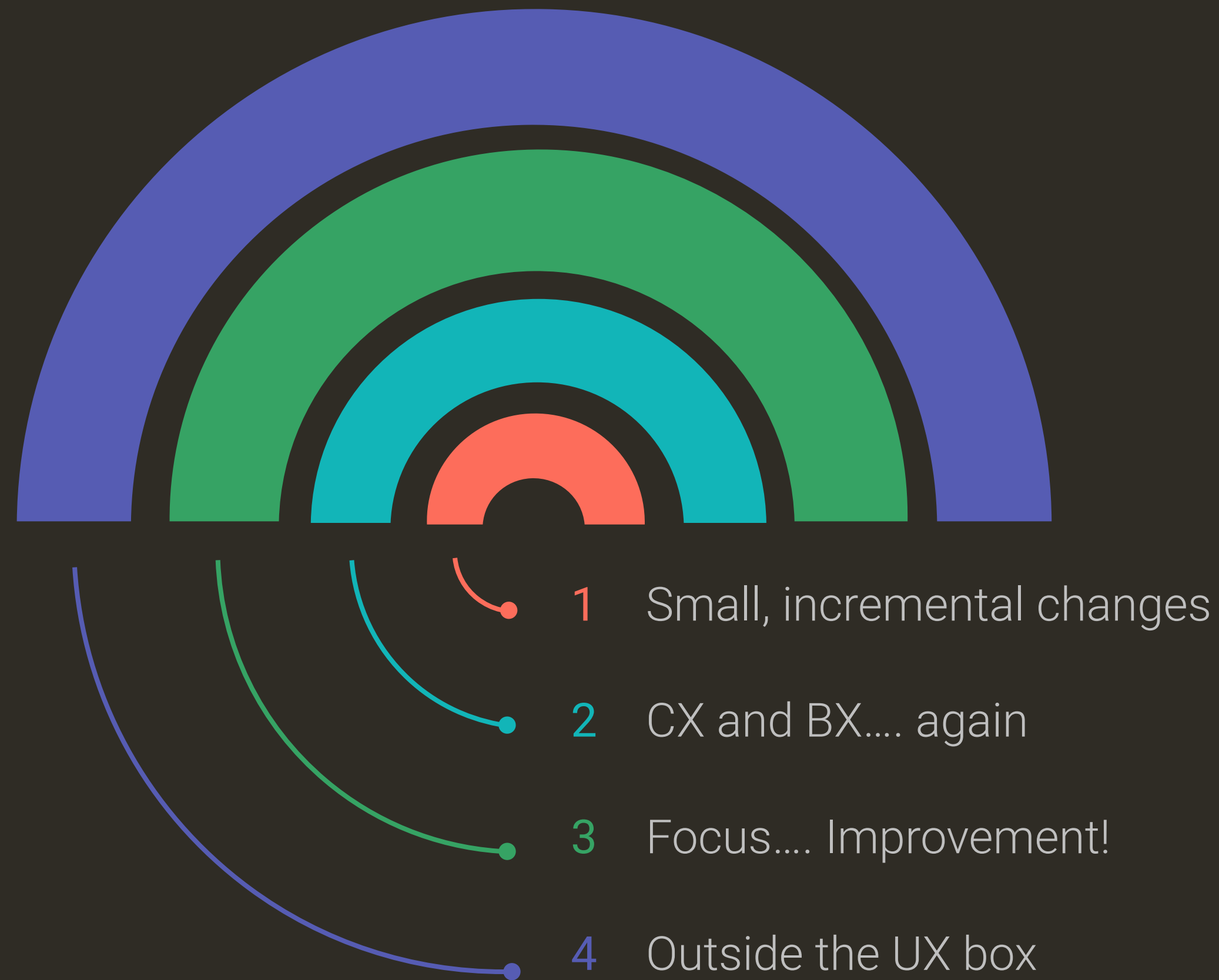


## Conduct design workshops

Providing an opportunity to engage team members and stakeholders to help design the solution is extremely fruitful, building a strong sense of camaraderie and ownership. Encouraging and supporting can enhance the dynamic of your relationship with the team.



# Embrace Kaizen Principles



## Small, incremental changes

Per the experts, small and incremental changes can result in significant improvements over time. Championing such initiatives is a strong leadership trait.



## CX and BX... again

Kaizen concepts focus on enhancing relationships with customers and optimizing the company's position in the marketplace. True UX will operate with these things in mind.



## Focus... Improvement!

Per Kaizen, ANYTHING that increases value-to-the-customer and/or decreases resources, effort, and time invested by the company is considered an improvement. Strive to identify and operate accordingly.



## Outside the UX box

Kaizen benefits include improvements in training, morale, communications, employee retention, and customer relations — all of which are outside the stereotypical UX arena, but can be realistically-oriented pursuits and definitely within leadership scope.

# Remain Dedicated to Continuing Education



## Engagement = Advantage

By committing to continued education (i.e., always being ready to learn and advance), we can stay ahead of the curve and maintain sensitivity to trends in our respective industries.



## Revisiting our resources

Do you engage in continued education? If so, what are your resources? Whatever they are, it behooves us to continually evaluate and revise in order to ensure we have optimal inroads. And don't get slack.



## Sharpening the saw

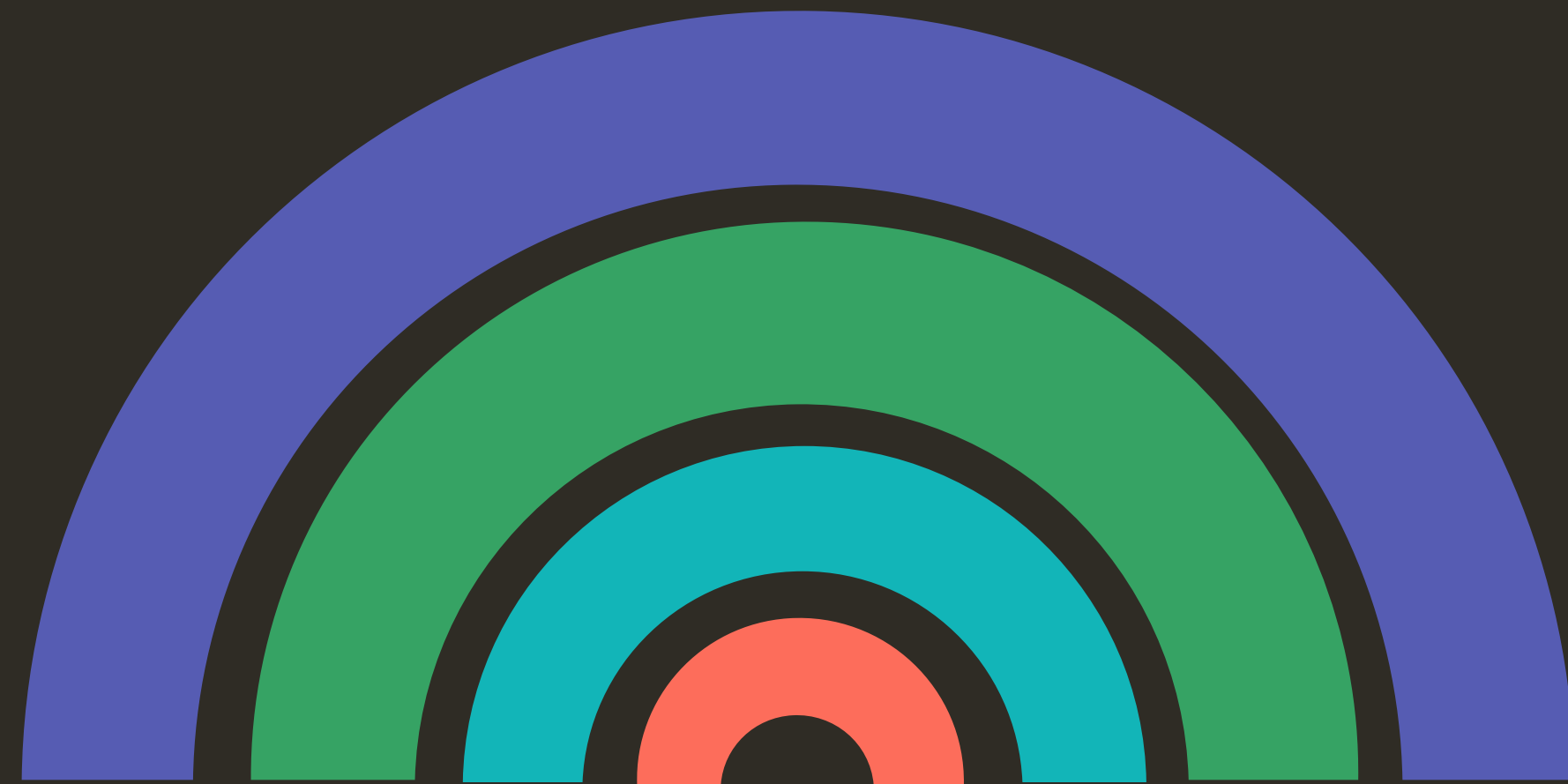
It is imperative that we are committed to continuing education – especially during times when our head is buried in various projects. It helps keep our minds fresh and our senses keen.



## Overcoming "article readers"

"Article readers" are the ones that indeed read, but only seem to grasp certain keywords. They later brandish their newfound words, but lack truly practical context. Be ready to provide the missing context in order to help maintain team health.

# Hoist the EI Banner



- 1 What is Emotional Intelligence?
- 2 Don't leave home without it
- 3 Twice as important
- 4 Empathy... isn't enough



## What is Emotional Intelligence?

EI components include self-awareness (knowing what makes you you), self-management (knowing what to do and when), social awareness (perception of what's happening with others and being sensitive to those issues), and relationship management (engaging effectively with others).



## Don't leave home without it

Forget American Express! Experts have found that "the most effective leaders are all alike in one crucial way".... They all have a high degree of emotional intelligence." Basic UX skills can only take us so far.



## Twice as important

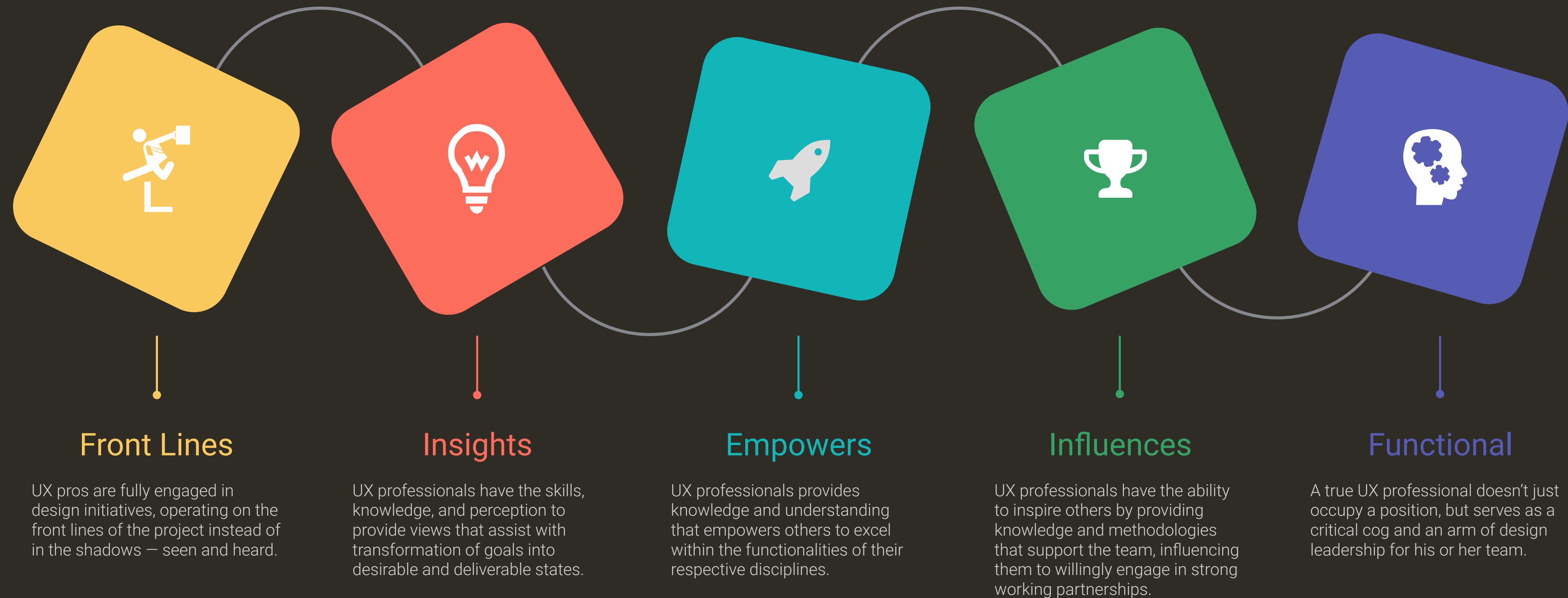
Noted expert Daniel Goleman performed research associated with workplace excellence, focusing on the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and EI. EI proved to be twice as important as the other contributing factors.



## Empathy... isn't enough

Empathy is an important element of the user experience, but in order to be excellent, we must extend ourselves beyond empathy and embrace the full model of emotional intelligence-related elements. In so doing, we'll factor in user AND team needs, as well as managing selves in excellence.

# Remember... UX Professionals **ARE** Leaders



# Recap: What We Can Do



## Overcome UX vs Them

As acceptance of UX continues to evolve, we must remain mindful of the need to not only provide our standard services, but to expand our teams' comfort levels and foster partnership in our professional ranks by resisting the urge to work in the UX silo.



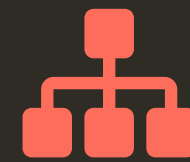
## Extend Beyond Deliverables

Being immersed in the world of deliverables is not enough. UX professionals should now function as business leaders and key functional assets.



## Cultivate Trust

Trust doesn't come naturally, but must be earned. In addition, a trusting environment must be cultivated and managed.



## Speak "Exec"

The days of inundating people with "UX speak" is over. In order to foster optimal creativity and maximize buy-in from the executive team, we MUST speak their language. Learn it and get fluent!



## Empower via Education

By taking the time to commit to educating those on our teams, we provide them with a sense of belonging, pave the way for fruitful dialog, help them understand our world, and give them the ability to provide genuinely valuable contributions to UX efforts.



## Embrace Kaizen

Akin to “speaking exec”, applying Kaizen-oriented methodologies and mindsets to UX efforts will help us to expand beyond stereotypical UX boundaries, broaden perception of how we’re valued, and make impact that wasn’t considered in yesteryear.



## Encourage & Support

Soliciting design input and encouraging people as they engage will go a long way in achieving leadership in UX and fostering a thriving design environment.



## Emotional Intelligence

According to noted expert, Daniel Goleman, all successful leaders excel when it comes to emotional intelligence. Therefore, UX professionals that seek to thrive as leaders must do likewise. It enhances the way we communicate, it helps us make better decisions, it helps us optimize empathy, and manage challenges and our emotions.



## Continued Education

Having a UX role isn't enough. In order to achieve leadership excellence, we need to maintain constant engagement in learning about any and every thing that might be related to our operation.



## Leadership Excellence Attained

The more you excel in these areas, the better aligned you will be with optimal levels of excellence in leadership, expanding perceptions of values regarding UX, building awesome team environments, and fostering creative hot beds.





Thank you!

 @darrenhood

 @uxpulse

 @IDFDetroit

## References / Recommended Books

### References

- The Future of UX Leadership: Radical Transformation - See more at: <http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2014/10/the-future-of-ux-leadership-radical-transformation.php#sthash.EJZa7Elg.fnAzAs2j.dpuf>
- UX Leadership, Part 2: What Great Leaders Must Do I <http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2015/01/ux-leadership-part-2-what-great-leaders-must-do.php>
- What Makes a Leader? by Daniel Goleman <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader/ar/1>

### Recommended Books

- Multipliers — How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter  
Liz Wiseman & Greg McKeown
- Emotional Intelligence 2.0  
Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves
- The Kaizen Pocket Handbook  
Kenneth Dailey
- Better — A Surgeon's Notes on Performance  
Atul Gawande
- Coaching for Emotional Intelligence  
Bob Wall
- The Language of Emotional Intelligence  
Jeanne Segal
- The Five Dysfunctions of a Team  
Patrick Lencioni