

Wesley Burks, MD

CEO, UNC Health Care
Dean, UNC School of Medicine

About Me

Simone's
Maxims

Roadmap
for Your
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Understanding Academic Medical Centers: Simone's Maxims¹

Editorial

Joseph V. Simone²

Human Cancer Institute, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

INTRODUCTION

Academic medical centers today represent a unique fusion of traditional academia, hospital functions, several levels of education, and, above all, patients. They are complex organizations trying to discharge an often conflicting melange of responsibilities. This complexity has grown in recent years with the increasingly rapid rate of change (1), stressing both faculty and leadership (2, 3). Lamenting the toll of change is not new (4). However, the qualitative difference in recent change is underscored by the shift in focus of two articles, 15 years apart, on academic governance by Petersdorf (5, 6), especially as they

see; Stanford University Medical Center; Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; and the University of Utah. Throughout those positions, I have gained some wisdom and many battle scars. To make some sense of my experiences and what I learned from many others, I began years ago to establish personal rules of thumb, "maxims," to discern some meaningful patterns in seemingly chaotic events and baffling human behavior. Thus, Simone's Maxims gradually emerged to guide my own judgment.

These maxims concern the behavior of academic medical institutions, their leaders, and their faculty from the individual's point of view. They were accumulated and developed from years of personal experience and many mistakes, as well as occasional revelations, both personal and borrowed from others. Although these maxims are personal, each is supported by the

Institutions

Leadership

Recruiting

Job
Changes

Success



Institutions

Institutions Don't Love You Back

"The relationship between a trainee, faculty member, or any employee and the institution is impersonal and contractual, whether written or not."

Institutions Have Infinite Time Horizons, But an Individual Has a Relatively Short Productive Period

"Institutional reputations (and those of its departments and divisions) change long after the time of their successes and failures; individual reputations change more quickly."

Institutional Incompetents or Troublemakers are Often Transferred to Other Areas, Where They Continue to Be Incompetent or Troublemakers

"Those who are consistently unproductive may become the majority because the competent learn that the institution sees no virtue in hard work and collaboration."



Leadership

Leaders are Often Chosen for Characteristics That Have Little Correlation With a Successful Tenure as Leader

"We all want superb investigators, teachers, and clinicians, preferably able to walk on water, but there are other practical values that are at least as important and often define the success or failure of a leader."

In Academic Institutions, Muck Flows Uphill

"With any significant problem, error, or conflict, the bigger the stink and the more contentious the conflict, the more rapid the uphill rise."

Leadership Does Matter

"Leadership matters, even though its effectiveness may not be apparent in the short term."



Recruiting

**First-Class People Recruit First-Class
People; Second-Class People Recruit
Third-Class People**

*"Some hesitate to recruit a
person who is smart enough and
ambitious enough to compete
with them."*

Personal Attitude and Team Compatibility is Grossly Underrated in Faculty Recruiting

*"Always recruit the best athlete,' or in this
case 'the best scientist,' is a stupid
oversimplification."*

The Longer and More Detailed the Written Offer, the More Likely Both Sides Will End Up Unhappy

"Trust that one's boss or bosses will act in one's best interest is probably the most important factor in job satisfaction, especially in the first few years."

Faculty Fired for Incompetence Will Almost Always Land a Better Job at Higher Pay

"When he lands the nice, new job, though, I assure you that his former boss will certainly not be thanked for forcing the job change."



Job Changes

Every Job Relocation Is Due to a Combination of "Push and Pull;" However, the More Push Dominates the Decision, the More Unlikely the Move will be Satisfactory

"One may be blinded to the warts on the new job by unhappiness in the old."

The "Fit" in a New Job Often is Not Apparent for At Least 18 Months

"Many new recruits spend part of the first year wondering what possessed them to leave 'home' or take that particular job in the first place; this is a normal reaction to the bite of reality."

**The Time Course of Academic Jobs is
Like the Classic Sigmoid Growth Curve of
Bacteria in Culture, with a Lag Phase,
Log Growth Phase, and Plateau**

*"With no change in the culture medium,
the plateau phase eventually is followed
by academic death."*

Academic Battles are Recurring and Contentious, and No One Can Win Them All

"For a uniquely important issue, one must be willing to put the job on the line, not as an idle threat or bluff, but in one's heart."

**One Should Consider an Academic
Move Only for an Improvement in
Anticipated Opportunity and
Environment of 50% or More**

*"It is in the nature of changes that the
grass always looks greener, and it may be,
just not as green as it looked."*



Success

**Academic Success, Ironically, Depends
on Recognizing and Adapting to the
Dominant Cultural and Financial
Features of One's Academic Era**

"By recognizing one's era, it is possible to
know where the power lies."

Academic Medicine is a Noble Calling

"Despite the problems, it can be the most fulfilling and rewarding of professions, if taken with a sharp eye for reality, a dash of iconoclasm, and a ready sense of humor."

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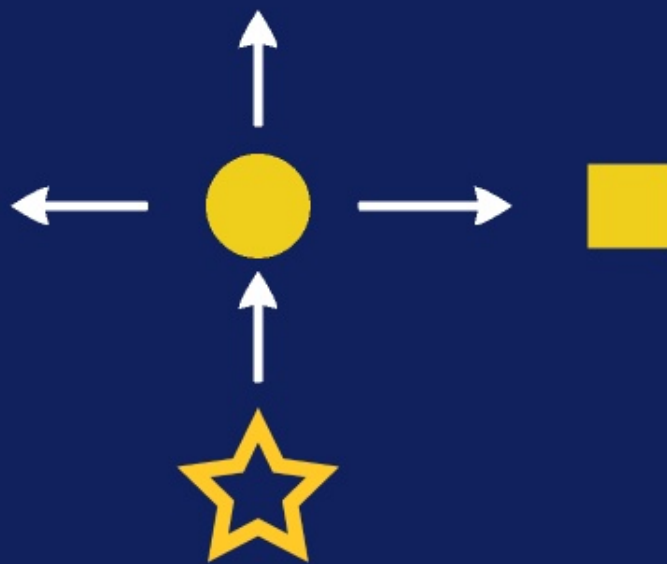
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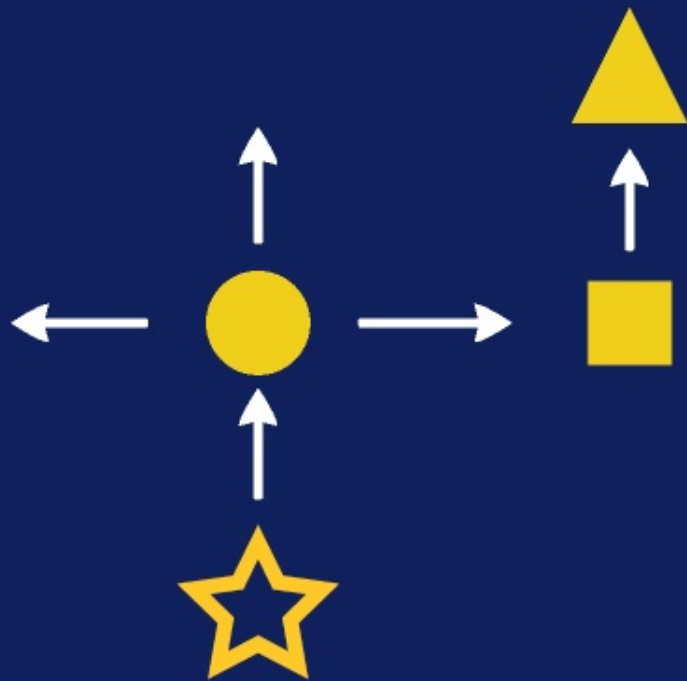
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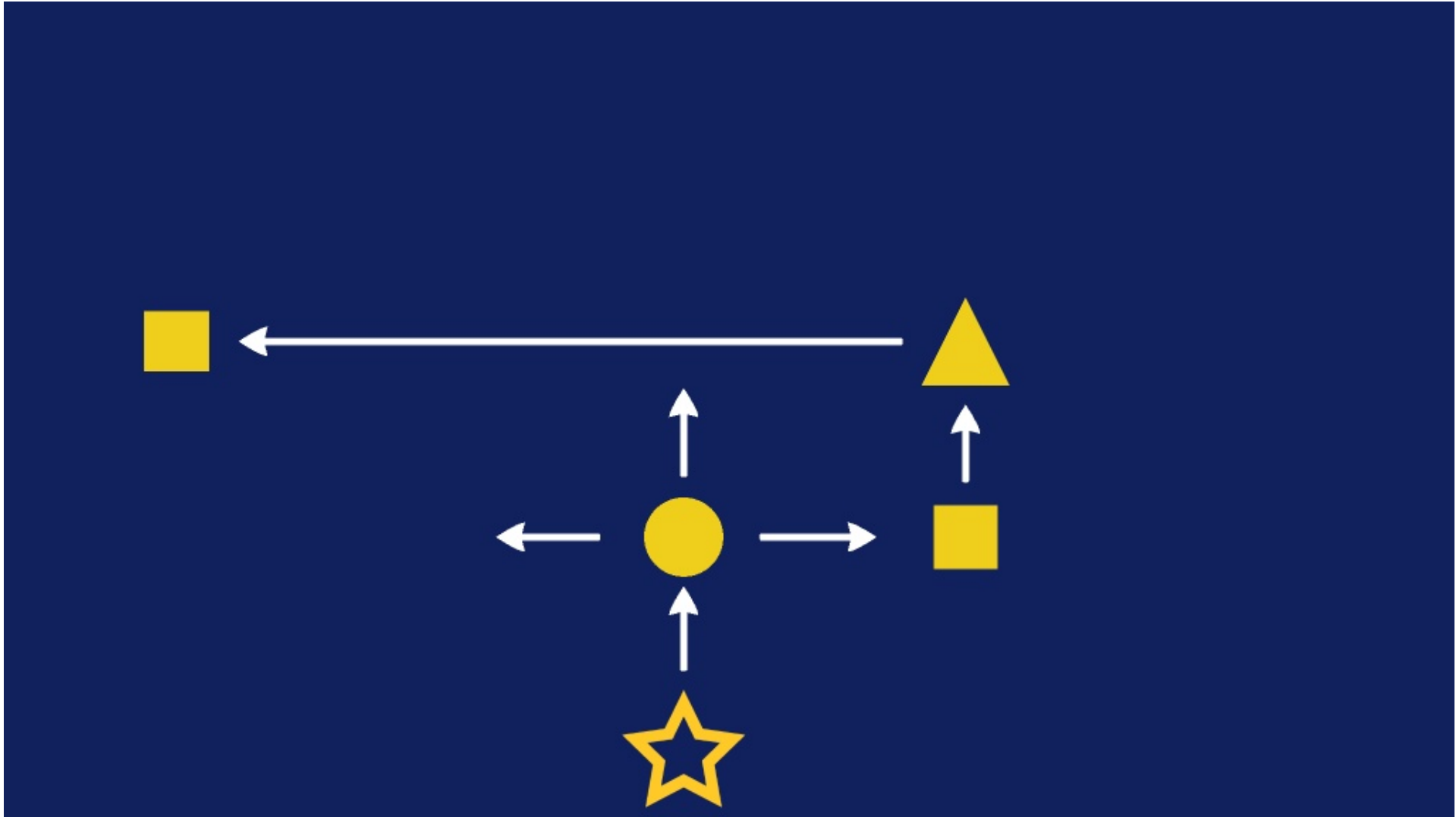
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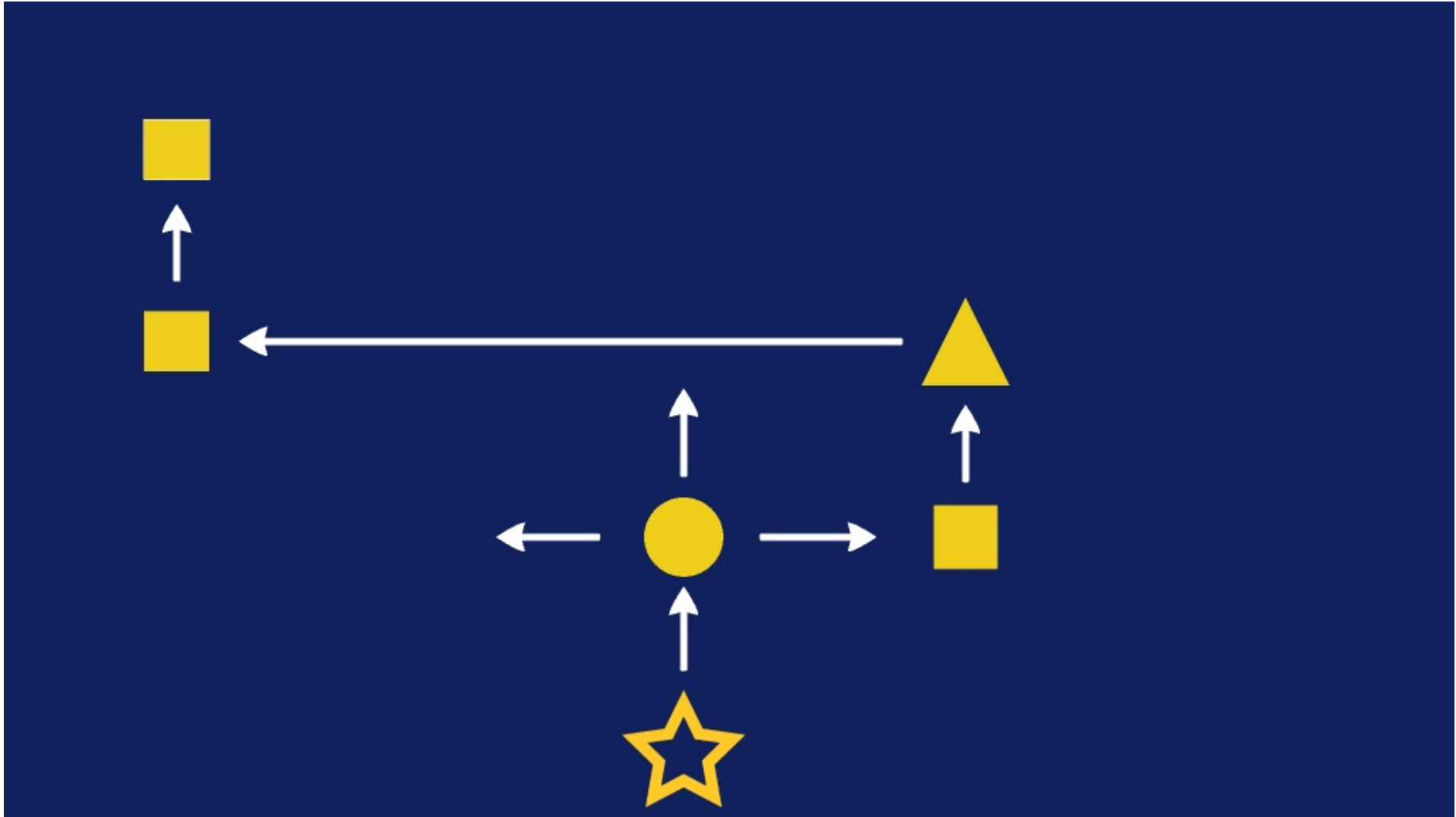


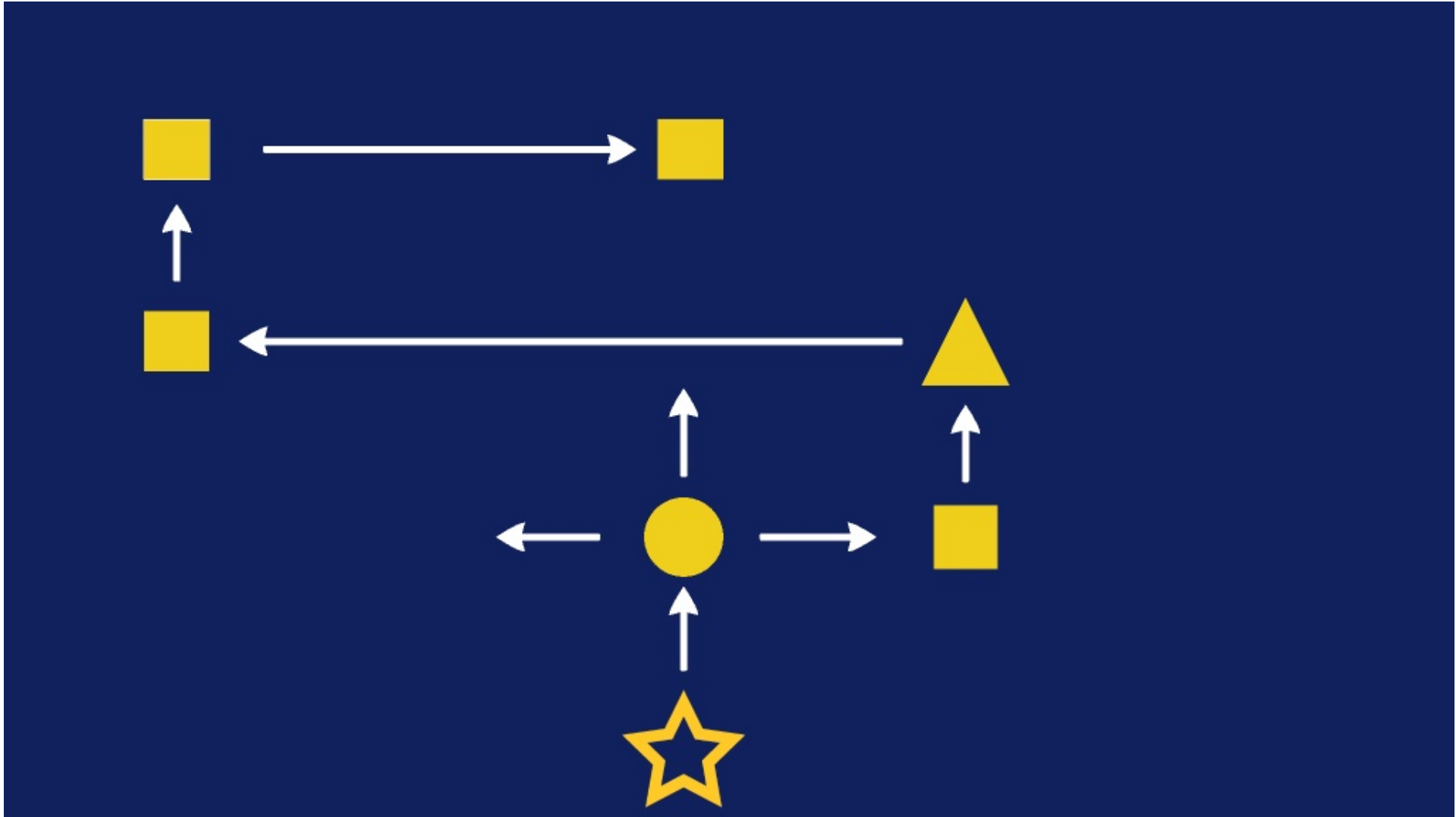










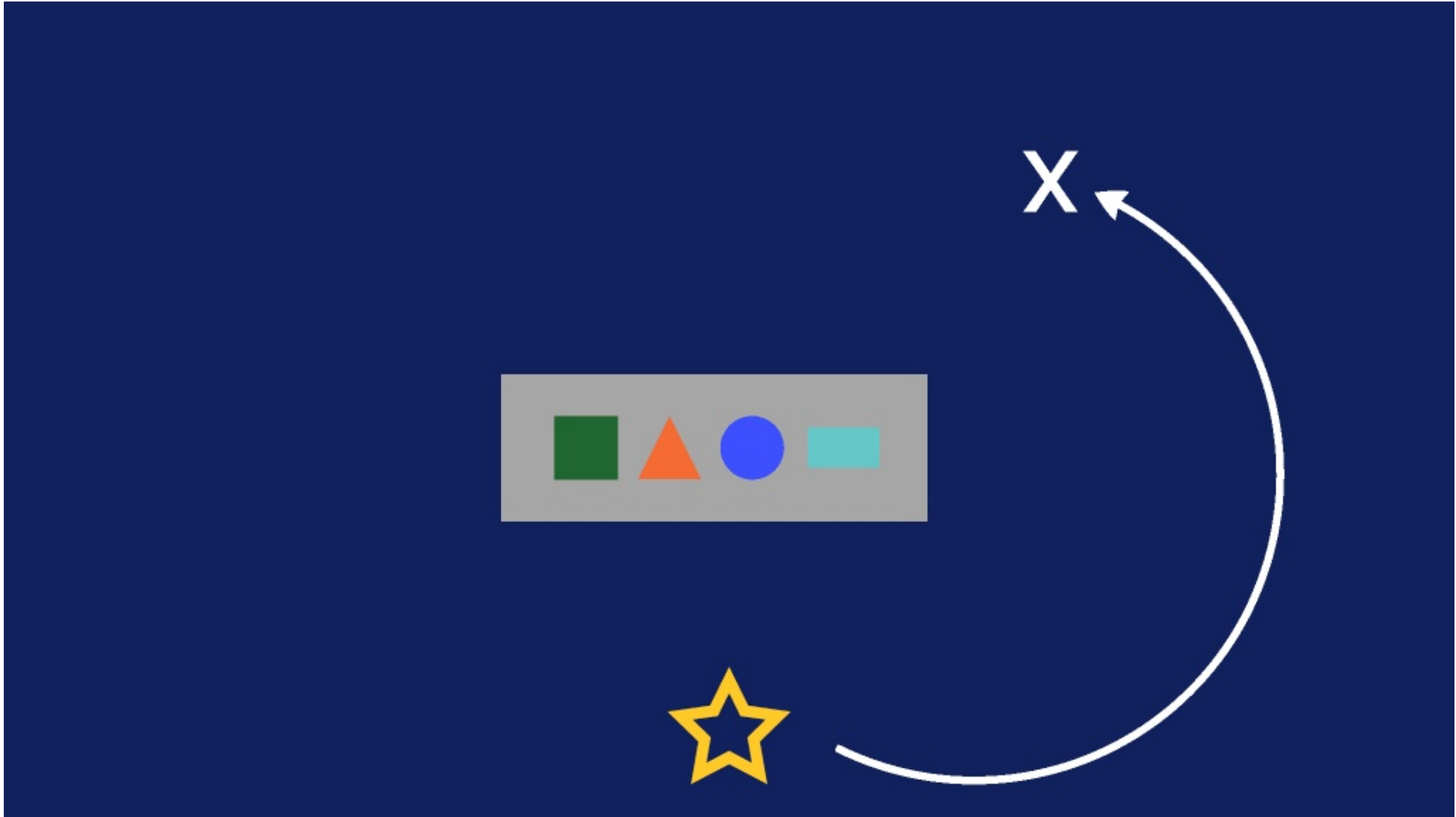


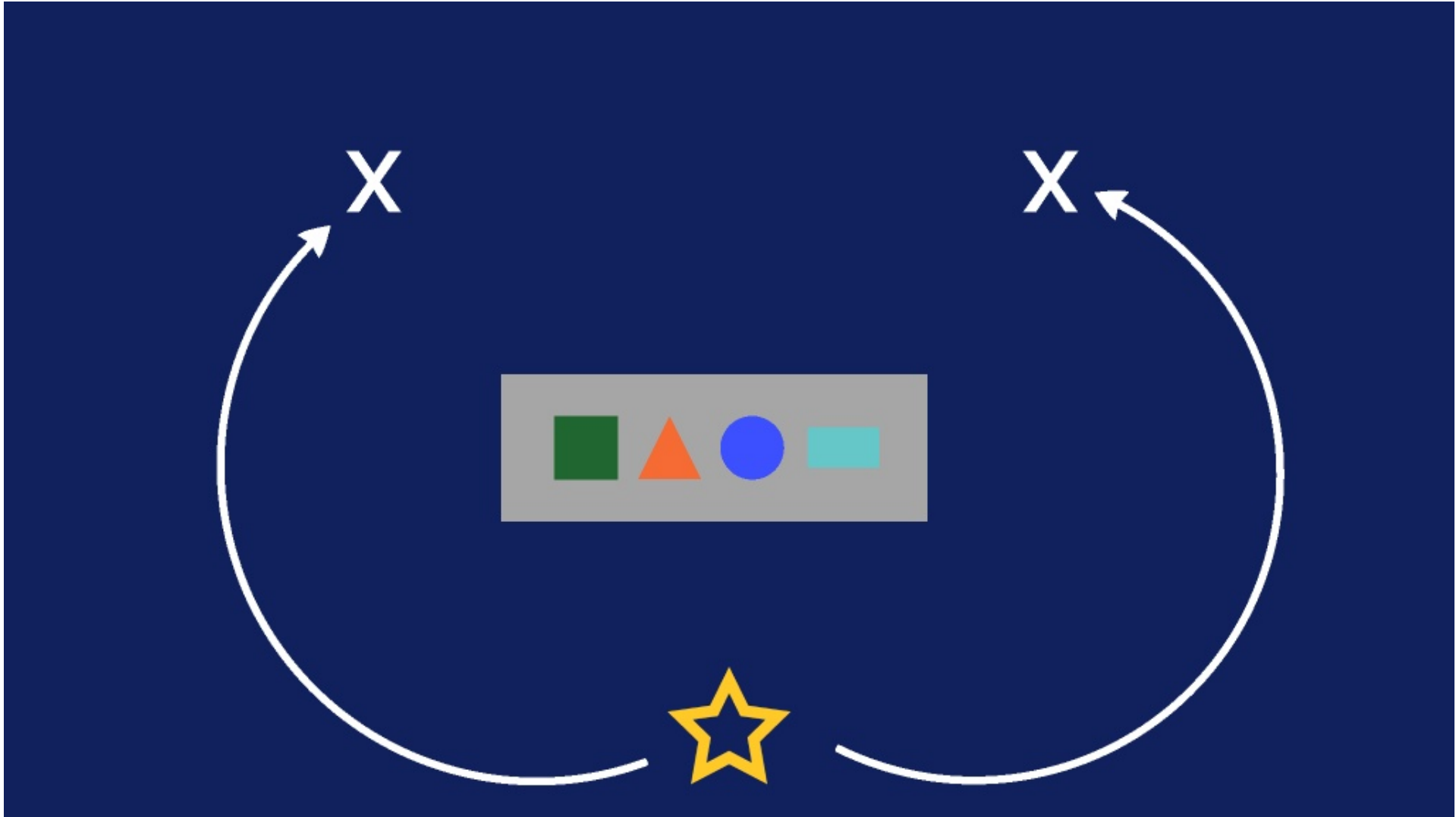


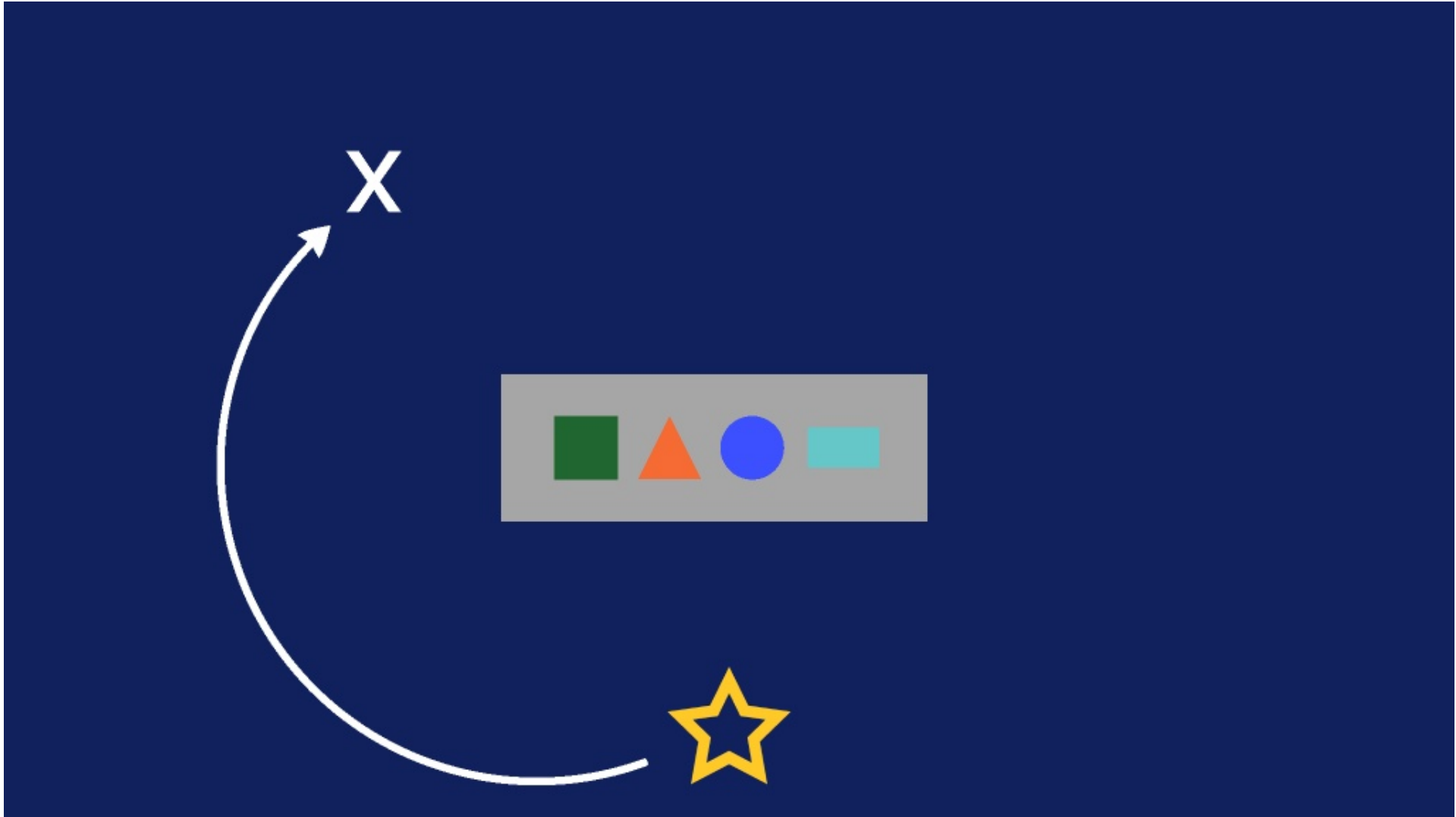














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THANK YOU!

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