



**34<sup>th</sup>** Annual **INCOSE**  
international symposium

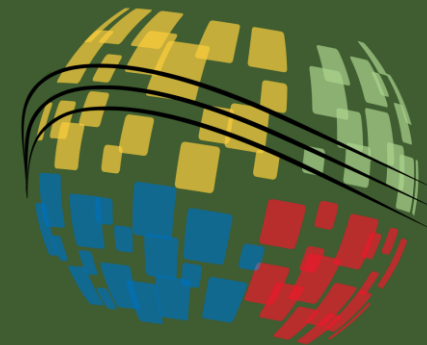
hybrid event

Dublin, Ireland  
July 2 - 6, 2024



Swapnil Bhosale – John Deere India Pvt. Ltd.

## Navigating Organizational Acceptance: Leveraging the Overton Window as Systems Thinking Tool for Radical Project Ideas Approval



# The Challenge

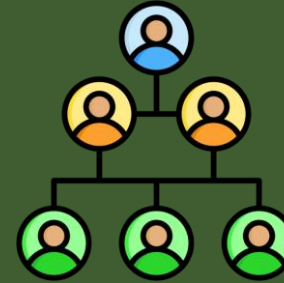
# The Challenge for Radical Ideas in Large Organizations



Idea Proposal to Leadership



Reality  
'Red Tape'



- Does complex hierarchies and matrix structure stifle the innovation?



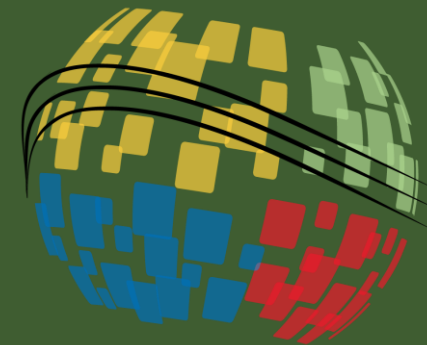
Myth  
'Best Ideas Win'



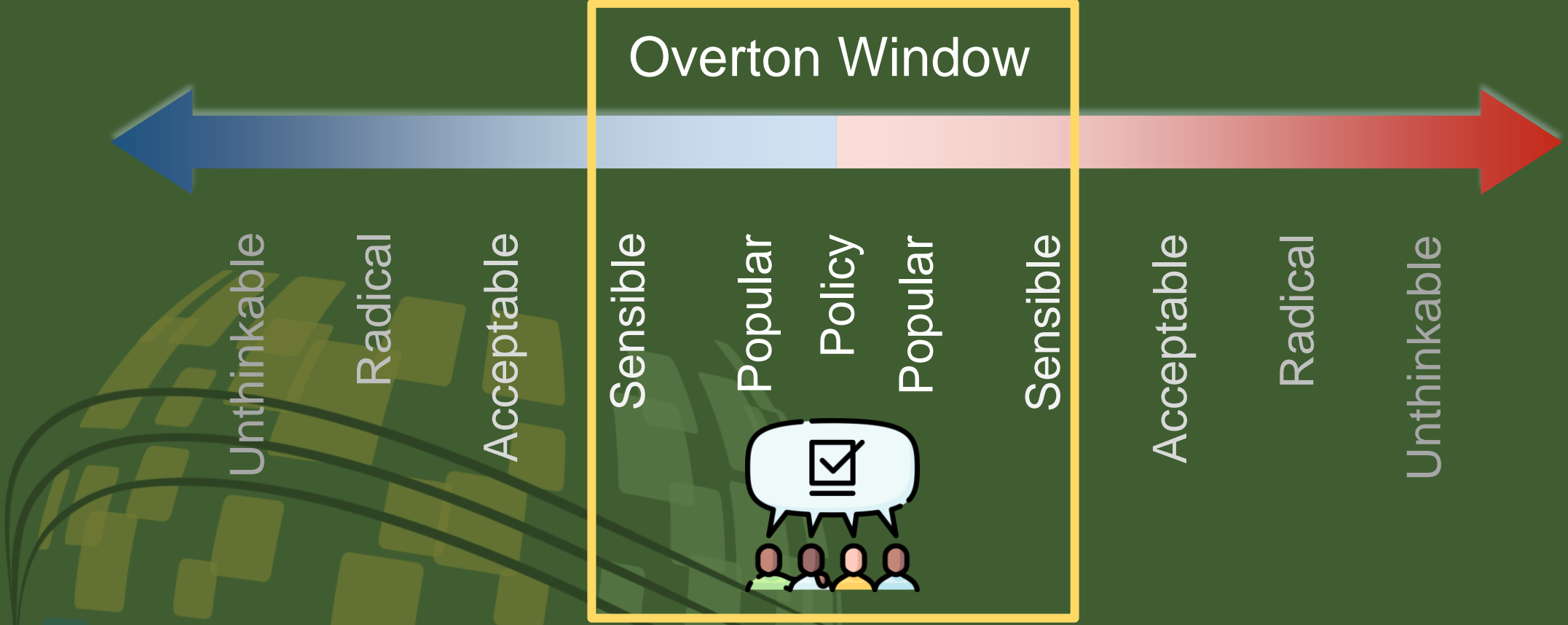
- Why such a great idea not supported?
- Is leadership too satisfied with incremental steps?

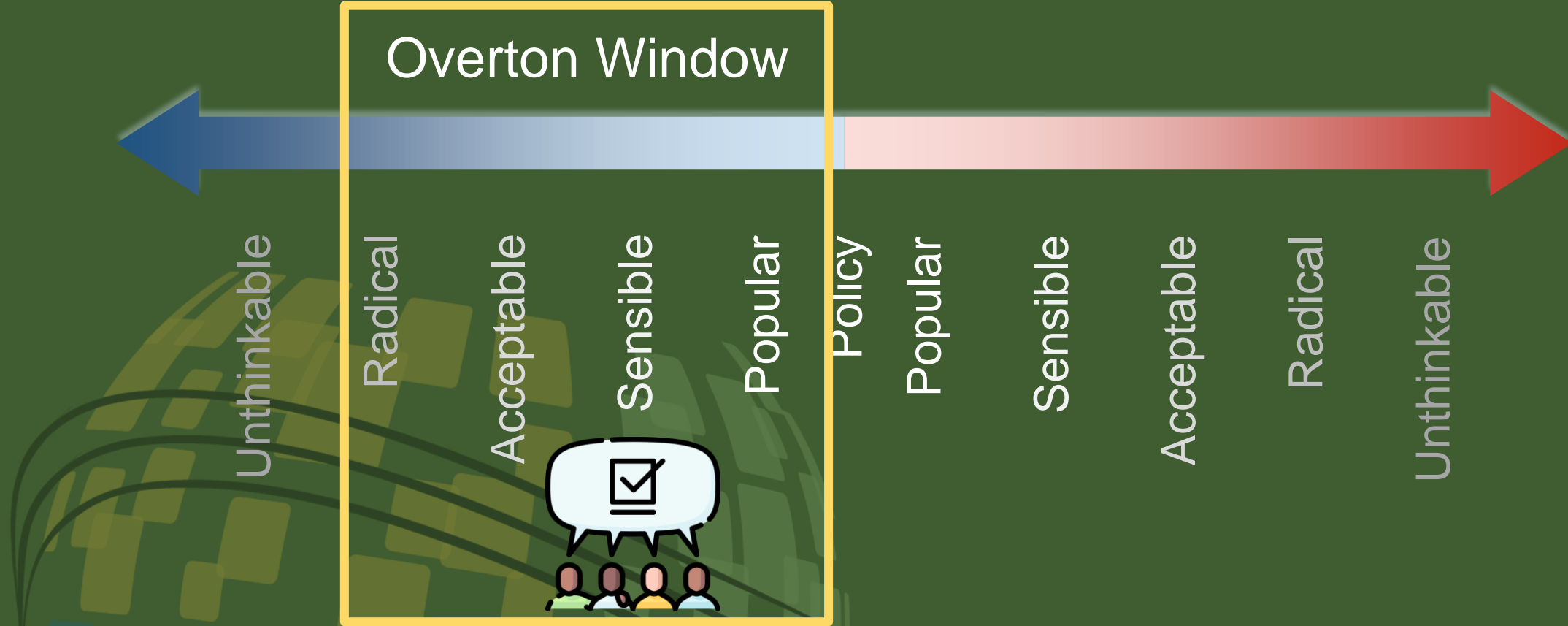
- A simple concept can help demystify

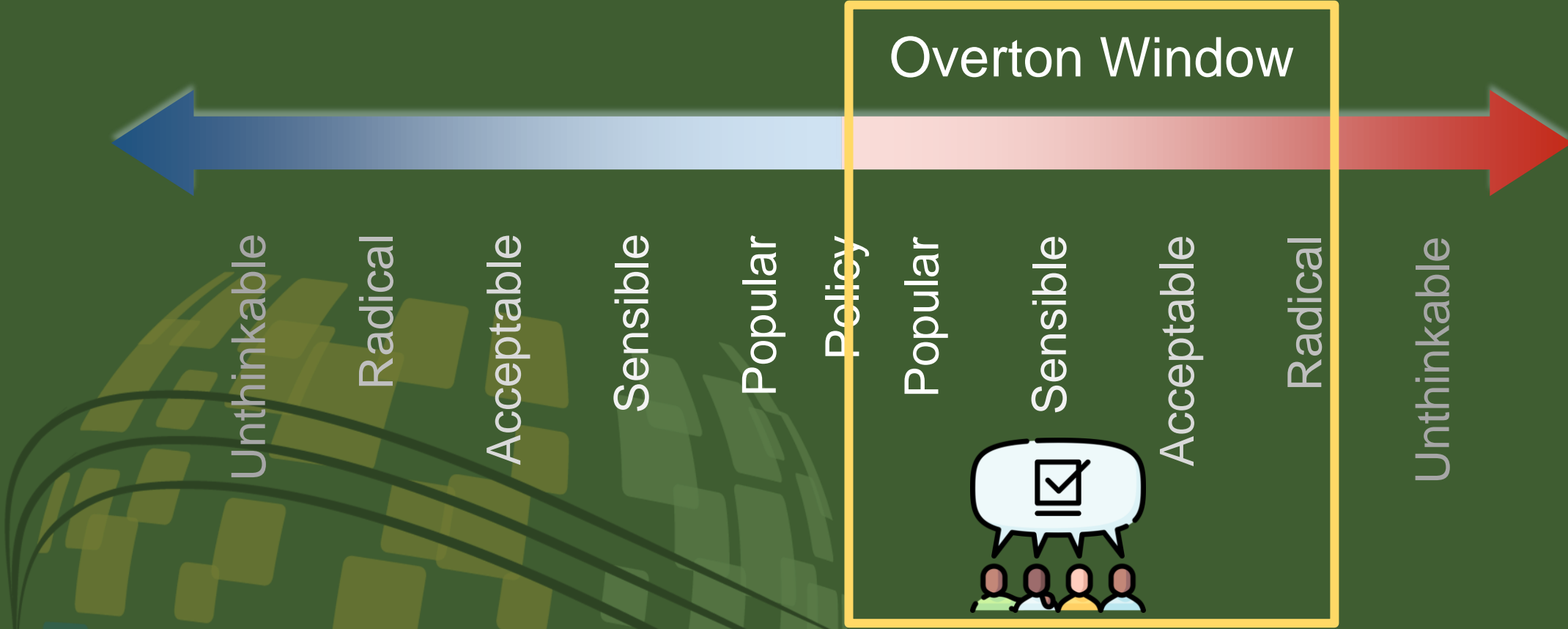
**Overton Window**

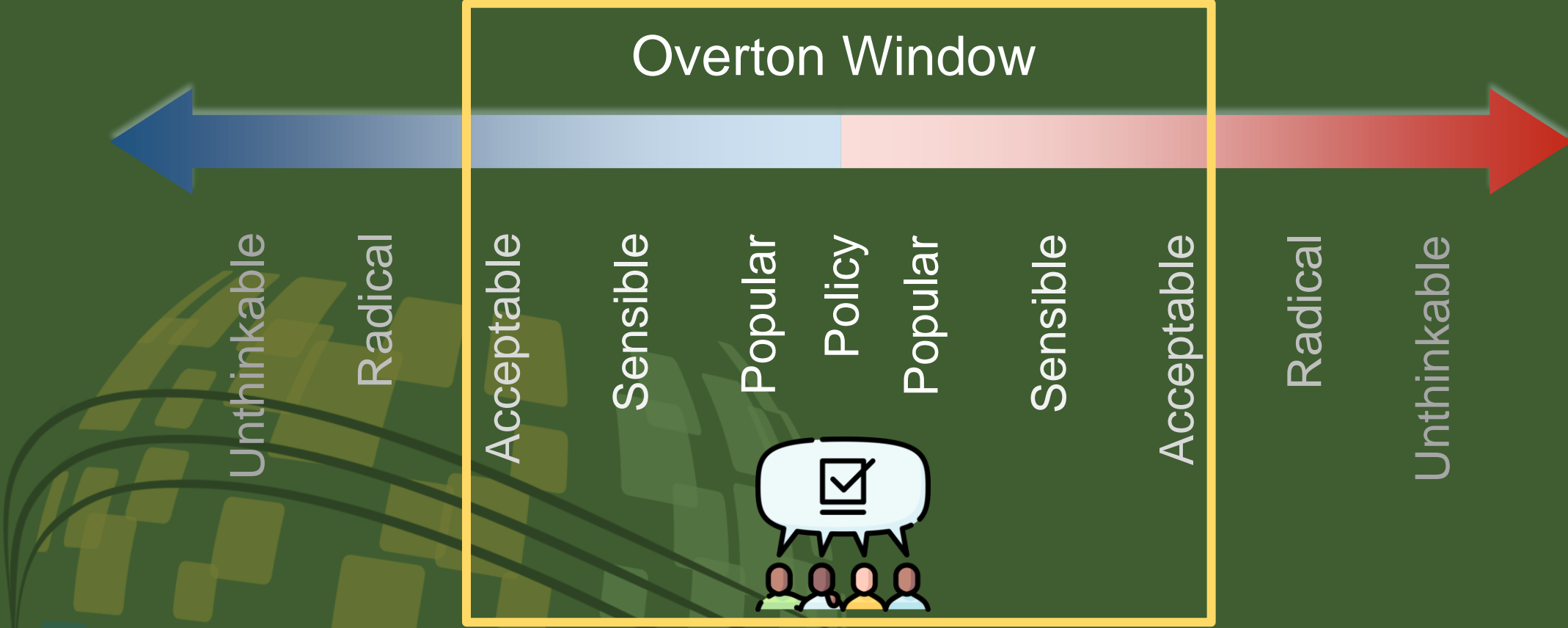


# What is Overton Window?



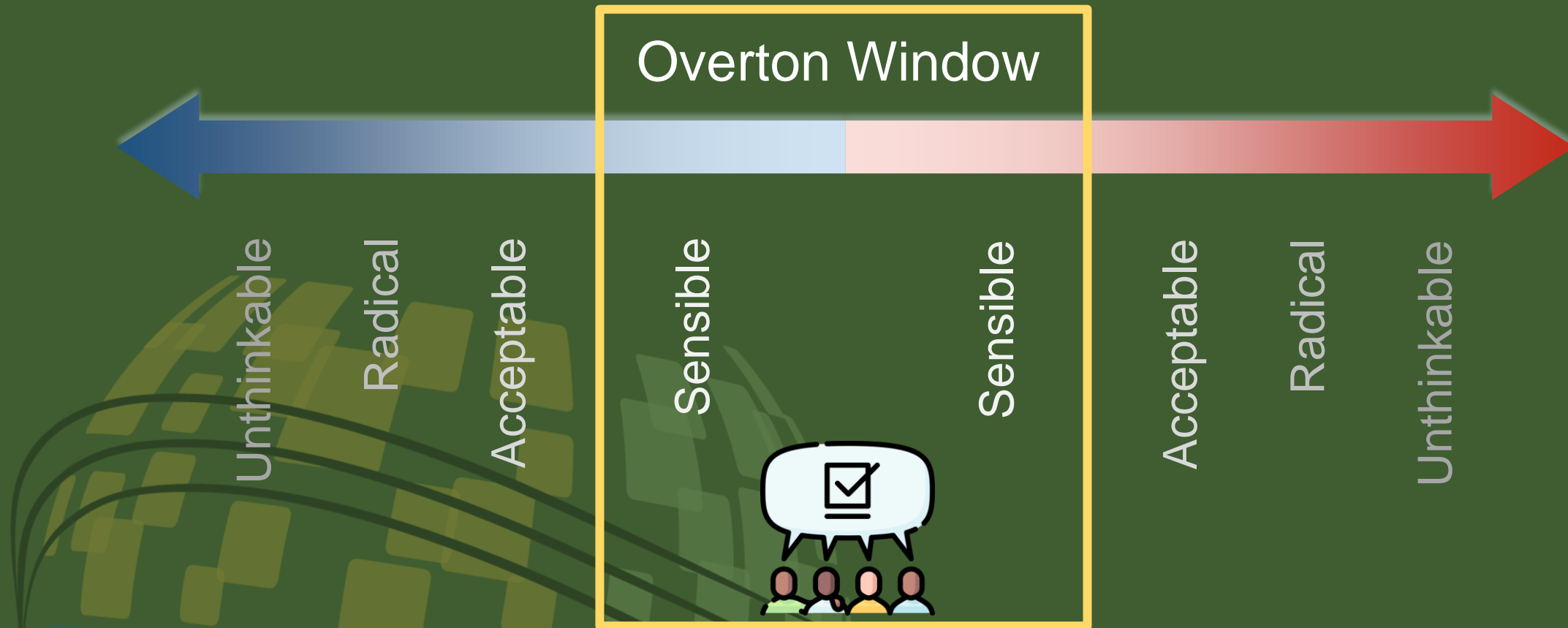


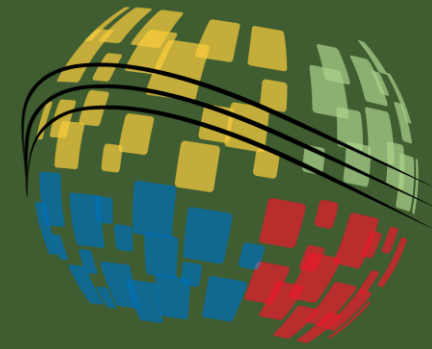






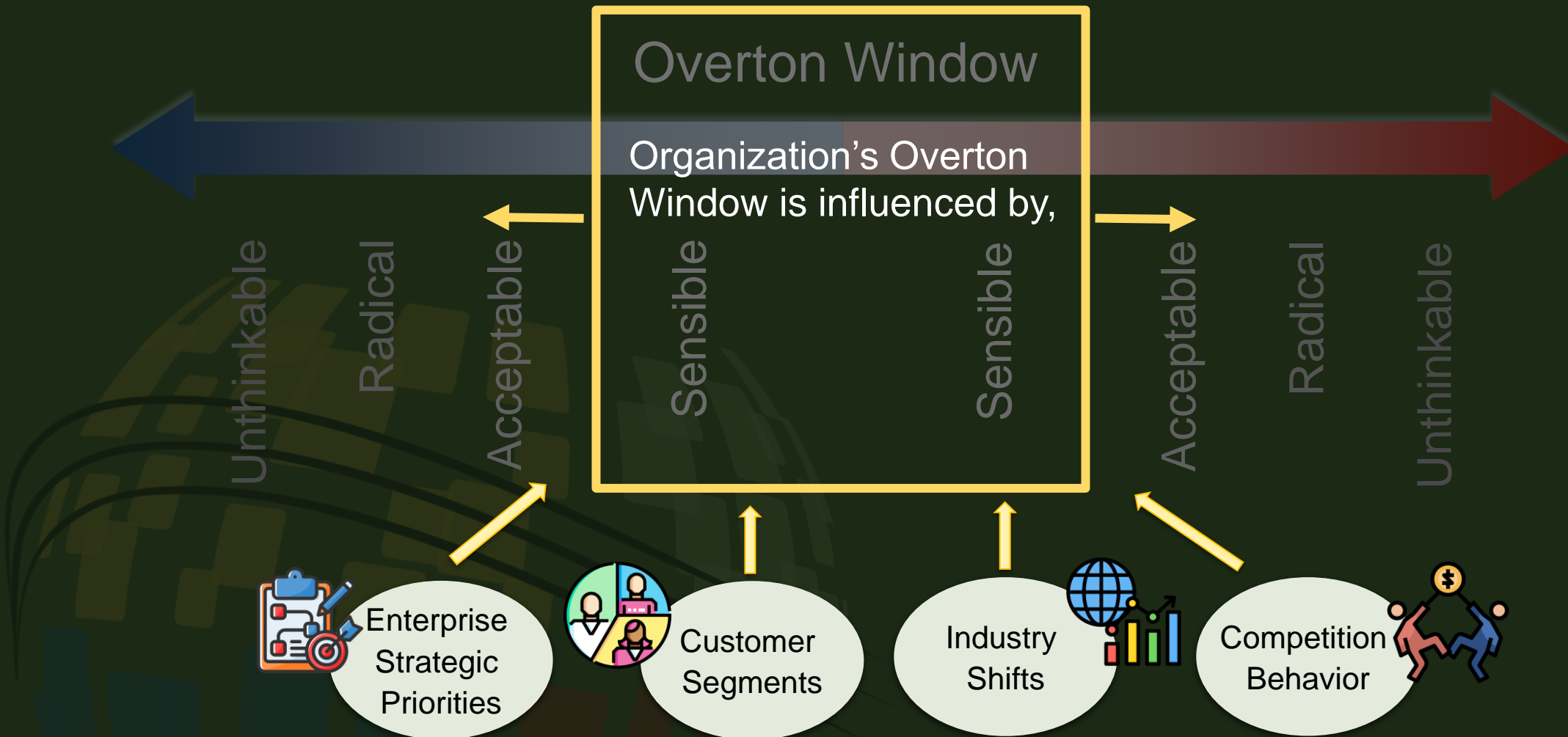
# Overton Window in Organizational Context



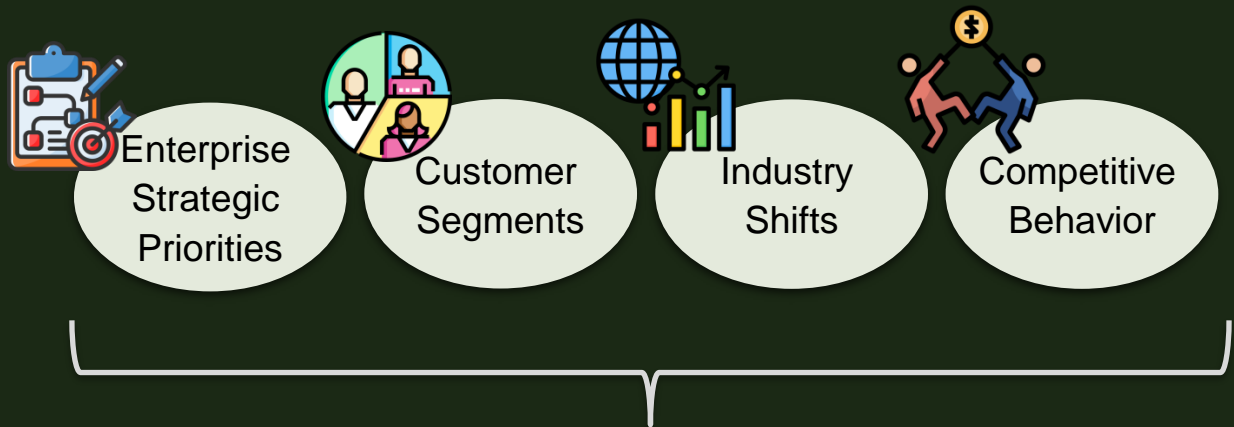


# Analyze Organization's Overton Window

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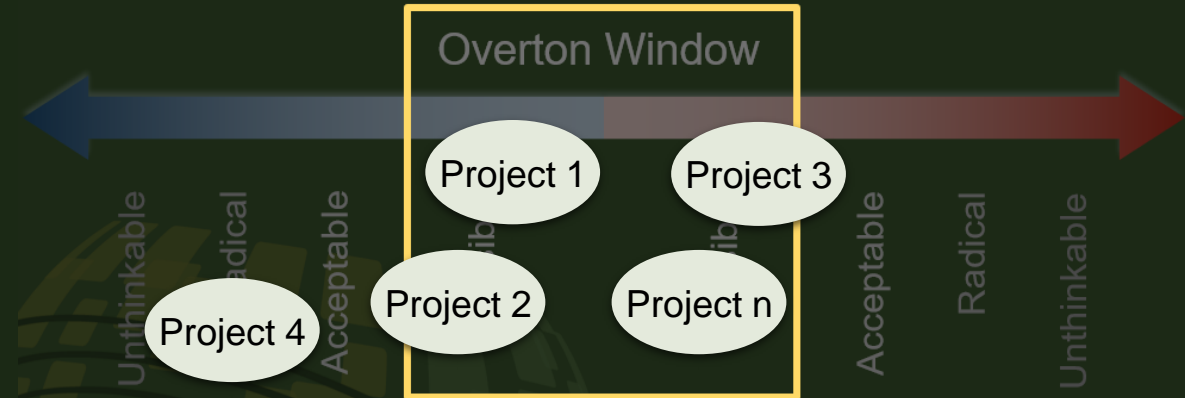
# Analyze Organization's Overton Window



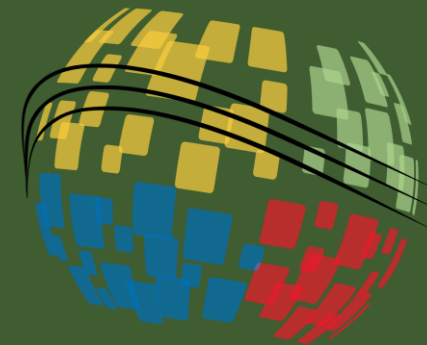
Organization Roadmaps



Individual Projects



- Projects within Overton Window gain momentum and funding.
- Projects with tenuous connections to it face scrutiny and need alignment.
- It calls for strengthening connection to strategic priorities and reframing ideas to align with the Overton Window.



Systems Thinking Approach

# How Overton Window fits in it?

# Overton Window within Systems Thinking Approach

## Systems Thinking

1

Holistic Perspective

Systems Thinking – Understand the system as whole focusing on interrelationships  
Overton Window – View the range of acceptable ideas influenced by multiple factors and stakeholders rather than focusing on one idea

2

Interconnectedness

Systems Thinking – Emphasizes interconnected parts of the system  
Overton Window – Shows how shifts in norms and beliefs can make radical ideas more acceptable

3

Dynamic Nature

Systems Thinking – Systems are dynamic and constantly evolving  
Overton Window – Reflects the evolving nature of what is considered acceptable over time

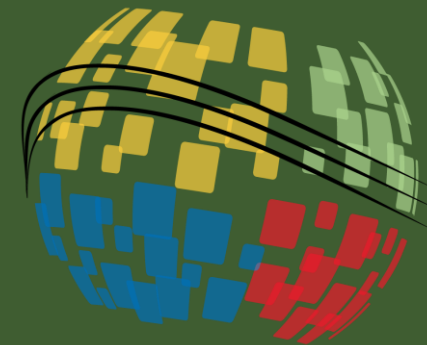
4

Feedback Loops

Systems Thinking – Actions and outcomes influence each other  
Overton Window – Introducing incremental changes can create positive feedback and shift acceptance.

*“Change starts when someone sees the next step.”*

- William Drayton

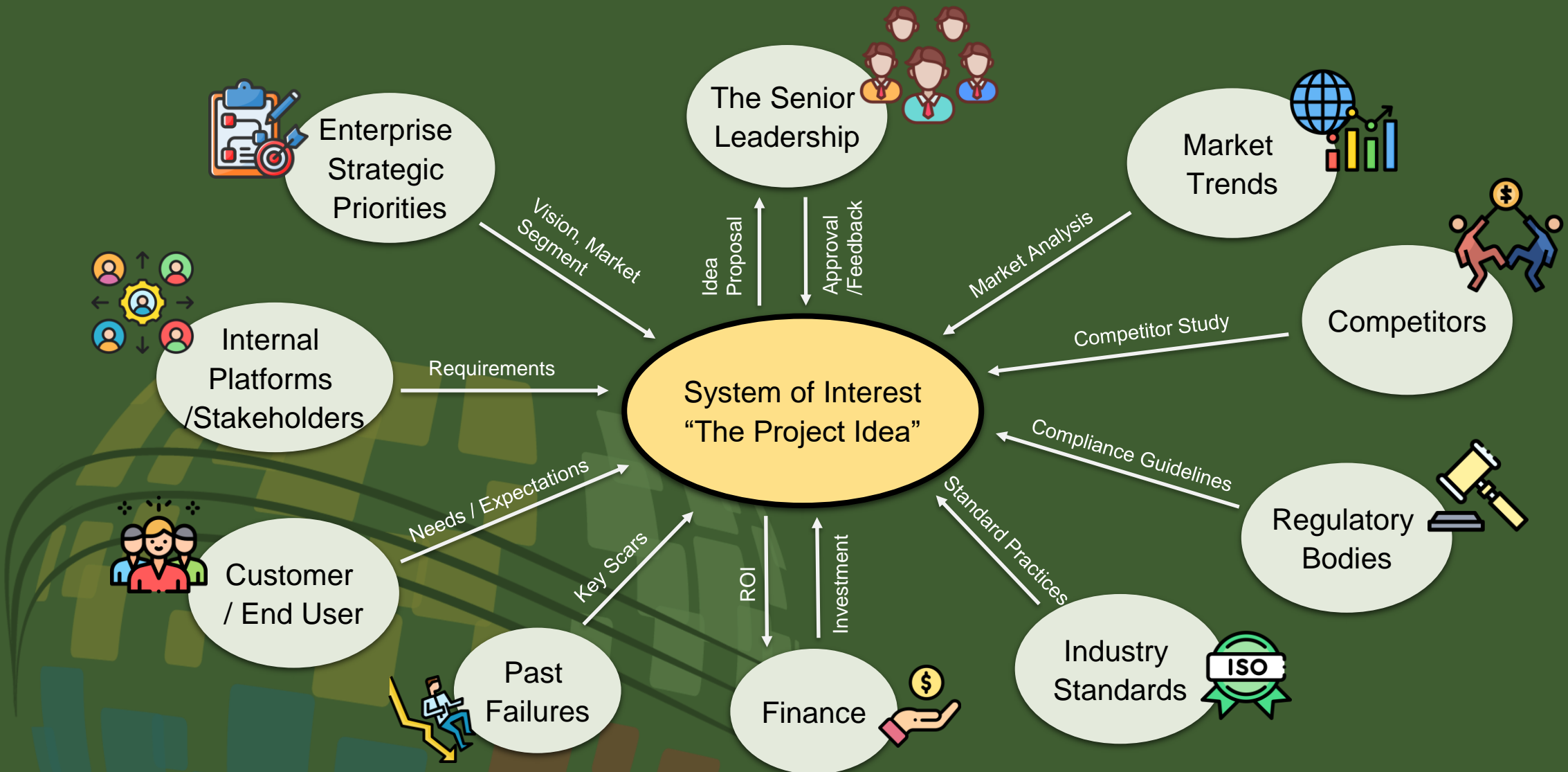


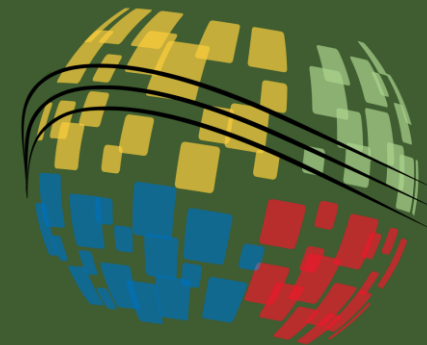
Applying System Methodologies

# Understanding System of Systems



# Understanding System of Systems – Context Diagram





Applying System Methodologies

# Stakeholder Analysis

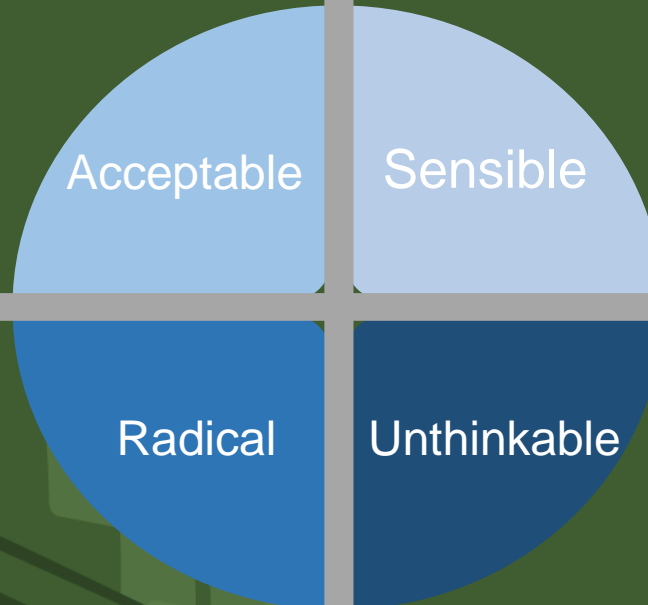
# Identify Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholders who see the idea as acceptable but somewhat progressive

- Regulatory Bodies
- Industry Standards
- Customer Support

Stakeholders who see the idea as within the realm of current organizational norms

- Finance



- Senior Leadership
- Enterprise Strategic Priorities
- Market Trend & Competition

- Internal Platforms / Stakeholders









Stakeholders who view the idea as innovative but significantly outside current norms

Stakeholders who view the idea as too extreme or unrealistic

# Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

Stakeholder Representative	Perception	Beliefs Shaping Perception
Internal Platforms	Unthinkable ●	Fear of disruption, risk aversion, focus on existing systems
Senior Leadership	Radical ●	Desire for innovation but cautious of drastic changes and believes in predictability. Skepticism due to past failures.
Enterprise Strategic Priorities	Radical ●	Alignment with long term goals but wary of immediate risks
Market Trends & Competition	Radical ●	Focus on maintaining their competitive position.
Regulatory Bodies	Acceptable ●	Regulatory compliance is focus
Industry Standards	Acceptable ●	Adherence to proven practices and standards.
Customer Support	Acceptable ●	Desire innovative solutions that meet unmet needs
Finance	Sensible ●	ROI and budget adherence

# Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

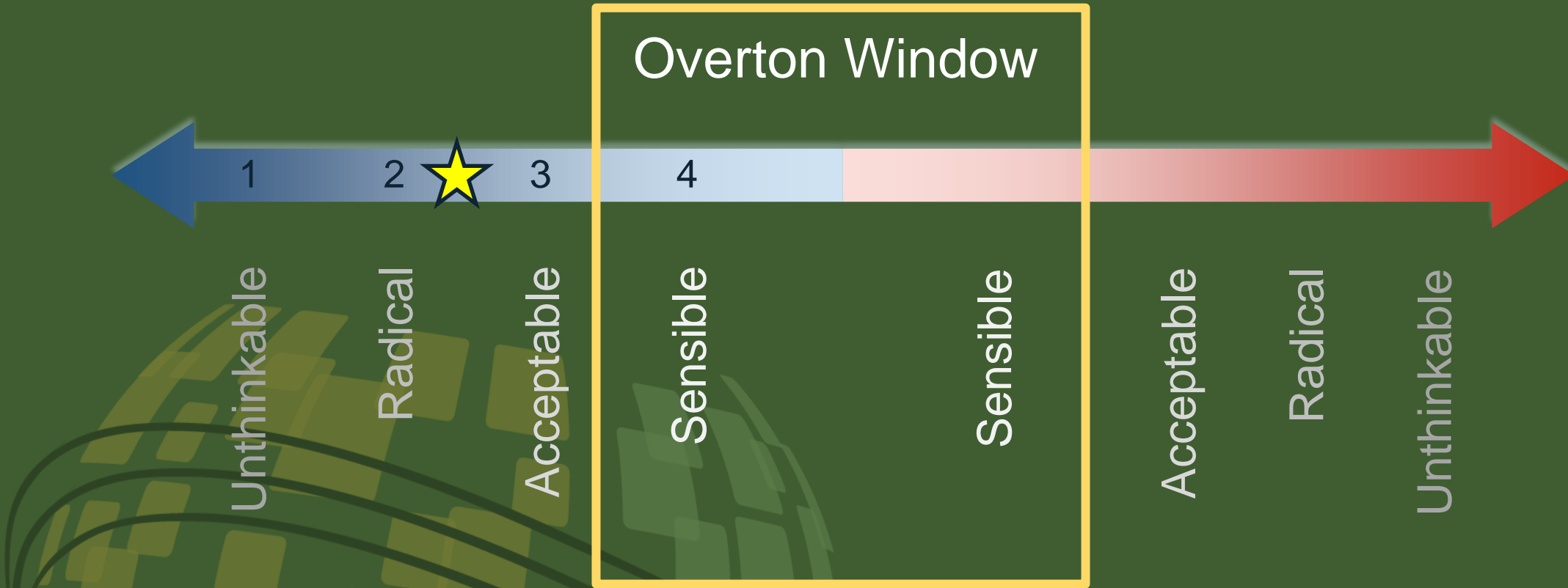
Stakeholder Representative	Influence Rating (1-5)	Perception	Beliefs Shaping Perception
Internal Platforms	2	Unthinkable 	Fear of disruption, risk aversion, focus on existing systems
Senior Leadership	5	Radical 	Desire for innovation but cautious of drastic changes and believes in predictability. Skepticism due to past failures.
Enterprise Strategic Priorities	5	Radical 	Alignment with long term goals but wary of immediate risks
Market Trends & Competition	4	Radical 	Focus on maintaining their competitive position.
Regulatory Bodies	3	Acceptable 	Regulatory compliance is focus
Industry Standards	2	Acceptable 	Adherence to proven practices and standards.
Customer Support	4	Acceptable 	Desire innovative solutions that meet unmet needs
Finance	2	Sensible 	ROI and budget adherence

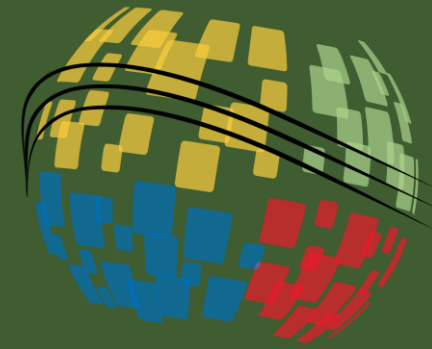
# Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

Stakeholder Representative	Influence Rating (1-5)	Perception Rating (1-4)	Weighted Score (Influence x Perception)
Internal Platforms	2	1 (Unthinkable)	2
Senior Leadership	5	2 (Radical)	10
Enterprise Strategic Priorities	5	2 (Radical)	10
Market Trends & Competition	4	2 (Radical)	8
Regulatory Bodies	3	3 (Acceptable)	9
Industry Standards	2	3 (Acceptable)	6
Customer Support	4	3 (Acceptable)	12
Finance	2	4 (Sensible)	8
<b>Sum</b>	<b>27</b>		<b>65</b>

**Avg Perception Rating** =  $65 / 27 = 2.40$

# 'The Project Idea' Mapping on Overton Window





Applying System Methodologies

# Strategy for Engagement



# Strategy for Engagement

Stakeholder Representative	Un-thinkable	Radical	Acceptable	Sensible
Internal Platforms	X →		→ O	
Senior Leadership		X →	→ O	
Enterprise Strategic Priorities		X →	→ O	
Market Trends & Competition		X →	→ O	
Regulatory Bodies			X	
Industry Standards			X	
Customer Support			X →	→ O
Finance				X

X – Current stakeholder perception of project idea

O – Stakeholder perception needed

# Strategy for Engagement

Stakeholder Representative	Un-thinkable	Radical	Acceptable	Sensible
Internal Platforms	x —————> o			
Senior Leadership		x —————> o		
Enterprise Strategic Priorities		x —————> o		
Market Trends & Competition		x —————> o		
Regulatory Bodies			x	
Industry Standards			x	
Customer Support			x —————> o	
Finance				x

x – Current stakeholder perception of project idea  
o – Stakeholder perception needed

## Market Trends & Competition

- Focus on differentiating edge from existing market offerings.
- Use market data of emerging trends or platform shift to support project's potential success.

## Internal Platforms

- Provide detailed feasibility studies, show incremental benefits and how the project can evolve over time.
- Highlight risk mitigation strategies to alleviate fears.

## Customer Support

- Gather and integrate customer feedback through customer discovery phase or pilot.

## Finance

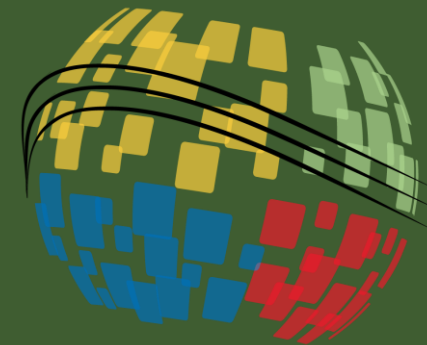
- Provide cost-benefit analysis and ROI projections.

## Senior Leadership & Enterprise Strategic Priorities

- Resolve tenuous connections of the project idea with strategic goals and reframe/tweak the idea.
- Build success stories with pilot results.
- Emphasize long term benefits.

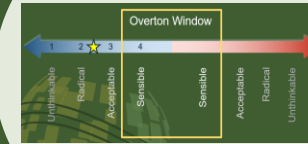
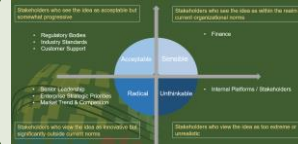
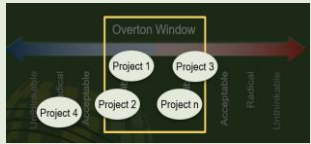
## Industry Standards

- Integrate industry best practices, Seek certifications or endorsements



# Summary & Case Study

# Practical Insights & Tools



Stakeholder Representative	Un-thinkable	Radical	Acceptable	Sensible
Internal Platforms	x			
Senior Leadership		x		
Enterprise Strategic Priorities		x		
Market Trends & Competitors		x		
Regulatory Bodies			x	
Industry Standards			x	
Customer Support			x	
Finance				x

## Analyze Organization's Overton Window

- Understand the current acceptability range for ideas

## Understand Larger Organizational System

- Use context diagram to visualize organizational elements interface with and influence the idea.

## Perform Stakeholder Analysis

- Identify stakeholder categories based on perception
- Analyze perceptions and beliefs
- Identify stakeholder power

## Map the Idea to Overton Window

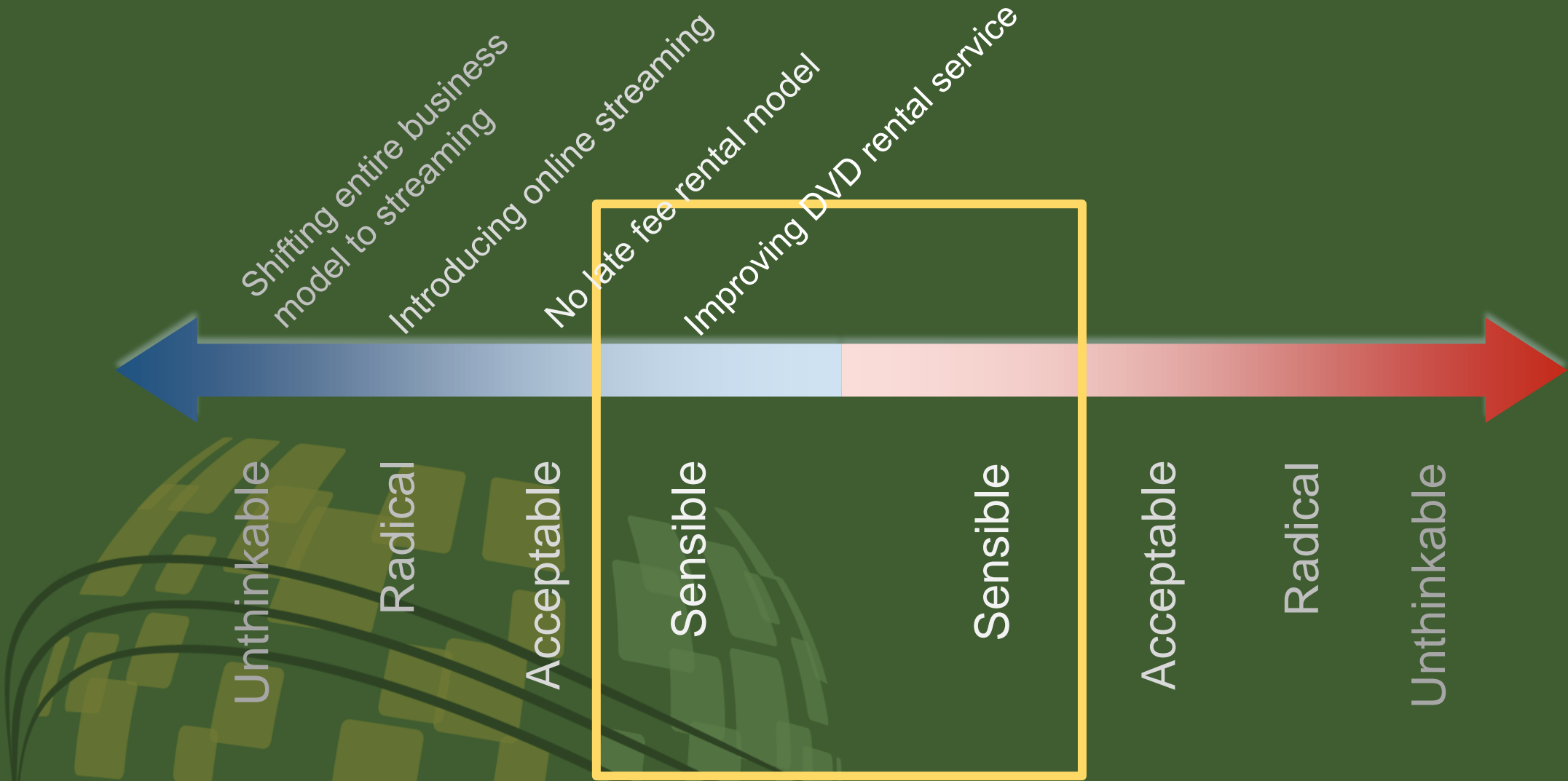
- Determine where the idea currently lies

## Iterate to Fit the Window

- Apply engagement strategies to convert stakeholder perceptions
- Refine and Reframe

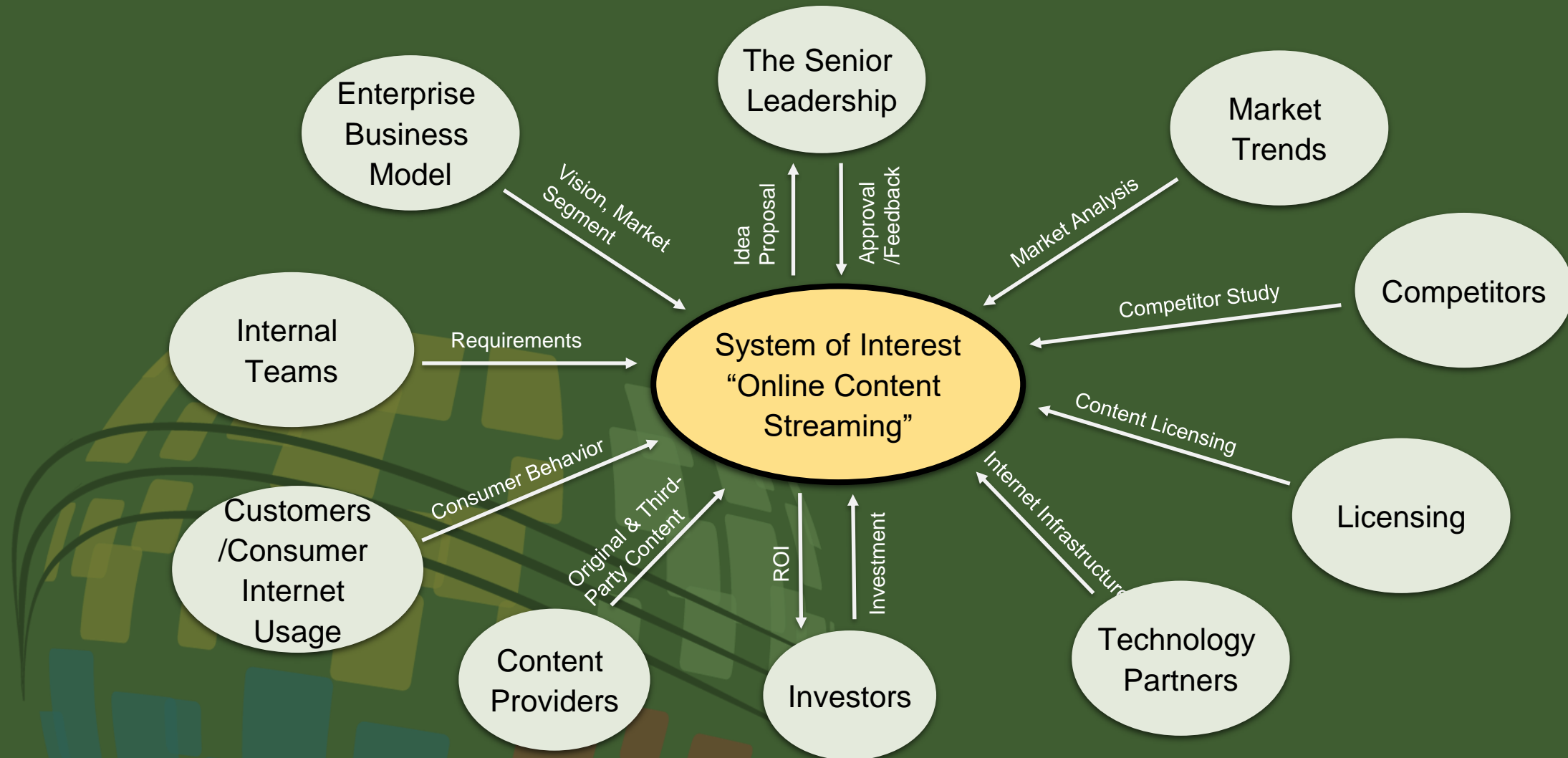
# Case Study – Netflix's Shift to Online Streaming

- In early 2000s, Netflix was a DVD rental service.
- Industry Trend – Traditional video rental stores
- Radical Idea – Streaming movies over the internet



Overton Window

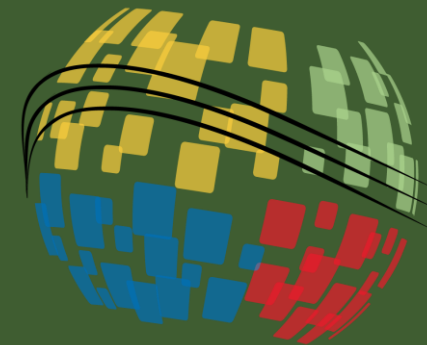
# Understanding System of Systems – Context Diagram



# Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

Stakeholder Representative	Influence Rating (1-5)	Perception	Beliefs Shaping Perception
Internal Teams	X	X	Complete unknowns of implementation
Senior Leadership	X	X	Skeptical, fear of disruption
Enterprise Business Model	X	X	Focus on existing successful model
Market Trends & Competition	X	X	Fear of cannibalizing DVD business
Technology Partners	X	X	Technical feasibility concerns
Content Providers	X	X	Licensing and revenue share issues
Customers	X	X	Early adopters showing interest, Mixed reactions due to internet usage tariff





# Conclusion

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- Build mindshare with patience.
- Some ideas are simply outside the Overton Window and may not gain acceptance immediately.
- Build engagement strategies to fit or shift the Overton Window.

*“What people resist is not change per se, but loss.”*

Ronald Heifetz, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*



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