



34th Annual **INCOSE**
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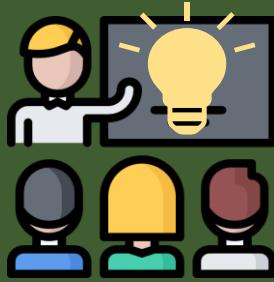
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Navigating Organizational Acceptance: Leveraging the Overton Window as Systems Thinking Tool for Radical Project Ideas Approval



The Challenge

The Challenge for Radical Ideas in Large Organizations



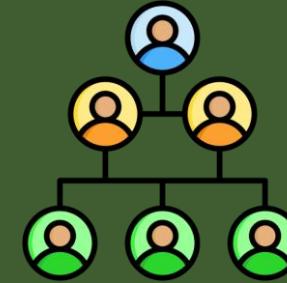
Idea Proposal to
Leadership



Reality
'Red Tape'



Myth
'Best Ideas Win'



- Does complex hierarchies and matrix structure stifle the innovation?



- 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

Sensible

Popular
Policy
Popular

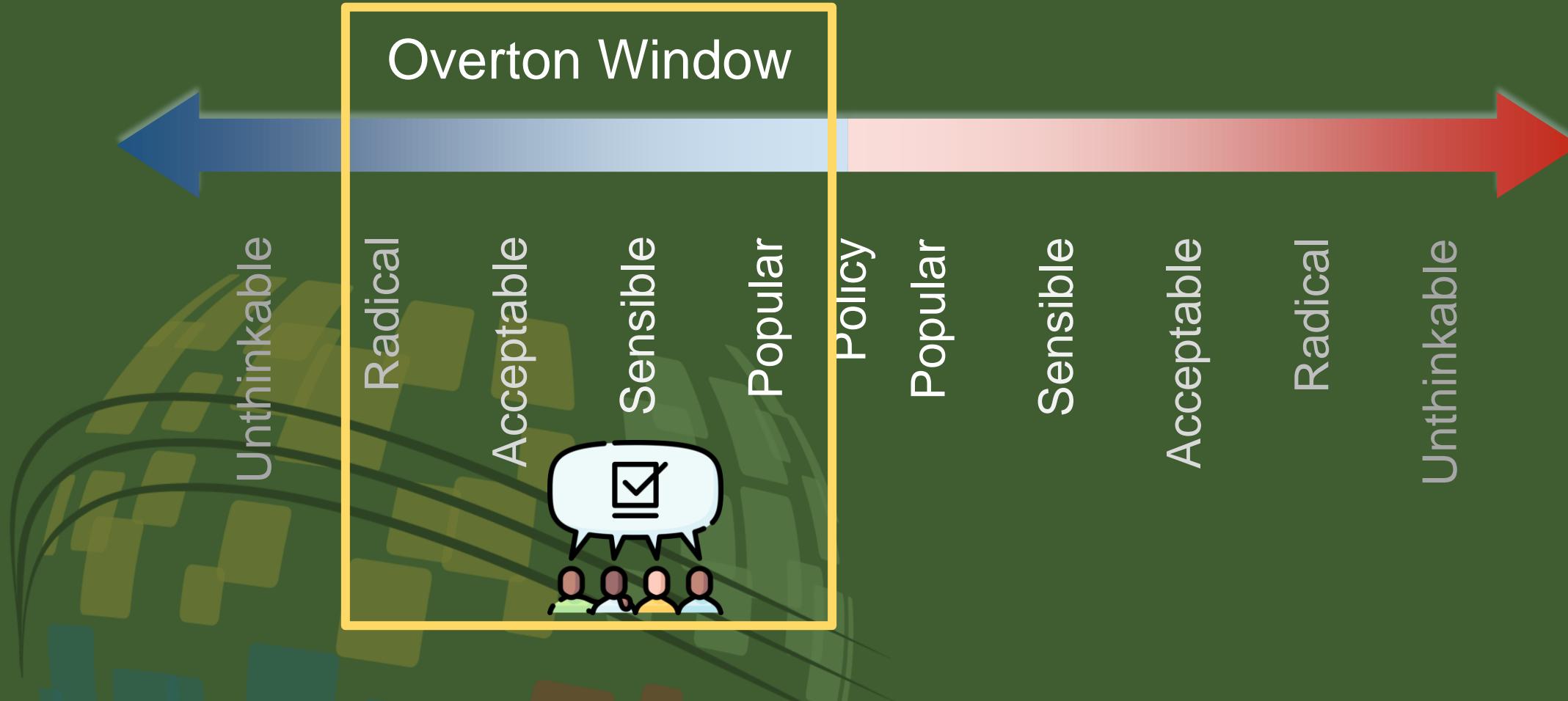
Sensible

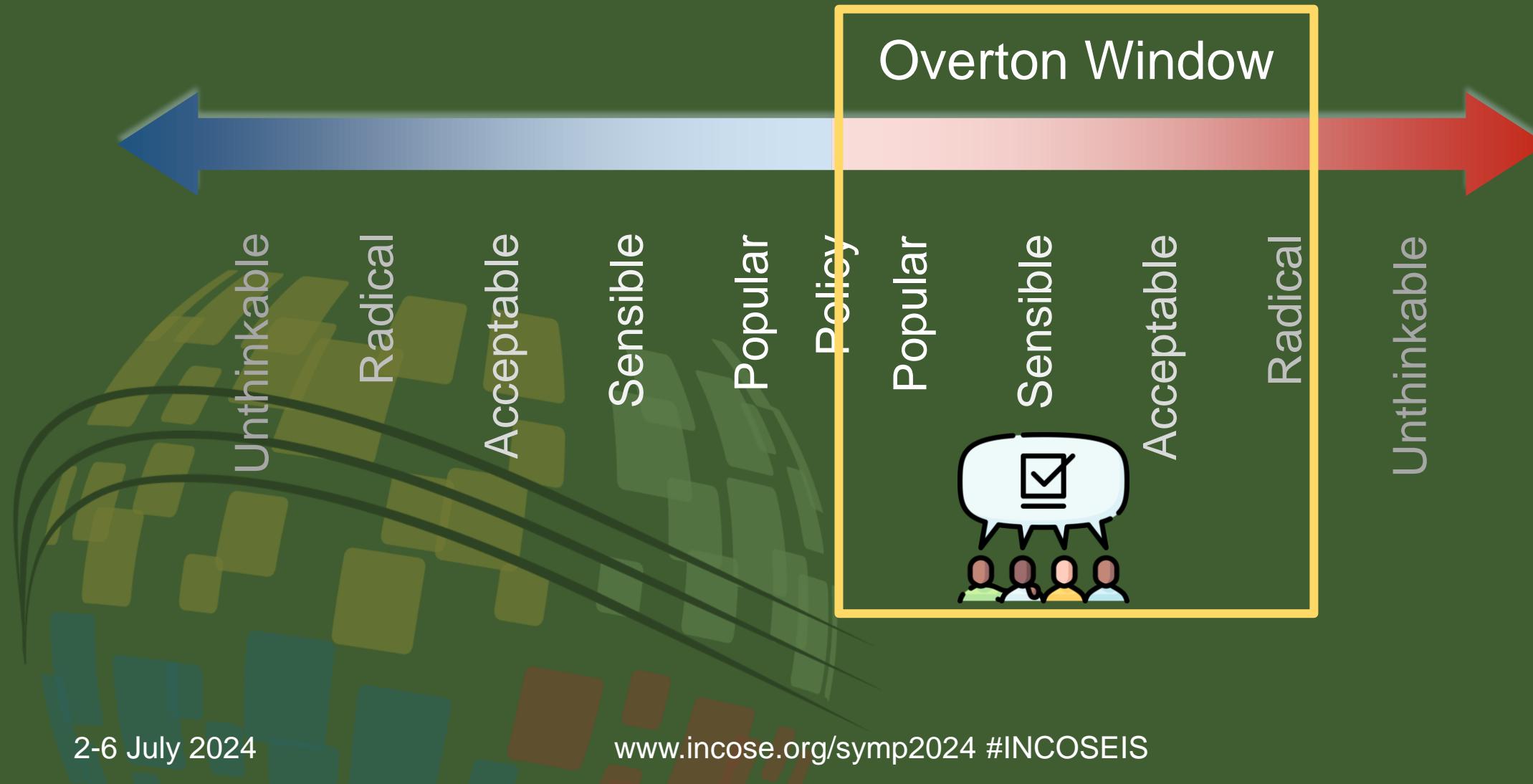


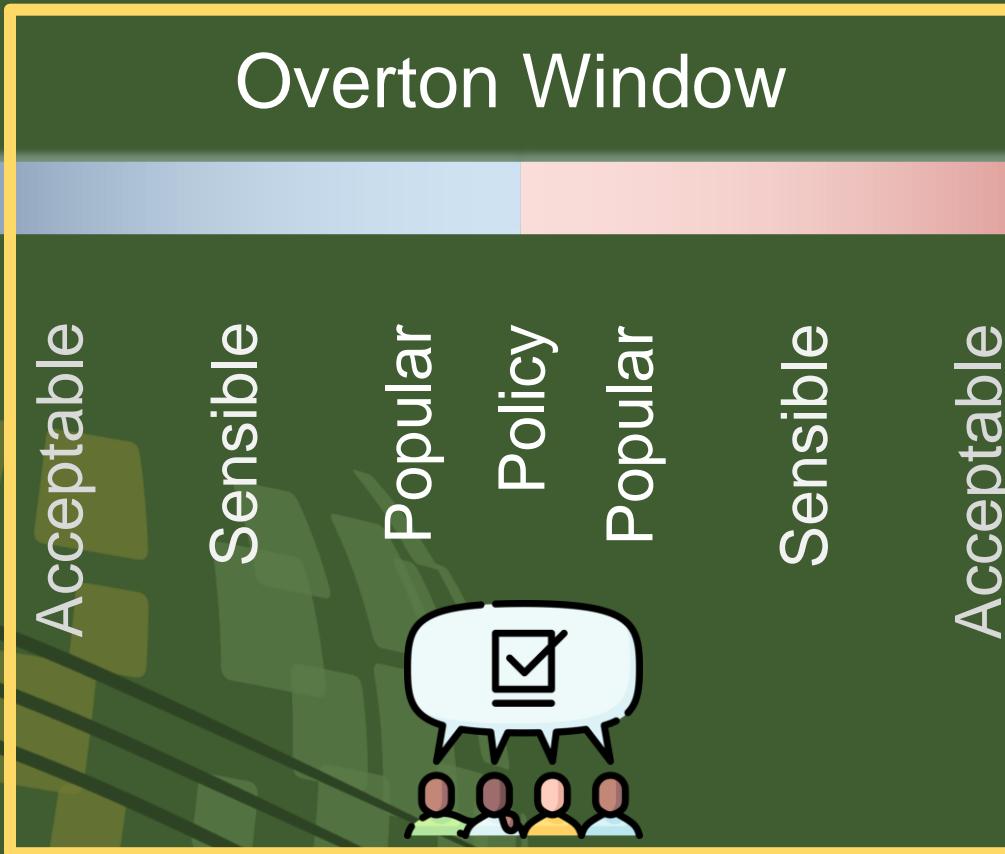
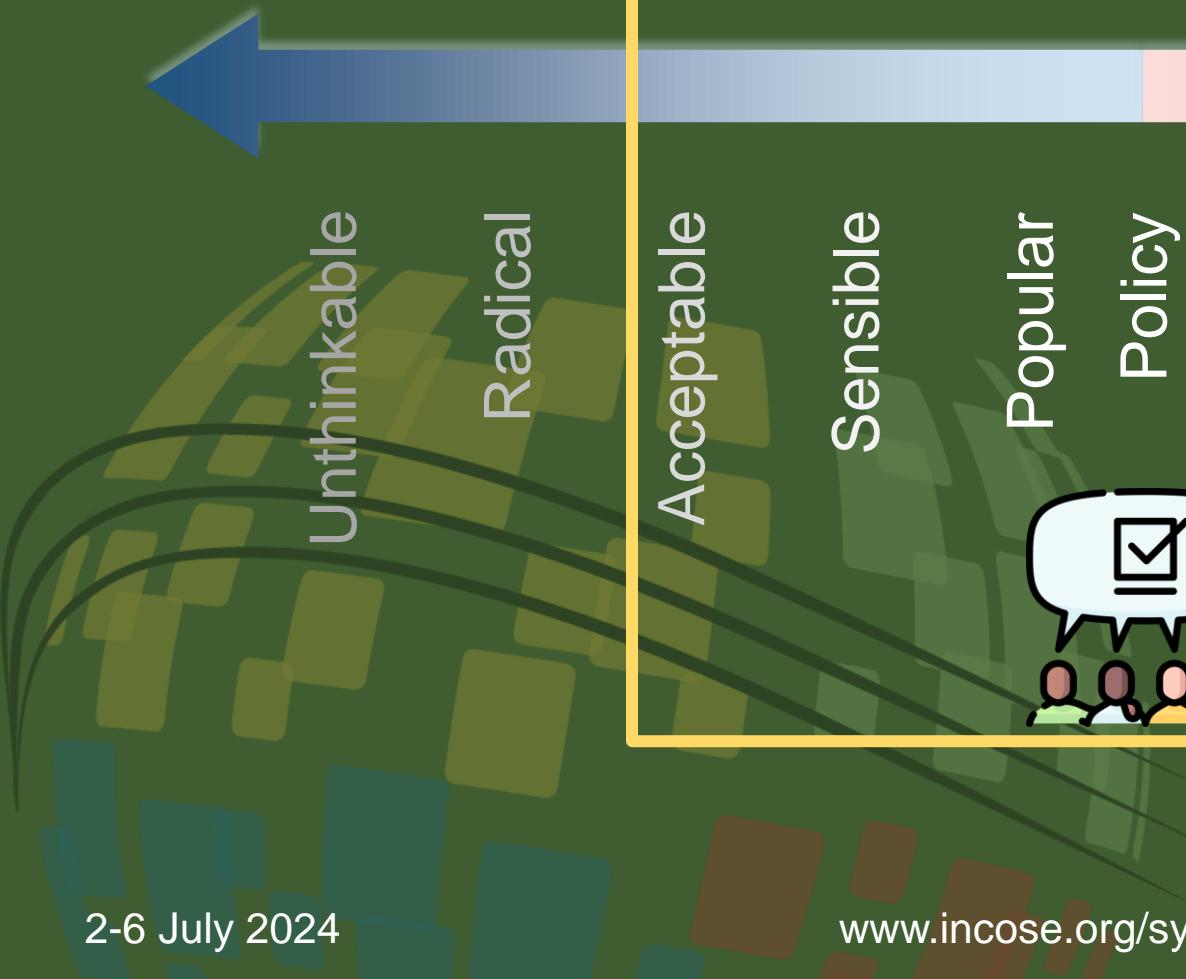
Acceptable

Radical

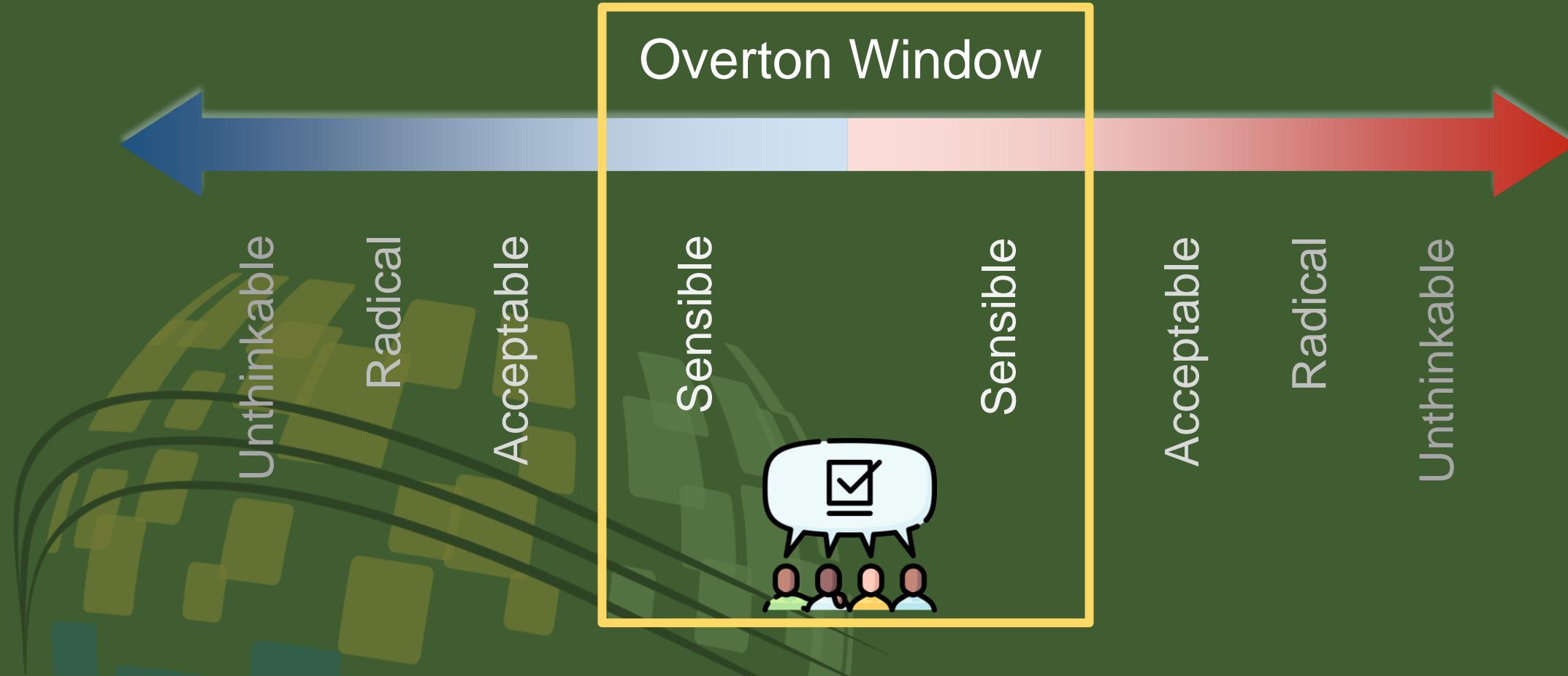
Unthinkable







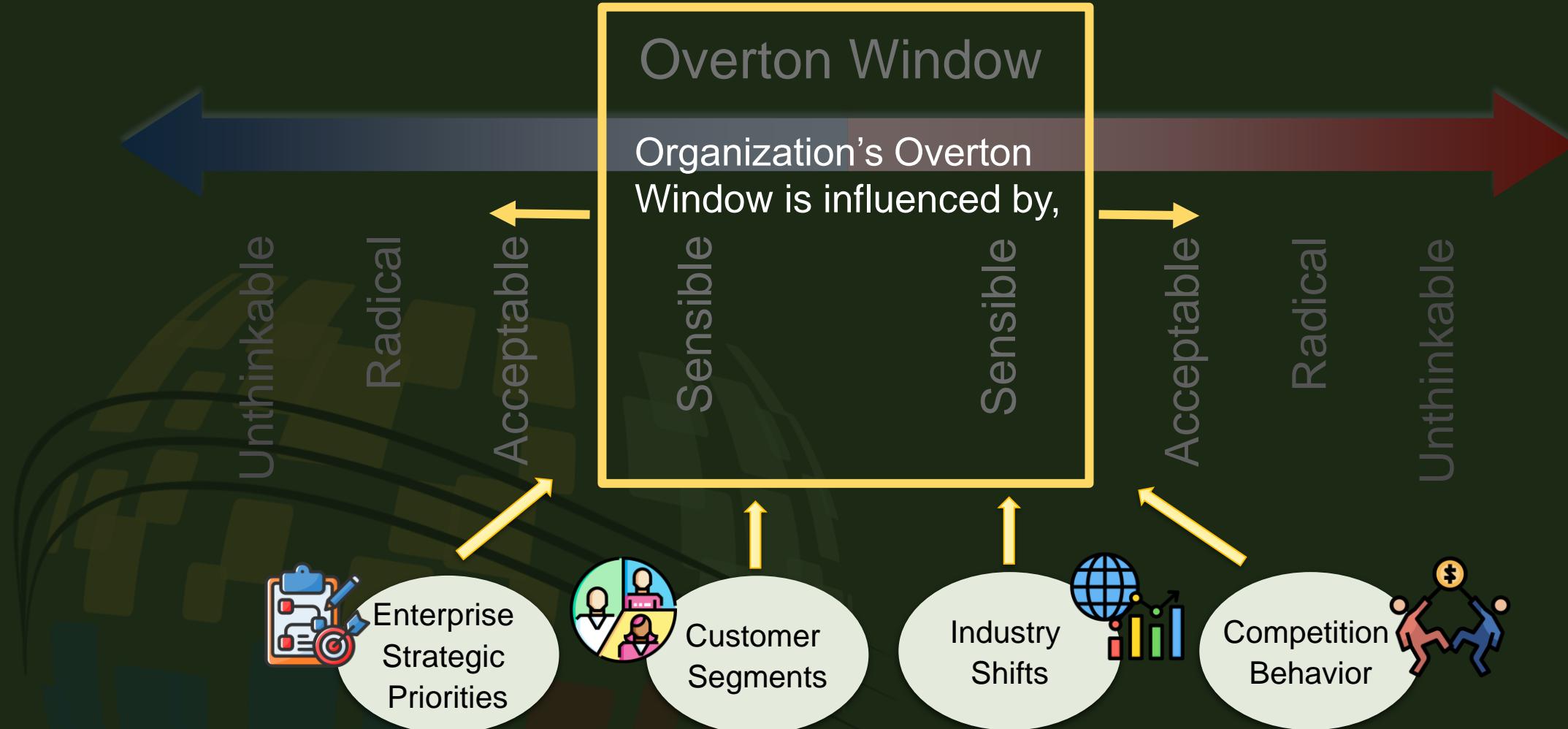
Overton Window in Organizational Context



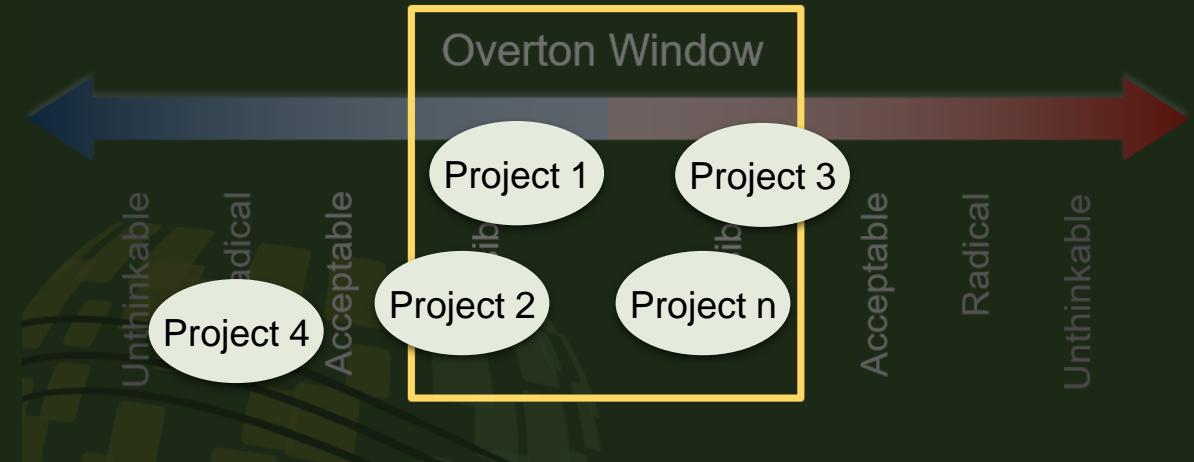
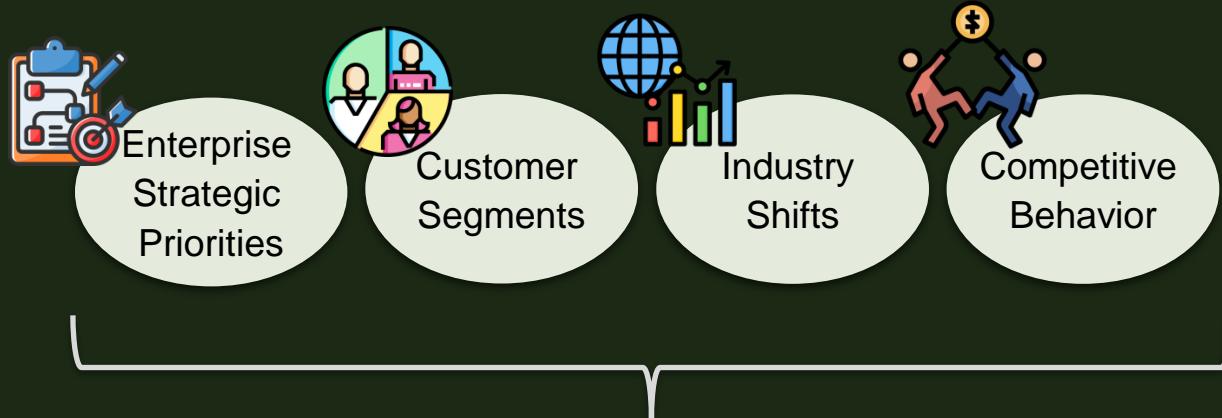


Analyze Organization's Overton Window

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Analyze Organization's Overton Window



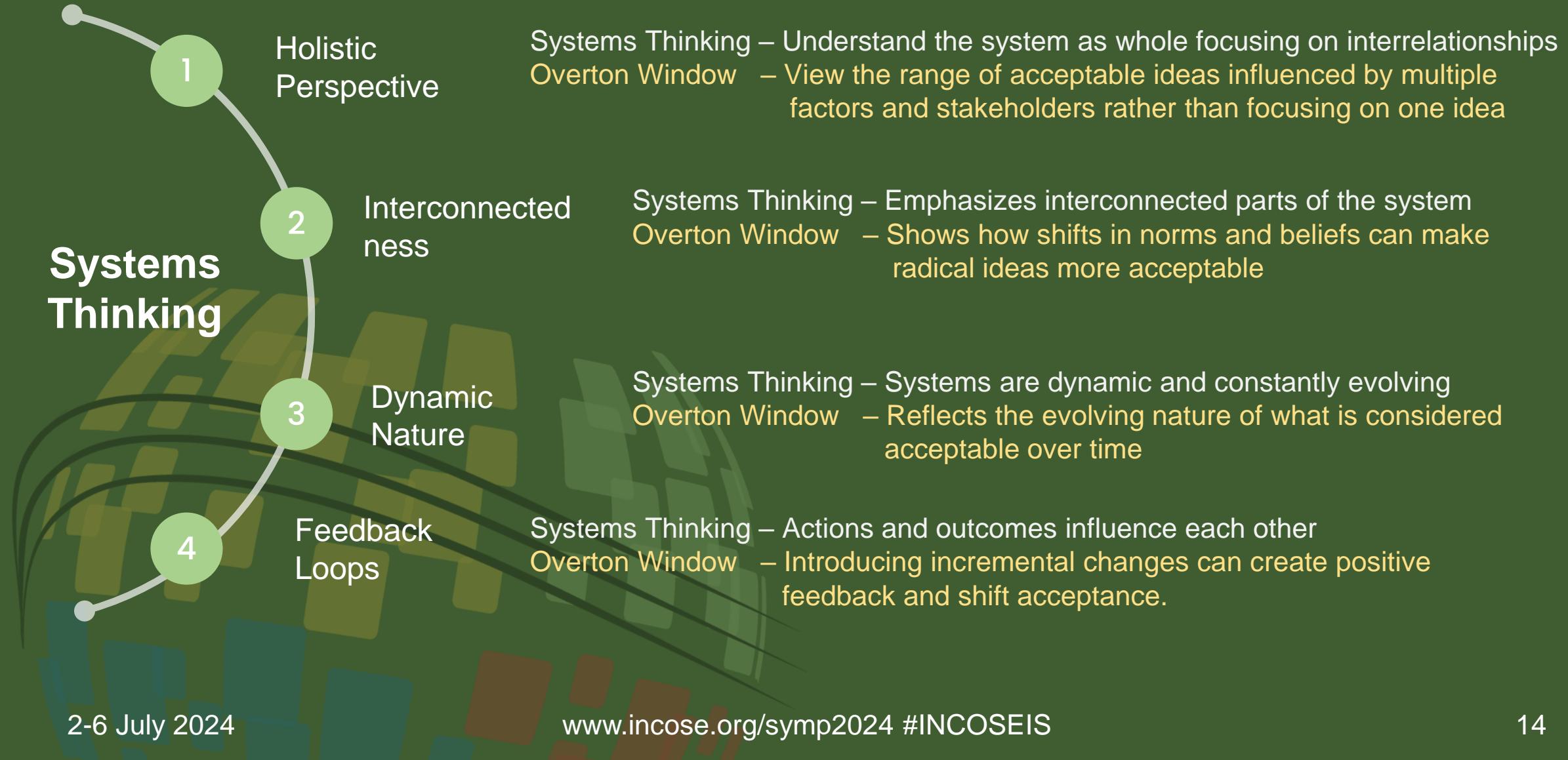
- Projects within Overton Window gain momentum and funding.
- Projects with tenuous connections to it face scrutiny and need alignment.
- It calls for strengthening connection to strategic priorities and reframing ideas to align with the Overton Window.



Systems Thinking Approach

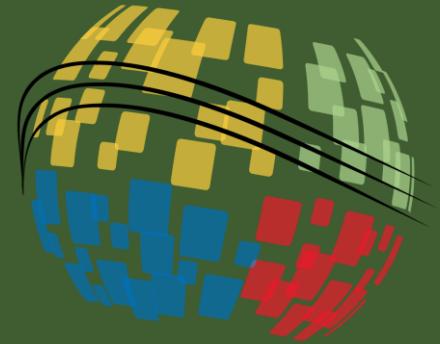
How Overton Window fits in it?

Overton Window within Systems Thinking Approach



“Change starts when someone sees the next step.”

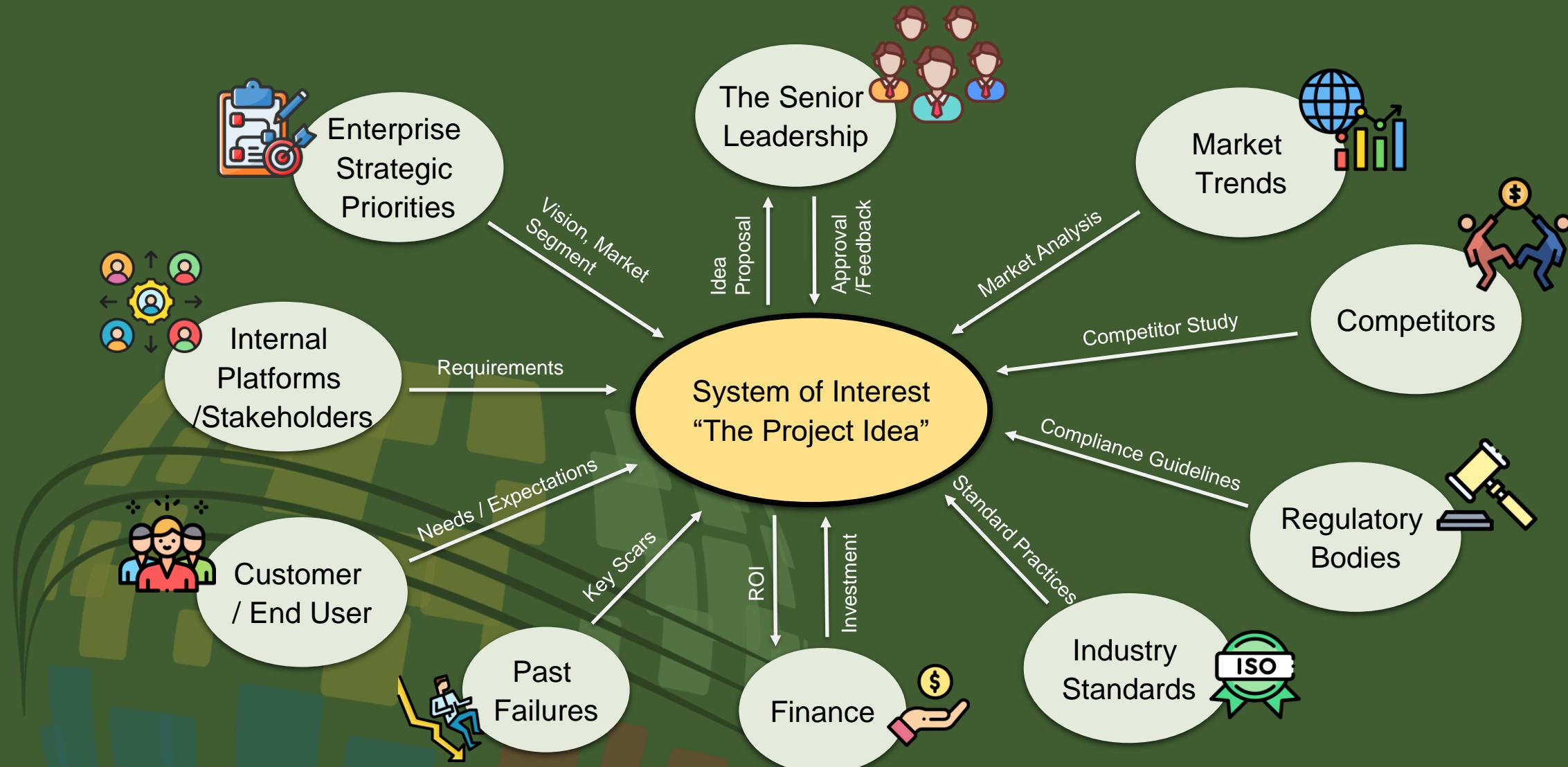
- William Drayton



Applying System Methodologies

Understanding System of Systems

Understanding System of Systems – Context Diagram

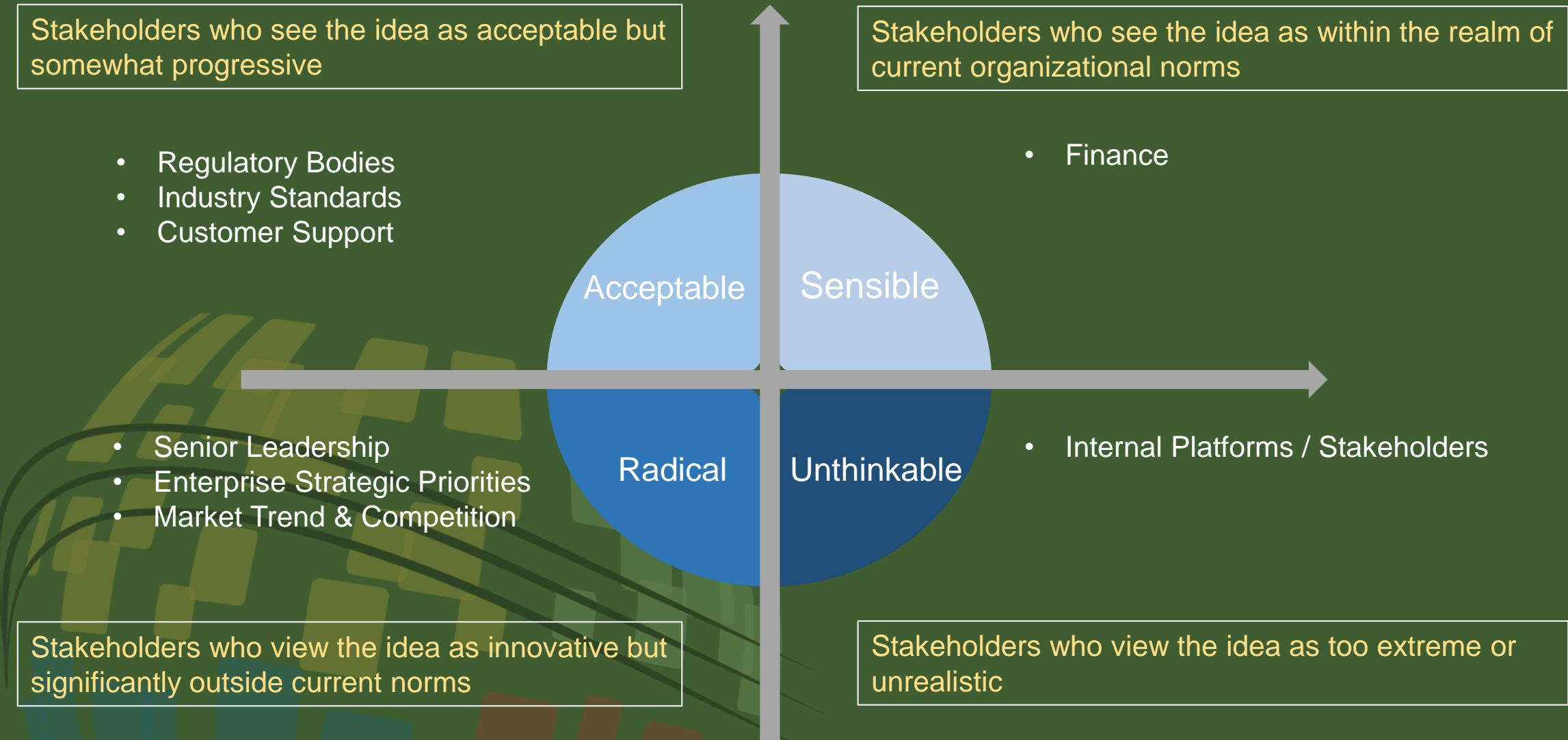




Applying System Methodologies

Stakeholder Analysis

Identify Stakeholder Categories



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

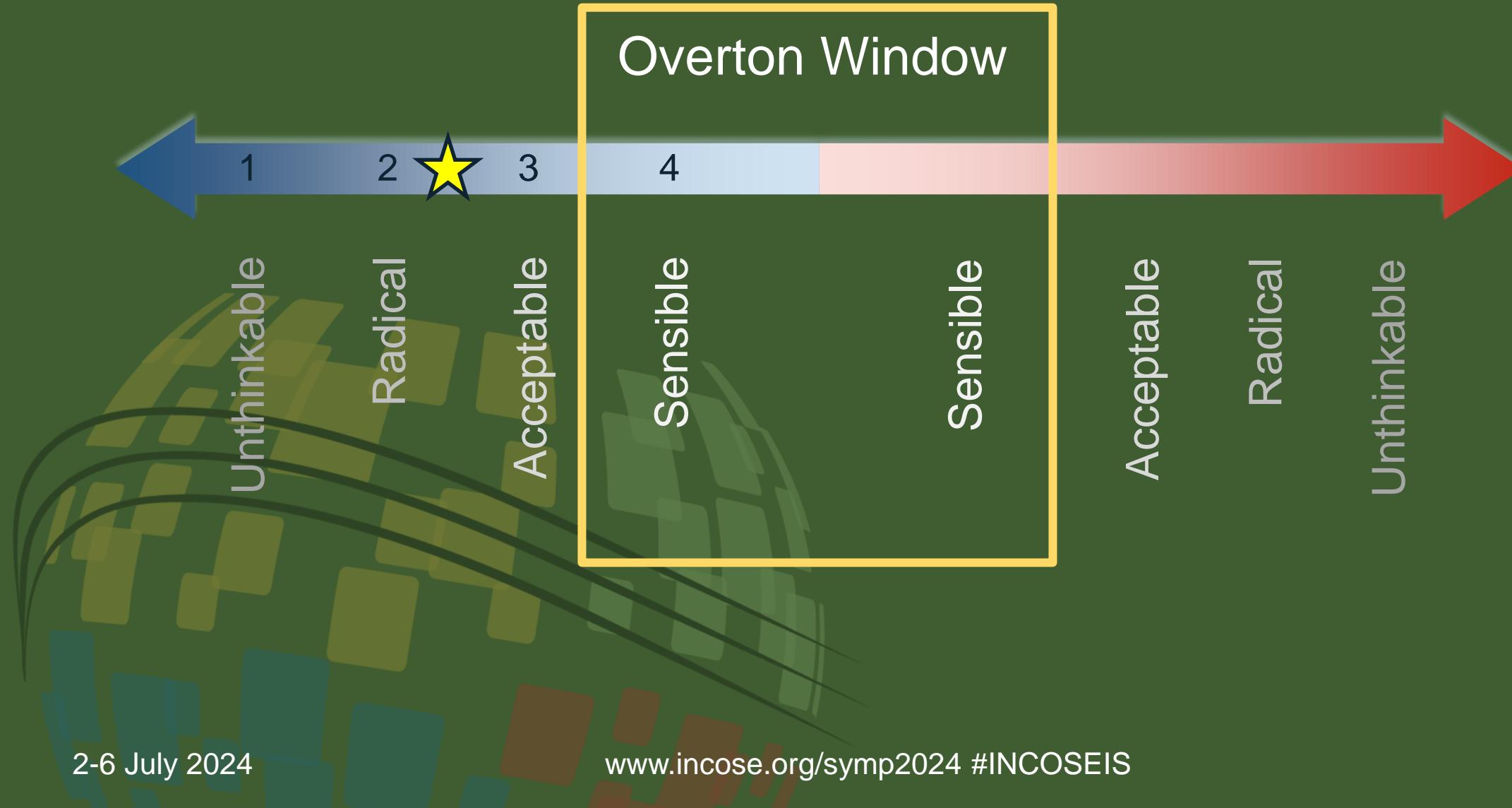
Stakeholder Representative	Influence Rating (1-5)	Perception	Beliefs Shaping Perception
Internal Platforms	2	Unthinkable ●	Fear of disruption, risk aversion, focus on existing systems
Senior Leadership	5	Radical ●	Desire for innovation but cautious of drastic changes and believes in predictability. Skepticism 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
Sum	27		65

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

0 – 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
0 – 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

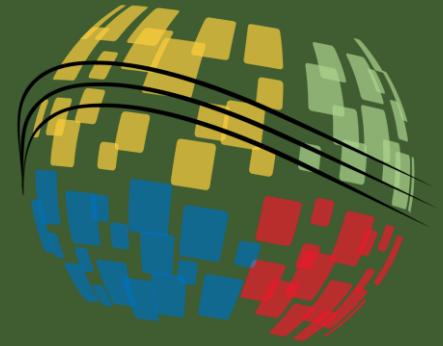
- Provide cost-benefit analysis and ROI projections.

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.

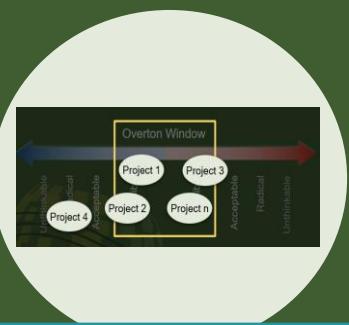
Industry Standards

- Integrate industry best practices, Seek certifications or endorsements



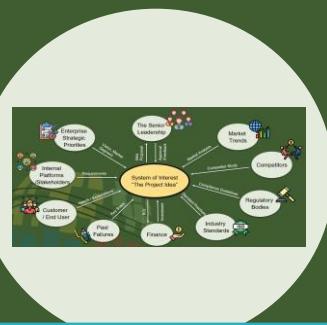
Summary & Case Study

Practical Insights & Tools



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.



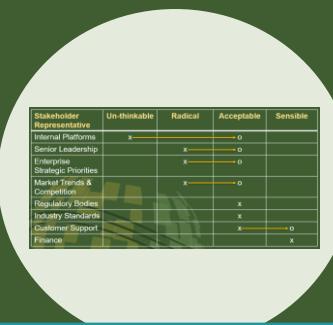
Perform Stakeholder Analysis

- 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

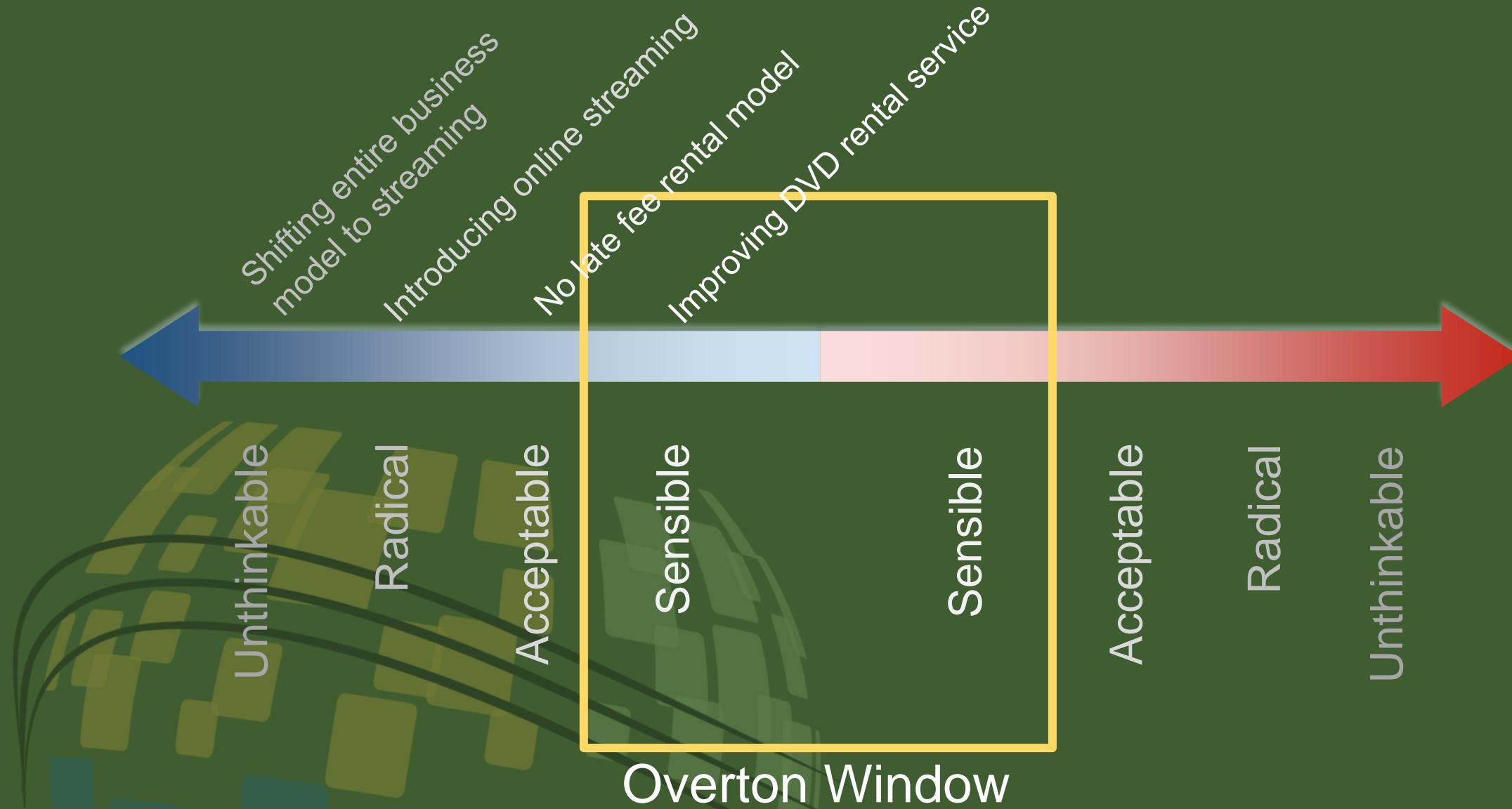


Iterate to Fit the Window

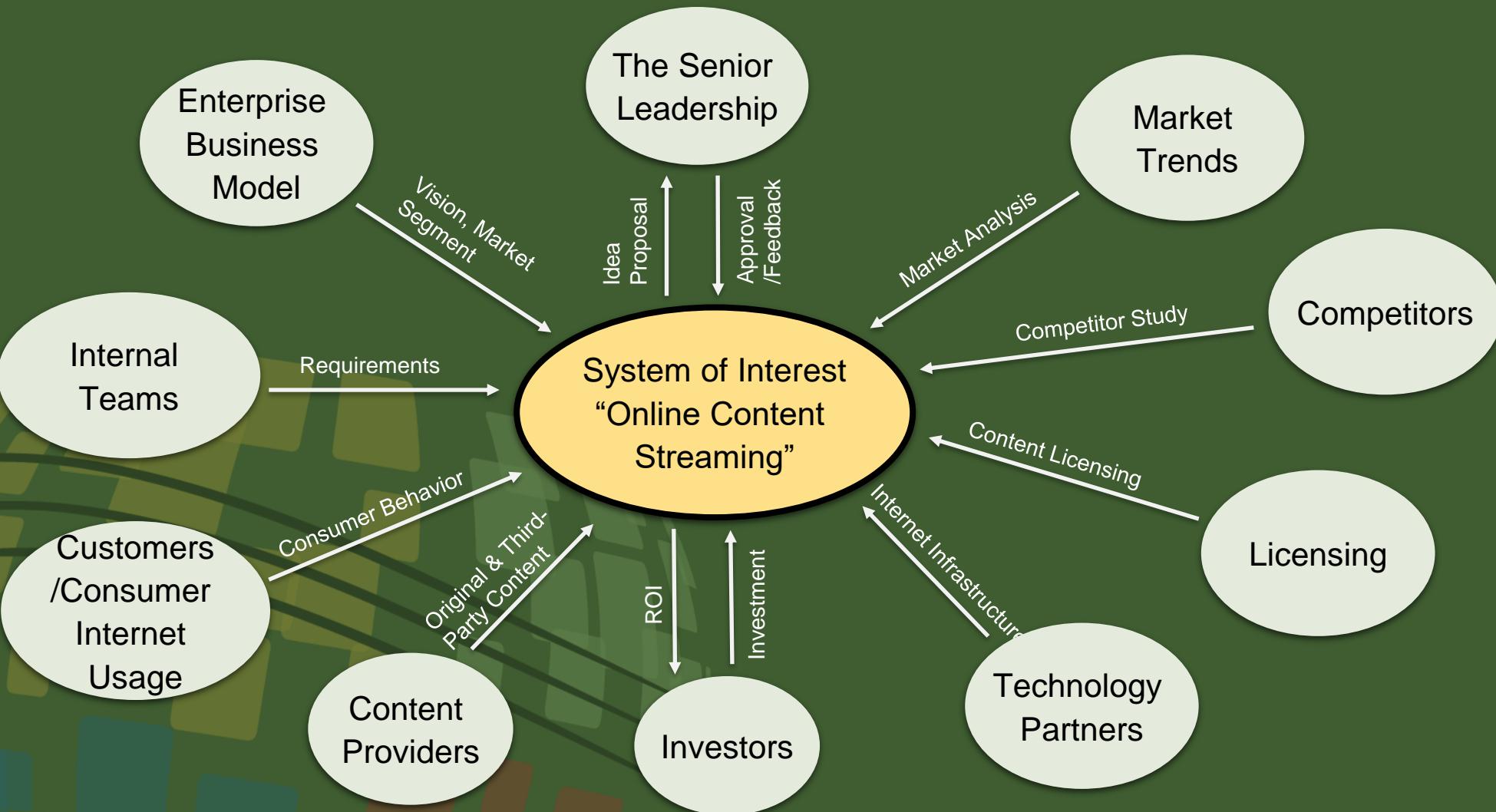
- Apply engagement strategies to convert stakeholder perceptions
- Refine and Reframe

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



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

Conclusion

- 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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