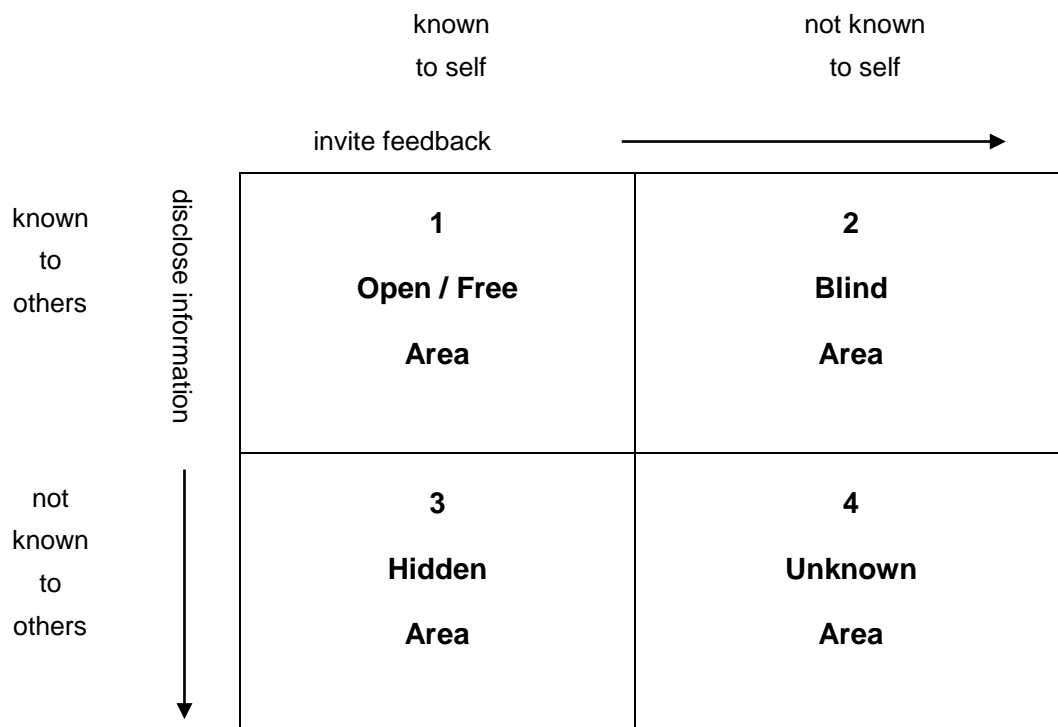


JOHARI WINDOW

The Model Joe Luft and Harry Ingham



The Model

The Johari Window model is a disclosure / feedback model of self awareness, an information processing tool. The Johari Window actually represents information – feelings, experience, views, knowledge, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, etc. within or about a person – in relation to their group, from four perspectives, which are described below.

The Johari Window model can also be used to represent the same information for a group in relation to other groups. Johari Window terminology refers to self and others: self means oneself, i.e., the person subject to the Johari Window analysis. Others means other people in the person’s group or team.

1. **Open or Free Area** – what is known by the person about him / herself and is also known by others.
2. **Blind Area** – what is unknown by the person about him / herself but which others know.
3. **Hidden Area** – what the person knows about him / herself that others do not know. It is also called the façade.
4. **Unknown Area** – what is unknown by the person about him / herself and is also unknown by others.

The Leader's Role

Managers and leaders can play an important role in facilitating feedback and disclosure among group members, and in directly giving feedback to individuals about their own blind areas. Leaders also have a big responsibility to promote a culture and expectation for open, honest, positive, helpful, constructive, sensitive communications, and the sharing of knowledge throughout their organization. Top performing groups, departments, companies and organizations always tend to have a culture of open positive communication, so encouraging the positive development of the 'open area' for everyone is a simple yet fundamental aspect of effective leadership.

Managers and leaders can help by creating an environment that encourages self-discovery, and to promote the processes of self discovery, constructive observation and feedback among team members. It is a widely accepted fact that the majority of people in any organization are at any time working well within their potential. Creating a culture, climate and expectation for self-discovery helps people to fulfill more of their potential and thereby to achieve more, and to contribute more to organizational performance.

Quadrant 1 Open or Free Area

This is the information about the person – behaviour, attitude, feelings, emotion, knowledge, experience, skills, views, etc – known by the person and known by the group.

The aim in any group should always be to develop the open area for every person, because when we work in this area with others we are at our most effective and productive, and the group is at its most productive too. The open or free area, or “the arena”, can be seen as the space where good communications and co-operation occur, free from distractions, mistrust, confusion, conflict and misunderstanding.

Established team members logically tend to have larger open areas than new team members. New team members start with relatively small open areas because relatively little knowledge about the new team member is shared. The size of the open area can be expanded horizontally into the blind space, by seeking and actively listening to feedback from other group members. Other group members can help a team member expand their open area by offering feedback, sensitively of course. The size of the open area can also be expanded vertically downwards into the hidden or avoided space by the person's disclosure of information, feelings, etc. about him / herself to the group and group members. Group members can help a person expand their open area into the hidden area by asking the person about him / herself.

Quadrant 2 Blind Area

This is what is known about a person by others in the group, but is unknown by the person him / herself. By seeking or soliciting feedback from others, the aim should be to reduce this area and thereby to increase the open area to increase self-awareness. This blind area is not an effective or productive space for individuals or groups. This blind area could also be referred to as ignorance about oneself. A blind area could also include issues that others are deliberately withholding from a person. We all know how difficult it is to work well when kept in the dark.

Group members and managers can take some responsibility for helping an individual to reduce their blind area – in turn increasing the open area – by giving sensitive feedback and encouraging disclosure. Managers should promote a climate of non-judgmental feedback, and group response to individual disclosure, which reduces fear and therefore encourages both processes to happen. The extent to which an individual seeks feedback, and the issues on which feedback is sought, must always be at the individual's own discretion.

Quadrant 3 Hidden Area

This is what is known to ourselves but kept hidden from, and therefore unknown, to others. This hidden or avoided self represents information, feelings, etc., anything that a person knows about him / herself, but which is not revealed. The hidden area could also include sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas, manipulative intentions. It's natural for very personal and private information and feelings to remain hidden, indeed, certain information, feelings and experiences have no bearing on work, and so can and should remain hidden. However, typically a lot of hidden information is not very personal, it is work or performance-related, and so is better positioned in the open area.

Relevant hidden information and feelings, etc., should be moved into the open area through the process of disclosure. The aim should be to disclose and expose relevant information and feelings, thereby increasing the open area. By telling others how we feel and other information about ourselves, we reduce the hidden area and increase the open area, which enables better understanding, co-operation, trust, team-working effectiveness and productivity. Reducing hidden areas also reduces the potential for confusion, misunderstanding, poor communication, etc., which all distract from and undermine team effectiveness.

Organizational culture and working atmosphere have a major influence on group member's preparedness to disclose their hidden selves. Most people fear judgment or vulnerability and therefore hold back hidden information and feelings, etc., that if moved into the open area and known by the group as well, would enhance mutual understanding, and thereby improve group awareness, enabling better individual performance and group effectiveness.

The extent to which an individual discloses personal feelings and information, and the issues which are disclosed, and to whom, must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to disclose. People should disclose at a pace and depth that they find personally comfortable. As with feedback, some people are more resilient than others.

Quadrant 4 Unknown Area

This is information, feelings, latent abilities, aptitudes, experiences etc., that are unknown to the person him / herself and unknown to others in the group. These unknown issues take a variety of forms: they can be feelings, behaviours, attitudes, capabilities, aptitudes, which can be quite close to the surface, and which can be positive and useful, or they can be deeper aspects of a person's personality, influencing his / her behaviour to various degrees. Large unknown areas would typically be expected in younger people, and people who lack experience or self-belief.

Examples of unknown factors are as follows, and the first example is particularly relevant and common, especially in typical organizations and teams:

- an ability that is under-estimated or untried through lack of opportunity, encouragement, confidence or training
- a natural ability or aptitude that a person doesn't realize they possess
- a fear or aversion that a person does not know they have
- an unknown illness
- repressed or subconscious feelings
- conditioned behavior or attitudes from childhood

The processes by which this information and knowledge can be uncovered are various, and can be prompted through self-discovery or observation by others, or in certain situations through collective or mutual discovery, of the sort of discovery experienced on intensive group work. Counselling can also uncover unknown issues, but this would then be known to the person and by one other, rather than by a group.

Whether unknown discovered knowledge moves into the hidden, blind or open area depends on who discovers it and what they do with the knowledge, notably whether it is then given as feedback, or disclosed. Again, as with disclosure and soliciting feedback, the process of self discovery is a sensitive one. The extent and depth to which an individual is able to seek out and discover their unknown feelings must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to do this.

Uncovering hidden talents, unknown aptitudes and skills, not to be confused with developing the Johari hidden area, is another aspect of developing the unknown area and is not so sensitive as unknown feelings. Providing people with the opportunity to try new things, with no great pressure to succeed, is often a useful way to discover unknown abilities, and thereby reduce the unknown area.

A note of caution about Quadrant 4: The unknown area could also include repressed or subconscious feelings rooted in formative events and traumatic past experiences, which can stay unknown for a lifetime. In a work or organizational context the Johari Window should not be used to address issues of a clinical nature.

~ Adapted by Julia Cipriani with permission from the author, Alan Chapman, August 2004.

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JOHARI WINDOW – PRINCIPLES OF CHANGE

1. A change in any one quadrant will affect all other quadrants.
2. It takes energy to hide, deny, or be blind to behaviour which is involved in interaction.
3. Threat tends to decrease awareness; mutual trust tends to increase awareness.
4. Forced awareness (exposure) is undesirable and usually ineffective.
5. Interpersonal learning means a change taken place so that Quadrant 1 is larger and one or more of the other quadrants has grown smaller.
6. Working with others is facilitated by a large enough area of free activity. It means more of the resources and skills in the membership can be applied to the task at hand.
7. The smaller the first quadrant, the poorer the communication.
8. There is universal curiosity about unknown areas, but this is held in check by custom, social training, and diverse fears.
9. Sensitivity means appreciating the covert aspects of behaviour in Quadrants 2, 3, and 4 and respecting the desire of others to keep them so.
10. Learning about group processes as they are being experienced helps to increase awareness – larger Quadrant 1 – for the group as whole, as well as for individuals.
11. The value system of a group and its membership may be noted in the way unknowns in the life of the group are confronted.

~ from *The Johari Window / A Graphic Model of Awareness in Interpersonal Relations* by Joe Luft