

The Johari Window Model

1. Introduction

The existence of healthy social relations is a psychological need and the happiness of people depends on the extent to which this need is met. Communication plays an important role in the formation of interpersonal relations. Often, the quality of social support a person offers to another and the direction of the human relations they will establish, depends upon the information they give about themselves. The individual's talking about himself/herself during his/her attempts to create new relationships provides the ground for the development of the relationship as it can bring trust, warmth and acceptance (Ataşalar, 1996). In his book "The Transparent Self" (1964), Jourard stated that conversational patterns are related to the level of intimacy between people. In other words, when a person reveals his / her personal information, the interlocutor responds to it. Subsequent studies have determined that this is about the principle of reciprocity in disclosure. According to this principle, as long as the person gives information about himself/herself and shows closeness to the other person, the other person will give the same amount of information and feels close (Burger, 2006; p:466; Ađlamaz, 2006). The Johari Window is a model that supports the creation of trust in interpersonal relations, as well as opens up lines of communication among members of a group.

2. What is Johari window Model?

The Johari Window improves self-awareness and mutual understanding between individuals within a group. It is particularly helpful for leaders who want to understand how people perceive them. The Johari Window is a simple and useful tool for understanding:

- self-awareness
- personal development
- improving communications
- interpersonal relationships
- group dynamics
- team development; and
- inter group relationships

The model was devised by American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955 while researching group dynamics at the University of California Los Angeles. The model was first published in the Proceedings of the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development by UCLA Extension Office in 1955 and was later expanded by Joseph Luft. The model name is derived from combining the two names 'Joseph' and 'Harry.'

3. Why use the Johari Window Model?

The effectiveness of one's leadership is often limited by his/her self-awareness. Improving self-awareness will help one listen, be more present and be better in tune with the person or group one is leading. The Johari Window model develops internal and external self-awareness. It helps one become aware of how others see one in contrast to how one sees oneself. A good outcome is a perfect alignment between how one sees oneself and how others see one. This happens when one is a very open leader who has worked with a stable group for some time. A common outcome is a difference between how one sees yourself and how others see one. There may be things important to one that others are unaware of. There may also be values one demonstrates that other people see but one is not aware of.

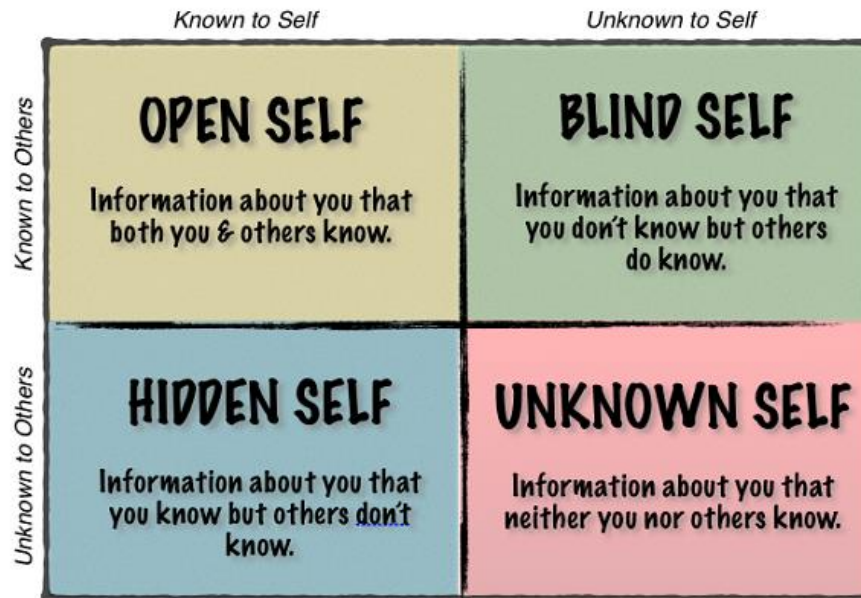
The Johari window helps create this awareness. With this knowledge, one can work to increase one's open area. Where how one sees oneself aligns with how others perceive one. This is done by discussing the results with the group and seeking greater understanding.

4. The four quadrants of the Johari window

This model is also known as **“feedback/disclosure model of self-awareness”** or **“the information processing tool.”** The model suggests two things - first, trust can be acquired by sharing information about oneself to others; and second, learning about the self from others' feedback. The model depicts a window with four panes through which communication flows as we give and receive information about ourselves to others.

In this model, the window represents *“information” such as feelings, experiences, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivations etc within or about a person in*

relation to four perspectives. In the diagram 'self' refers to oneself, in other words, the person who is under study. 'Others' refers to other people. The four perspectives are called regions or quadrants or areas. Each of the regions represents information known or unknown to the individual and known or unknown to the others.



The premise behind the window is that there are certain things which we know, and things we do not know about ourselves. Similarly, there are certain things others know and do not know. Thus, at any given point of time in life, we may see our total being as we understand it and as others know about it in a true sense through this 4-paned Johari window. In the diagram, all panes look equal but in reality that is not the case. The openness of each pane will vary depending on one's own personal level of:

- How well one knows oneself?
- How much one shares about oneself with others?
- How well others know one?

Johari Window – the Four Regions

- What is known by the person about him/her self and is also known by others comes in **open area, open self, free area, free self, or the arena**
- What is unknown to the person about him/her self but which others know comes in **blind area, blind self, or blindspot**
- What the person knows about him/her self that others do not know comes in **hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, avoided self or 'facade'**
- What is unknown by the person about him/her self and is also unknown by others comes in **unknown area or unknown self**

5. How does the Johari Window Work?

a) The Open Area:

When using the Johari Window in organizational teams, the goal should be to develop the Open area as much as possible for each team member. When we work in this area, we are operating in our most productive and effective space individually and as a group. Working in this area results in open, honest, & transparent communication, and minimizes miscommunication, mistrust, & confusion.

New team members often have smaller open areas than established team members. They need time to learn about others, and to share information about themselves. The Johari Window can serve as an important instrument in establishing a culture of open communication. Encouraging continuous development of the 'open area' or 'open self' for everyone by making it safe for others to share information is an essential aspect of effective leadership.

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. This process is known as '**feedback solicitation**'. Other group members can help a team member expand their open area by offering feedback, though sensitively. 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.

Managers and team leaders can play an important role in **facilitating feedback and encouraging disclosures** among group members and indirectly giving feedback to individuals about their own blind areas. 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' or 'open self'** for everyone is a simple yet fundamental aspect of effective leadership.

b) The Blind Area

The Blind area represents information that is known about a person to others, but is not known to the person himself/herself. This is known as their “blind spot.” Everyone has blind spots. By **soliciting feedback**, and by being open to feedback by others, we become more aware of how others perceive us, and we shrink our blind spots and increase our open area. This leads to stronger communication and trust.

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, or issues in which one is deluded. A blind area could also include issues that others are deliberately withholding from a person. This relates to the difficulty one experiences when being "kept in the dark".

Managers should promote a climate of non-judgemental 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.

c) The Hidden Area

The Hidden area represents information that person intentionally hides from others. The hidden area could also include sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas, manipulative intentions, secrets - anything that a person knows but does not reveal,

for whatever reason. As a person's trust grows, they will increasingly **disclose** greater information, thereby closing this window and enlarging the Open window. By making disclosures about how we feel and other information about ourselves we reduce the hidden area and increase the open area, which enables better understanding, cooperation, trust, team-working effectiveness and productivity and 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 members' preparedness to disclose their hidden selves. Most people fear judgement or vulnerability and therefore hold back hidden information and feelings, etc 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.

d) The Unknown Area

The Unknown area represents information, feelings, latent abilities, aptitudes, experiences etc, that are unknown to the person him/herself and unknown to others in the group. 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 (the first example is particularly relevant and common, especially in typical organizations and teams):

- An ability that is under-estimated or un-tried through lack of opportunity, encouragement, confidence or training
- A natural ability or aptitude that a person does not realise they possess
- A fear or aversion that a person does not know they have
- An unknown illness
- Repressed or subconscious feelings
- Conditioned behaviour or attitudes from childhood

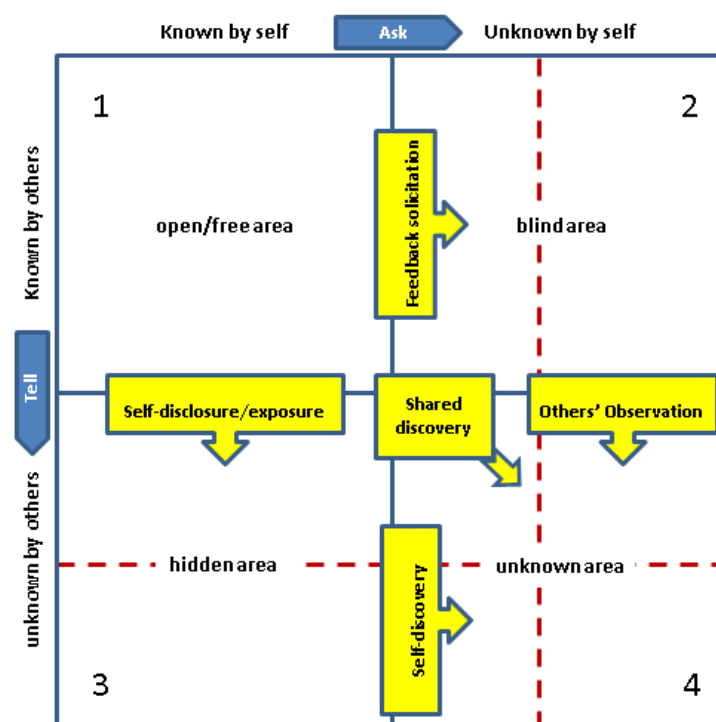
There are several processes by which this information and knowledge can be uncovered, e.g. self-discovery or observation by others, or in certain situations through, collective or mutual discovery (e.g. experienced during out-bound exercises or other intensive group projects). Organizations that promote cultures

of self-discovery and learning create opportunities for employees to close this window as they develop greater self-awareness. Creating a culture, climate and expectation for self-discovery helps people to fulfil more of their potential and thereby to achieve more, and to contribute more to organisational performance.

6. Practical Implementation

As discussed, the balance between the four quadrants can change. One might want to tell someone an aspect of one's life that one had previously kept hidden. For example, maybe one is not comfortable contributing ideas in large groups. This would increase one's open area and decrease one's hidden area. It is also possible to increase one's open area, by asking for feedback from people. When feedback is given honestly, it can reduce the size of one's blind area (e.g. the annoying habit of interrupting people before they have finished making their point.. Alternatively, people always want to talk to one because one is a good listener). Sometimes, one doesn't realise these aspects of one's character until it is pointed out. By working with others, it is possible for one to discover aspects that no one may never have appreciated before.

Johari Window model



From a practical point of view in implementing the Johari window, one needs to look at two steps:

Step one:

The place to start in the Johari window is in the open area. One must make notes about oneself. What are the strengths and the weaknesses? What is one comfortable with and willing to share with others? One must try and be honest and clear about what one knows about oneself already.

Step two:

Involving other people and asking for feedback about oneself. One must be prepared to consider the feedback seriously. That doesn't mean that one has to do everything that's suggested, but one should at least listen and think about it. The person who provided feedback must be duly acknowledged for making the effort. Depending on how confident one is, one might prefer to do this as either a group exercise or on a one-to-one basis. One must remember that giving effective feedback is a skill and some people may be better at it than others. When receiving feedback, it is advisable to be respectful, to listen and reflect on what has been said. One may want to explore the feedback points further, which can lead to greater self-discovery.

There are three common outcomes from the Johari Window exercise:

- **People don't know who one really are** - This happens when the hidden area is very big.
- **One don't know who one is** - This happens when the blind spot and hidden areas are large.
- **One's behaviours don't match how would prefer to be perceived-** This is another outcome when one's blindspot area is large.

7. Limitations of Johari Window

The Johari window does have its drawbacks:

- Some things are perhaps better not communicated with others.

- People may pass on the information they received further than one might desire, or use it in a negative way.
- Some people or cultures have a very open and accepting approach to feedback and some do not. People can take personal feedback offensively. So it's important when facilitating, to exercise caution and start gradually.

8. Conclusion:

Johari window is a very potent model, and as with other powerful ideas, simply helping people to understand it is the most effective way to optimise the value to people. Learning the Johari model can help one become a better communicator with a much higher level of self-awareness and help one enjoy greater self-discovery and develop strong teams in organizations by building culture of trust, safety, and transparency. This is also a useful tool in training setting as group dynamics and group development are hugely influenced by how open or closed people in the group are.

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