

The Johari Window

Building Self-Awareness and Trust

Have you ever been part of a team whose members were all open and honest with one another?

If so, then chances are you worked extremely effectively together. You and your colleagues likely knew everyone's strengths and weaknesses and enjoyed high levels of trust. Such a positive working environment probably helped to create a top-performing, tight-knit unit.

Teams rely on a combination of self-awareness and trust to run like a finely tuned machine. But how do you build those qualities?

In this article, we look at how you and your team members can use the Johari Window to develop self-awareness, trust and communication, and so grow as people and as colleagues.

What Is the Johari Window?

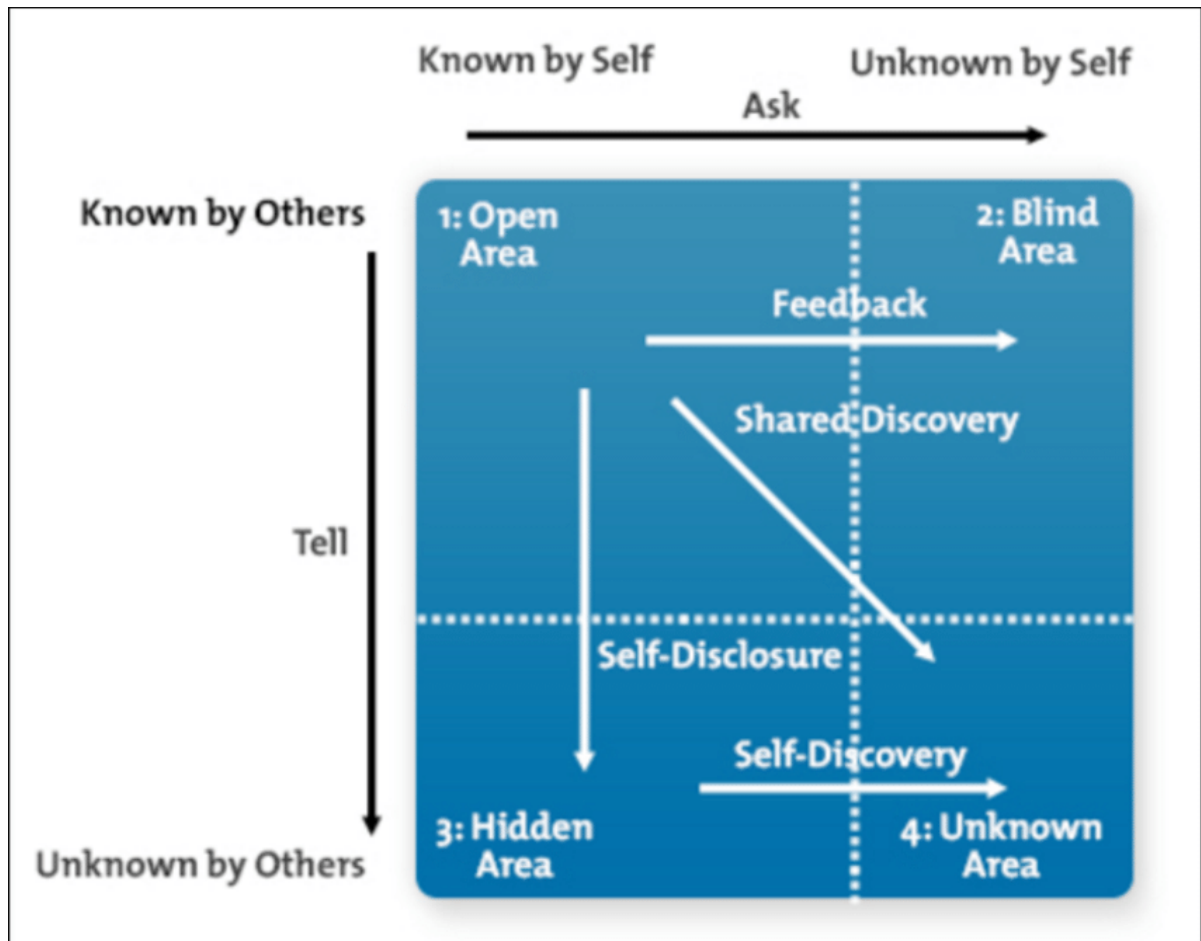
The Johari Window may sound rather exotic, but the title is simply a combination of the names of psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who created the model in 1955.

The model provides a simple visual reference for examining your personality, and for improving understanding between individuals. Most people use it to develop self-awareness.

There are two key ideas behind the tool:

1. You can build trust with others by disclosing information about yourself.
2. With the help of feedback from other people, you can learn about yourself and deal with personal issues.

The Johari Window may look complicated (see figure 1, below), but it is actually easy to use and understand. It has four panes, called "quadrants." Each quadrant contains information about your self-awareness and how others see you.



1. Open Area (Quadrant 1)

The Open Area represents the things that you know about yourself and that others know about you. This includes your behavior, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and "public" history.

The ideal Johari Window (see figure 2, below) has a large Open Area. This is because, in general, the more that people know about themselves and one another, the more productive, cooperative and trusting they'll be when working together.

Figure 2: An Ideal Johari Window



A large Open Area shows that you're aware of your abilities, feelings and behaviors, and that the people around you understand you well.

Small Open Areas can be a sign that someone is young, or new to his job, because he hasn't shared much information about himself or may not be very self-aware. But it can also reflect someone who is an introvert.

, uncommunicative or difficult to work with.

2. Blind Area (Quadrant 2)

The Blind Area represents things about yourself that you aren't aware of, but that others know about you. For example, you might not realize that you're a great listener until someone points it out to you.

It can also reveal deeper issues, such as feelings of incompetence or anger that you haven't faced up to, but that others sense in you.

A small Blind Area indicates that you're aware of how your behavior affects other people, whereas a large Blind Area suggests that you may be naive or even in denial about it. A large Blind Area could also mean that your colleagues are keeping what they know about you to themselves.

No one works at their best when they're "in the dark," so it's important to reduce the size of your Blind Area.

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3. Hidden Area (Quadrant 3)

The Hidden Area represents things that you know about yourself, but that you keep hidden from other people.

You don't need to share all of your private thoughts and feelings with work colleagues. Naturally, you wouldn't want to reveal anything that would make you feel embarrassed or vulnerable. Withholding information is perfectly reasonable if it has no bearing on your work.

However, hiding information about yourself that is related to your work or your performance could lead to co-workers having less trust in you. So, if your Johari Window has a large Hidden Area, you could try to be more open with them. Our article, [Self-Disclosure](#)

, can help you to do this.

4. Unknown Area (Quadrant 4)

The Unknown Area represents things that are unknown to you and by others. For example, you may have some dazzling untapped abilities that neither you nor anyone else knows about.

A large Unknown Area may just be a sign of youth or inexperience, but it can also mean that you need to work hard on discovering and releasing new information about yourself.

Note:

The quadrants can change size over time – and, because they are interdependent, changing the size of one quadrant will also change the size of the others. For example, telling your team about an aspect of your life that you'd always kept hidden would decrease your Hidden Area and increase your Open Area.

Using the Johari Window

Your ultimate goal in using the Johari Window is to enlarge your Open Area. Here's how to do it.

1. Identify Your Personal Characteristics

Look at the list of characteristics in Figure 3, below. Then, reflect on your inner self and choose the words that you think best describe you.

Figure 3: The 55 Adjectives of the Johari Window

able	accepting	adaptable	bold	brave	calm	caring
cheerful	clever	complex	confident	dependable	dignified	energetic
extroverted	friendly	giving	happy	helpful	idealistic	independent
ingenious	intelligent	introverted	kind	knowledgeable	logical	loving
mature	modest	nervous	observant	organized	patient	powerful
proud	quiet	reflective	relaxed	religious	responsive	searching
self-assertive	self-conscious	sensible	sentimental	shy	silly	spontaneous
sympathetic	tense	trustworthy	warm	wise	witty	

Next, ask one or more of your colleagues to choose the adjectives that they feel best describe you.

Then, draw a Johari Window diagram, and fill in the quadrants as follows:

- Open Area: write the adjectives that both you and your colleagues chose.
- Hidden Area: write the adjectives that only you chose.
- Blind Area: write the adjectives that only your colleagues chose.
- Unknown Area: write the adjectives that were not chosen by any of you, but that you are prompted to consider as your self-awareness increases.

Note:

The results that you get from this exercise will differ depending on who else you involve. For example, if you work with multiple teams, one group might see you as dynamic, but the other might think you're distant.

2. Define Your Goal

Look at the filled-in Johari Window, and think about how you can increase your Open Area and reduce the other quadrants. For example, if you tend to be secretive, you may want to reduce the size of your Hidden Area. Or, if you're surprised by what your colleagues think about you, you might want to minimize your Blind Area.

3. Open Up and Ask For Feedback.

To minimize your Hidden and Unknown areas, you need to reveal more about yourself. Self-disclosure

is a give-and-take process of sharing information with other people. The more that you share your thoughts, feelings and opinions, the more your Open Area expands vertically and shrinks your Hidden Area, and the more people will likely trust you.

To reduce the size of your Blind or Unknown areas, you need to improve your self-awareness by seeking and accepting feedback.

This can be daunting, but finding out new things about yourself can also be empowering, and fun! When people provide feedback about you, and you are receptive to it, your Open Area expands horizontally and your Blind Area gets smaller.

If the size of your Unknown Area is a problem, look for ways to break out of your comfort zone.

. Taking on new challenges, testing your limits, and being open to new experiences can help you – and your colleagues – to learn more about your skills and abilities.

Key Points

Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham developed the Johari Window in 1955. It's a simple but powerful visual tool for developing self-awareness, and for building trust and better workplace relationships.

It is divided into four quadrants: Open Area, Blind Area, Hidden Area, and Unknown Area. These represent what a person knows about herself, and what others know about her.

The Johari Window shows how self-disclosure and feedback can help you to grow, both personally and professionally. It demonstrates the importance of open communication and its effect on group trust.

Your Open Area expands vertically with self-disclosure, and horizontally with feedback from other people. By encouraging healthy self-disclosure and sensitive feedback, you can build a stronger and more effective team.

Reference: The Mindtools.Com