

Disclosure and Feedback—Johari Window

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How do relationships get healthy? One party discloses a little information about him/herself, which causes the other to feel comfortable sharing information, too. As each individual listens to information provided by the other, each feels increasingly more comfortable sharing themselves and their insights and observations.

As a leader, do you realize that your peers and those under your authority know some things about you that you don't know? Is it possible that if they shared that awareness with you, you might be more effective?

Back in 1955, a couple of psychologists named Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham devised a simple model to describe what happens when open dialogue exists--and how to make it even better!

Hey, it's the fiftieth anniversary of the "Johari Window"! For lack of a more descriptive name, that's what Joe and Harry decided to call the four quadrants shown here.

	I Know About Me	I Don't Know About Me
Others Know About Me	Public Area ("Open" Area)	Blind Area
Others Don't Know About Me	Hidden Area ("Façade" Area)	Unknown Area

Public or "Open" Area--That part of your conscious self (values, attitudes, motivation, behaviors, habits, prejudices, tendencies, perspective, etc.) of which you are aware, and which is also known to others.

Hidden or "Façade" Area--That part of you that you've not shared with others because of fear, pride, newness in the relationship, or even oversight. This area can be reduced (and the public area expanded) to the degree that you are willing to disclose information about who you are and how you "see" the world.

Blind Area--That part of you that others observe and experience but is unknown to you--or that you imagine being quite different from what others perceive. You can learn about these characteristics to the degree you are willing to listen to information others choose to share with you.

Unknown Area--We are amazingly complex beings. We never understand all there is to know about ourselves. By reflecting, alone and with others, you can uncover some of the insights that had been unavailable to you and to those who work with you. For many people, this may be their largest quadrant!

So, what can this model do for you as a leader?

When you work together with another person on a common objective, it is generally beneficial that you understand and trust each other. This occurs easiest when each is willing to self-disclose. Collaborative relationships, then, can be characterized as a pair of dynamic Johari windows, operating to move information from the hidden, blind, and unknown areas into the open area.

As the leader, you usually have a greater influence on how the relationship develops. If you are willing to share information about yourself, usually the other person will reciprocate. To be effective, however, you must actively listen, showing genuine interest in the other person's stories and biographical tales.

As volunteered information flows more easily, you can request feedback from the other individual. If you genuinely acknowledge the earliest offerings, additional and more insightful information is likely to follow.

Leaders who genuinely desire to serve those under their authority establish an environment in which feedback is actively solicited and new information about each party is freely shared. This atmosphere of disclosure and feedback builds trust quickly, a critical component of healthy relationships! It's why "Management by Wandering Around," a concept, when executed well, can be so effective! (For more information on MBWA, see *In Search of Excellence*, 1982, by Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman.)