

Disclosure and Feedback—Johari Window

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How do relationships get healthy? Each party discloses a little information about themselves, which causes others to feel comfortable to share information, too. Each individual listens to information provided by others, and as the relationship grows, we feel more comfortable sharing our observations with each other.

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 guys 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"! That's what Joe and Harry decided to call the simple quadrants shown below.

	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, etc.) of which you are aware and which is also known to others.

Hidden (or "Façade") Area—That part that you choose not to share with others because of fear, pride, 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.

Blind Area—That part of you that others can see, but is unknown to you—or you imagine being very different from what others perceive. You can learn about these characteristics to the degree you are willing to listen to information others decide 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.

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 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 greater influence in 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 accept 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 very critical component of healthy relationships! It's why "Management by Wandering Around," executed well, can be so effective!