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Johari Window

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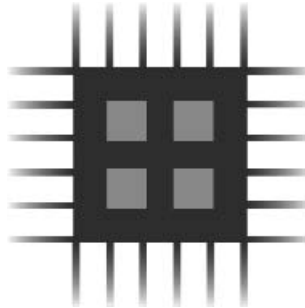
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PERSONAL AWARENESS AND STYLE FRAMEWORKS



What are my unique strengths, interests, orientation, and values? How can I be more effective in my life?

Understanding and managing oneself is a core competency that touches every aspect of personal effectiveness. We are all somewhat different in style and preferences. As we learn more about our own makeup, we are able to make better sense of experiences and wiser personal decisions. Like petals of a flower, each framework reveals another aspect of our nature. An important part of the personal journey is deciding which of these aspects to explore.

This section contains many of the oldest and best-tested frameworks available. The Johari Window provides a powerful lens into how others perceive us, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is probably the most widely applied personality model, and the Learning Styles Inventory is the entry point for understanding how we prefer to learn.



Johari Window

Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham

Oh would some Power the giftie give us
To see ourselves as others see us!
It would from many a blunder free us,
and foolish notion.

—Robert Burns³

The The Johari Window (Figure 8.2) was developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham at the University of California and was first presented to a group at the Western Training Laboratory in 1955. Since then, it has been incorporated into hundreds of educational and awareness-training curricula and

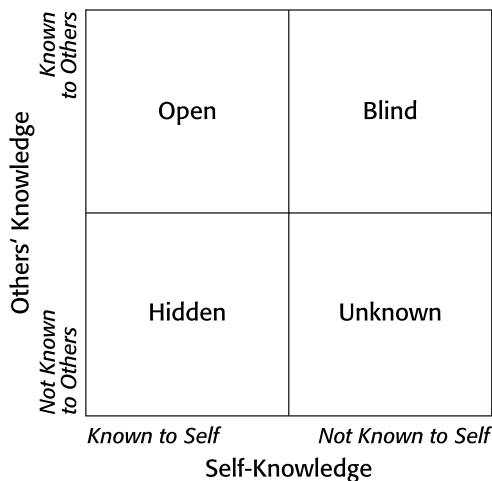


Figure 8.2. Johari Window

has been adapted to address unique industry, topic, and community interests. Based on principles of feedback and learning, individuals and groups use the framework to increase levels of openness and self-understanding. It assumes that more self-knowledge is preferable, as is more openness. The framework is used to sensitize one to both of these areas and to expand them.

The Two Dimensions and Their Extremes. The Johari Window is structured in the reflexive form, looking at the same subject matter, oneself, from two perspectives:

Others' Knowledge: Known to Others versus Not Known to Others. As you participate in activities with others in the world, they learn about you and form impressions based on what you communicate and reveal, as well as from their observations of you.

Self-Knowledge: Known to Self versus Not Known to Self. There are things about ourselves that we know and understand fully and accurately. You may be funny or a good singer and know these to be true about you. Equally, for most of us, there are qualities about which we are not aware. You may have a good singing voice and truly not realize it. The x-axis divides self-knowledge into these two categories.

The Four Quadrants. Through the exchange of feedback, we are capable of expanding our self-knowledge and modifying behaviors that may annoy others and undermine our success in the world. A 2001 study by Development Dimen-

sions International of five thousand professionals found that an amazing 69 percent of leaders behave in ways that actively derail their careers.⁴ Interestingly, 16 percent of leaders were described as unknown to their colleagues. It's hard to trust someone you don't really know. Working to alter your Johari Window helps to change this.

Unlike most other 2×2 frameworks, the quadrants are not fixed and equal in size. Think of them as panes in a window, with some more transparent than others. The lines separating the boxes are like shades that can be pulled more or less open. When an aspect of oneself is revealed and shared through the feedback process, one has an opportunity to expand the window of self-understanding. By choosing to share more with others, we are better understood and seen as more authentic. The ideal Johari configuration is uneven, with the public, shared zone larger than the rest:

- Upper left: Open (the Public Arena). This is the self that is well known to both you and others. People tend to trust others who are open to sharing their thoughts candidly and receiving feedback. These people tend to learn more from their experiences and are more effective leaders and influencers. Self-disclosure, however, can feel risky and requires confidence and comfort with oneself. Feedback can also be a scary proposition and is most effective when one seeks it out and when the conditions are sufficiently psychologically safe.
- Lower left: Hidden (the Facade). This box includes things we know or believe but choose not to share with others. We may have a hidden agenda or feel embarrassed about an experience. Often the decision to hide is made automatically, without consciously thinking through the possible consequences. The trouble with hiding behind a facade is that it consumes a lot of energy to hide what is true. And others sense they are not seeing the whole picture when actions and motivations don't line up, eroding trust. Things often turn worse when the reality is revealed. Remember that two recent U.S. presidents, Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton, tried to suppress facts, only to have them blow up in their faces.⁵
- Lower right: Unknown. Within each of us reside talents, opinions, fears, and motivations that are unknown to our self and others. Some of this material lies in our subconscious, surfacing in reaction to triggering events. Blind spots can be dangerous, and it is preferable to be familiar with these parts of ourselves. There are various ways to accomplish this, all of which involve becoming more self-reflective. The Unknown category is problematic when it is permitted to grow and dominate.
- Upper right: Blind. There are aspects about us that others see more clearly than we do. Friends, bosses, and our kids all hold valuable knowledge that can help to complete our sense of who we are. This box represents a major learning opportunity waiting to be tapped. Openness and encouragement of others

are needed. People are uncomfortable with giving feedback they worry may be hurtful or that is unwanted. By working with the Johari Window, we can slowly reverse the self-protective mechanisms that keep the light out.

Example: When Being Right Isn't Enough. Geoffrey had worked hard to earn the job and reputation he now enjoyed. He had joined the company as a young engineering graduate twelve years ago. Progressing from analyst to designer and then shift team leader over a seven-year period had felt natural and easy. Somewhere around that time, his advancement stopped, and try as he did, nothing seemed to help his cause. He believed he was effective and respected, perhaps even a little feared, for his laser-like analytic prowess. His performance reviews were consistently positive, if a little vague. He had heard that company management liked it when staff signed up for effectiveness training provided by the in-house professional development group. Geoffrey registered, not expecting much but hopeful this might at least send a message he was serious about his career. If things didn't improve soon, he would start to consider outside opportunities.

Prior to arriving at the session, all attendees were asked to complete a two-page Johari Window questionnaire (Figure 8.3). The session began with reviewing the results. Then the group of twenty participants engaged in a simulation exercise involving building some equipment together using plastic blocks. Geoffrey did this, feeling pretty good about how it went until the group ignored one of his suggestions about halfway through the game. He had been right, and if only they had followed his suggestion, the team would have performed more successfully.

The next thing they did was to fill in the same Johari Window rating form for each other (Figure 8.4) that they had completed prior to the course for themselves. The feedback to Geoffrey was clear and devastating. It didn't matter that Geoffrey had been right about the solution. The group saw him as closed and manipulative. Not only did his team members not appreciate his suggestions, they actively resented him.

Disappointed with the feedback, Geoffrey was asked if the views of the other participants surprised him. He thought about that for a moment. Then the facilitator asked him what had motivated his behavior. Finally, she asked what insights he had about the other members of his team. What could he share with them that would help them to be more effective team members in future? He realized that aside from their rejection of his idea, he had not really observed anything of note. This was stunning to him. He prized himself on his ability to observe and analyze, and here he had noticed nothing worth telling.

He shared all these thoughts, feeling at first anger, then embarrassment, and finally relief. By the end of the day, he knew he was beginning to understand why he was not being considered for promotion in the company. More important, he was beginning to see how guarded and blind his ambition had made

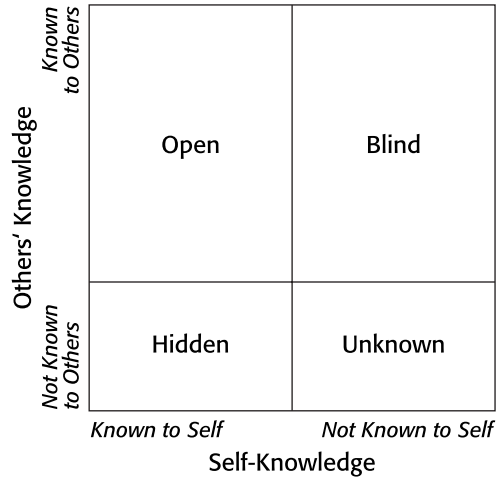


Figure 8.3. Geoffrey's Self-Assessment

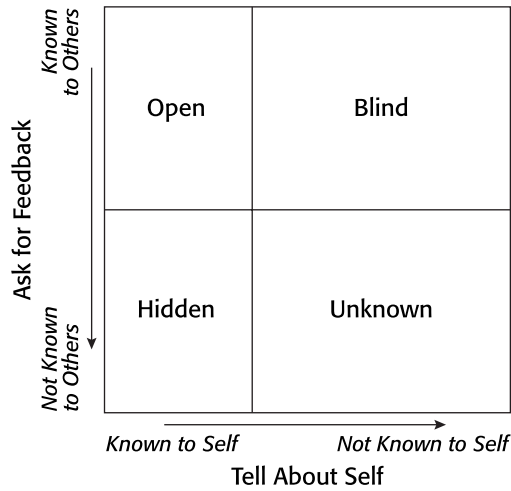


Figure 8.4. Geoffrey's Team's Feedback

him over the years, and he questioned whether he wanted to continue to live in this way. On days 2 and 3, Geoffrey started a journey of self-discovery that had been long overdue.

Context. The Johari Window is used by training groups, teams, and individuals to sensitize themselves to issues of self-knowledge, impact on others, and personal and group effectiveness. This is a highly adaptive tool and can be applied lightly as a context for other processes, or as a framework around which to structure activities.

Method. The Johari Window provides a framework for looking at interactions and ourselves differently. Typically, the process begins with learning about the model itself. This is followed with generating data about ourselves and others. Finally, perceptions are exchanged as individuals give and receive feedback. Use of the window can quickly take you into sensitive areas of personal feelings, fears, and perceptions, so it is important that application is led by experienced practitioners in human development. The Johari Window has been applied in countless team-building sessions around the world and is frequently used in educational and therapeutic contexts:

- Step 1: Educate. To benefit from the Johari Window framework requires a basic understanding of the core ideas, the dimensions, and the quadrants. This education is usually accomplished through lecture and reading. There are many sources to choose from, and some of the best are available for free on the Web. Depending on the depth of understanding needed and the purpose, you can select a short overview piece from Augsburg College (<http://www.augsburg.edu/education/edc210/JoHari.html>) or a more in-depth treatment by David M. Boje (http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/503/JoHari_window.htm).

- Step 2: Self-assess. As a prelude to receiving feedback from others, it is often helpful to conduct some reflective self-assessment. What would others say about me? How open am I? Would it be better if I were more open? The two approaches to achieving this are to complete a brief self-scoring survey, or to draw the window, adjusting the size of the four quadrants to reflect how you see yourself.

- Step 3: Give and receive feedback. The transformative impact of the Johari Window is the result of the exchange of meaningful feedback. Feedback is a surprisingly powerful force and needs to be treated with care and respect. Safe conditions for all are necessary. Even then, the process will contain risk for participants. At times, it is helpful to stop and discuss the feedback process itself as people grow more comfortable in the roles of both giver and receiver. Beware of a tendency to become defensive in receiving or protective in giving feedback. Both are natural responses, but neither is particularly helpful. Feedback received should be about areas the receiver is willing to pursue. It is often best for the

recipient not to speak at all while receiving feedback, so he or she neither deflects nor misses important information. Feedback given should be honest, descriptive, and nonjudgmental. Sharing the feeling level impact of others' actions is particularly powerful and helpful.

- Step 4: Plan and experiment. It is possible to improve one's window configuration through active exploration in a discussion or group experience. To lock in gains, however, it is important to change some of our behaviors in the world. The goal is to be both more open and to learn from others on an ongoing basis. This step consists of making some specific commitments to being different that will maintain and increase progress.

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Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Isabel Briggs Myers and Katherine Briggs

The MBTI [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator] is primarily concerned with the valuable differences in people that result from where they like to focus their attention, the way they like to take in information, the way they like to decide, and the kind of lifestyle they adopt.

—Isabel Briggs Myers⁶

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is the most widely used personality test in the world, completed by approximately 2 million people each year. Developed by the mother-daughter team of Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers, the work is based on Carl Jung's personality theory described in his 1921 book, *Psychological Types*. Two basic cognitive functions define differences between humans: how we take in information and how we make decisions. Jung also looked at differences in how we get and expend energy. The survey produces sixteen individual profiles based on four sets of preferences (Table 8.2).⁷

The four sets of preferences used by the MBTI are:

- Introversiion-Extraversiion (I, E): A focus on the inner world of ideas and reflection versus the outer, external world