Johari Window

Introduction

The **Johari window** is a technique that helps people better understand their relationship with themselves and others. It was created by psychologists Joseph Luft (1916–2014) and Harrington Ingham (1916–1995) in 1955, and is used primarily in self-help groups and corporate settings as a heuristic exercise. Luft and Ingham called their Johari Window model 'Johari' after combining their first names, Joe and Harrington.

Description

In the exercise, subjects pick a number of adjectives from a list, choosing ones they feel describe their own personality. The subject's peers then get the same list, and each picks an equal number of adjectives that describe the subject. These adjectives are then inserted into a two-by-two grid of four cells.

The philosopher Charles Handy calls this concept the *Johari House with four rooms.* Room one is the part of ourselves that we and others see. Room two contains aspects that others see but we are unaware of. Room three is the private space we know but hide from others. Room four is the unconscious part of us that neither ourselves nor others see.

The four quadrants

Open, or Arena
Adjectives that both the subject and peers select go in this cell (or *quadrant*) of the grid. These are traits that subject and peers perceive.

Hidden, or Façade
Adjectives selected by the subject, but not by any of their peers, go in this quadrant. These are things the peers are either unaware of, or that are untrue but for the subject's claim.

Blind Spot
Adjectives not selected by subjects, but only by their peers go here. These represent what others perceive but the subject does not.

Unknown
Adjectives that neither subject nor peers selected go here. They represent subject's behaviors or motives that no one participating recognizes—either because they do not apply or because of collective ignorance of these traits.

Some examples of unknown factors can be as follows:

- 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 doesn't realise they possess
- a fear or aversion that a person does not know they have
- an unknown illness
- repressed or subconscious feeling
- conditioned behaviour or attitudes from childhood

For example in an educational setting, a student's contact with a tutor, may help them understand how their experiences both in and outside of school can have an impact on their learning. This discovery about themself would reduce the size of their unknown area.

From a practical point of view in implementing the Johari window you need to look at two steps.

Step one:

The place to start in the Johari window is in the open area. Make some notes about yourself. Complete the Self Awareness Diagnostic. What are your strengths and your weaknesses? What are you comfortable with and willing to share with others? Try and be honest and clear about what you know about yourself already.

Step two:

Involve other people and ask for feedback about yourself. Be prepared to seriously consider it. That doesn't mean that you have to do everything that's suggested, but you should at least listen and think about it. Then give the person who provided the feedback some acknowledgement or thanks for making the effort. Depending on how confident you are you might prefer to do this as either a group exercise or on a one to one basis. Remember that giving effective feedback is a skill and some people may be better at it than others. When receiving feedback, be respectful, listen and reflect on what has been said. It may be on receiving feedback you may want to explore it further that can lead to discovery about yourself.

The Johari window as a tool does have its drawbacks

- Some things are perhaps better not communicated with others.
- People may pass on the information they received further than you 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.

There are many ways to use the Johari model in learning and development. It very much depends on what you want to achieve in your training or development activities? What are your intended outputs and how will you measure that they have been achieved? How can the Johari Window theory and principles are used to assist this.

Johari is a very elegant and potent model, and as with other powerful ideas, simply helping people to understand is the most effective way to optimise the value to people. When people really understand it in their own terms, it empowers them to use the thinking in their own way, and to incorporate the underlying principles into their future thinking and behaviour.

The Self Awareness Diagnostic is a great accompaniment to the Johari window model. It helps people to explore the qualities that make them who they are. The simple online questionnaire provides instant feedback to the participant that they can positively use in understanding their personal strengths and weaknesses, what belongs in their open space. It can also objectively help the participant to start to process some of those attributes that reside in their blind spot and can encourage discussion amongst the group without being confrontational or causing contention.

What is unique about the Self Awareness Diagnostic is it explores not only an individual's 'soft skills' and working style preferences but also how participants like to learn; their learning styles. In an education or business environment this can be a great enabler for a teacher or trainer to ensure all the members of the group are motivated and able to achieve their full potential.