

The Johari Window offers a way of looking at processes of communication, trust and risk taking between individuals and in teams.

How does it work? Team interactions can be seen as information passing between team members. When I put forward ideas or proposals in response to the comments of others I am increasing the size of the arena by revealing information previously unavailable to the group. If I choose to keep these reactions to myself - lets say to play it safe - I maintain a sort of façade. Disclosure is the process of me taking the risk to move information from the façade to the arena. Similarly, others may experience a reaction to my behaviour or comments but choose to remain silent which creates a blind spot. By making the reaction public however, information is put into the arena and is feedback for me. As I become aware of the impact I have on others I have the option to adjust my behaviour in response to the feedback.

In a team context you can look at disclosure and feedback as mini bargains that contribute to - or detract from - the creation of a climate of trust and confidence. The more I get what I consider to be a favourable reaction to my contributions the more I'll continue to contribute. Focusing attention on this dynamic in team interactions allows judgments to be made about the size of the arena in relation to the task at hand. We can talk partnership and win/win but do we have the willingness and the boldness to make it happen in practice? A degree of effort and risk is required.

A potential irritation with this model is that it can add weight to the tree hugging cliché of openness and honesty as a good thing regardless - so sharing biographical facts and talking about our feelings becomes the recipe for effective relationships without reference to, or coherence with, the achievement of results.

The Johari Window - originated by Joe Luft and Harry Ingham

