

The New Johari Window

#12. Quadrant I: The Original Johari Window

William Bergquist, Ph.D.

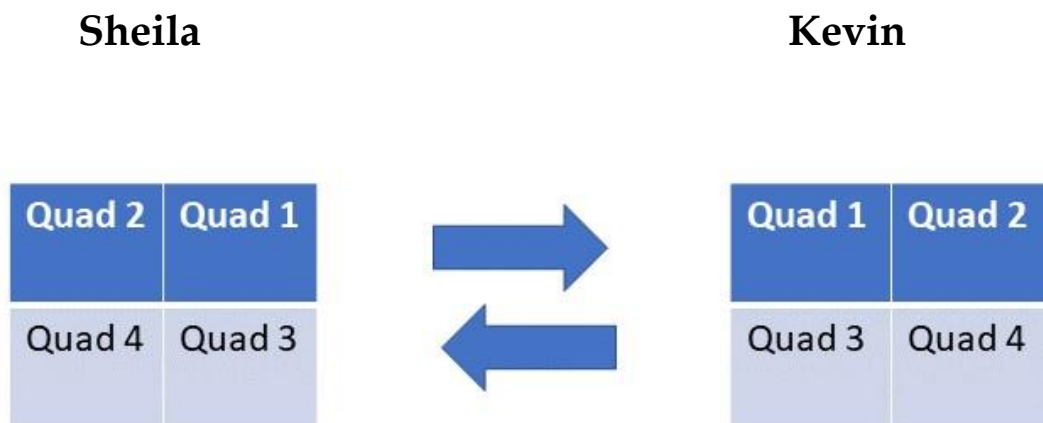
To make sense of Joe Luft's original concept of Quad One – in all of its subtlety and complexity – I will offer a hypothetical example of two people in interaction. We shall follow these two people through all four quadrants, so let's devote a few lines of prose to becoming acquainted with them. Let me first introduce you to Kevin. He is 45 years old, works in a high tech firm, and is a bit shy. Our second protagonist is Sheila. She is 40 years old, serves as Executive Director of a Human Service Agency, and is quite outgoing and even charismatic. Kevin serves on Sheila's Board of Directors as Treasurer of the Board.

Kevin has been on the Board for two years, but has rarely spoken up. He was recruited to the Board because of his "ease with numbers," and his seemingly "rational" and "systematic" approach to solving problems. Kevin's company is deeply committed to public service and has agreed to release Kevin to work two hours per week as the Board Treasurer. So, Kevin has been elected Treasurer by other Board members because he has time and an "accountant's mentality." However, Kevin has never actually done much accounting (his wife pays their bills) and doesn't know much about balance sheets or financial audits.

Sheila and Kevin are meeting alone for the first time. She wants to fill him in on what she would like her Board Treasurer to do, but also wants to determine if Kevin "really" knows much about finances and accounting. After all, he has rarely spoken up since joining the Board, so Sheila is unaware of what he does and does not know, and what he can and can not do. The position of Treasurer is critical to Sheila's agency. She has to work with a very tight budget and must always live with the prospect of reduced public funding for her agency.

Kevin feels that he was “railroaded” into the Treasurer position. The previous Treasurer retired from the Board, after serving in this position for many years (before Sheila assumed the position of Executive Director). No one else on the Board wanted to assume the position of Treasurer. There were “big shoes” to fill and Sheila had leaned heavily on the previous Treasurer for advice. There is one additional factor at play. Everyone on the board knows that Kevin is in a difficult position. The president of his high tech firm is one of Sheila’s closest friends and a friend of several other Board members. Kevin is very interested in doing a good job of working with Sheila and her Board, since this work could reflect favorably on his own career at the high tech firm. Kevin is certain that Sheila will let his president know how he is doing as Board Treasurer.

The stage is set for their meeting and interaction. They both have information to share with one another and both are willing to let certain aspects of their self be open to the other person’s view. We can diagram the interaction between Sheila and Kevin, using Joe Luft’s original model of dual windows interplaying with one another:



- 1 = Quadrant One: Public Self
- 2 = Quadrant Two: Blind Self
- 3 = Quadrant Three: Private Self
- 4 = Quadrant Four: Unknown Self

What are the things that Sheila and Kevin are willing to share (Quad One)? Sheila can talk about the role and responsibilities of the Board Treasurer position. Kevin can disclose the time he is available each week to work as Treasurer and can share his legitimate interest in doing a good job. Hopefully, to make Kevin feel more comfortable, Sheila can also reveal that she often “feels a bit uneasy” in working with “financial matters.”

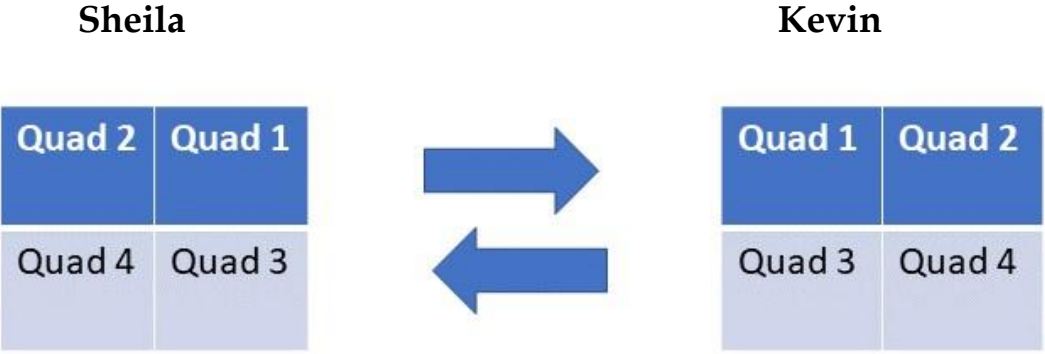
This is actually not “news” for Kevin. He already knew (his own Quad Three with regard to Sheila and part of Sheila’s Quad Two) that Sheila relied for many years on the financial expertise of her previous Treasurer and that Sheila’s considerable talents lay in other areas. What occurs, in fact, is that Kevin feels much less comfortable after she shares this information, given that he’s not sure he can do the job (this information resides in Kevin’s Quad Three along with the information – or assumptions – that Kevin already holds regarding Sheila’s attitudes about her own financial incompetence).

Kevin tells Sheila that he hopes he can be helpful to her (legitimate Quad One disclosure) and that he’s “confident” he can be of assistance to Sheila with regard to financial matters (a false Quad One statement). Sheila detects the hesitation in Kevin’s voice (leakage of Kevin’s Quad Three into his Quad One) and begins to wonder if she can trust his competency – though she does trust his intentions (enthusiastic interest in doing a good job). Sheila stores her tentative skepticism regarding Kevin’s financial competencies in her own third quadrant (hidden). Kevin is unaware of Sheila’s skepticism (Kevin’s Quad Two: Blind Self), though he does have a vague feeling of uneasiness regarding their interaction (some of Sheila’s skepticism is leaking out through her nonverbal expressions, just as some of Kevin’s self-doubt leaked out through his hesitant voice).

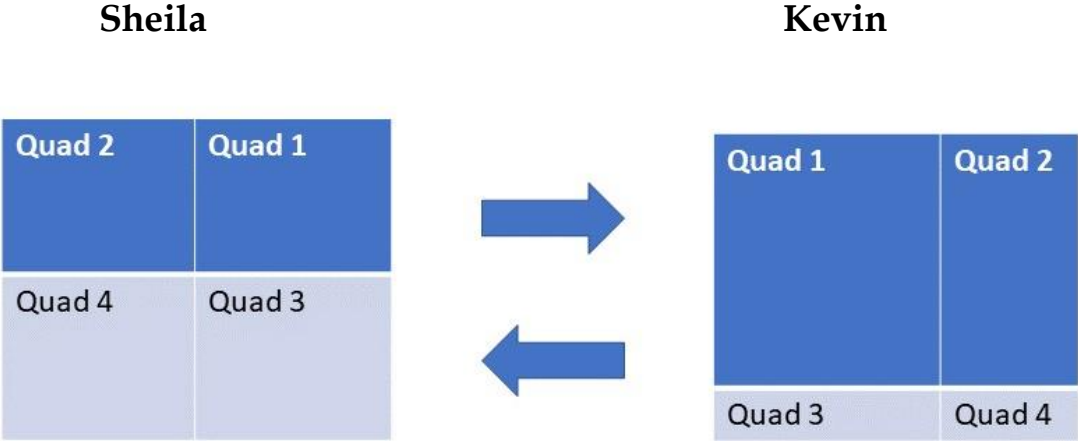
Potential benefit for both Sheila and Kevin (Quad Four in both of their windows) lie behind the interaction between these two people. With Sheila’s support, Kevin can learn to be a good Treasurer. Sheila can, in turn, gain some wanted assistance regarding financial matters. Sheila

may even learn more about finances herself in her attempt to assist Kevin – thus making her less dependent in the future on Board Treasurers (who apparently are not easy to recruit). For these potential outcomes to be realized, both Sheila and Kevin will eventually have to expand their public selves (Quad One) with regard to one another.

First, Kevin may want to disclose more about his limited financial background and his uneasiness regarding the position of Treasurer. In doing so, Kevin would be moving information from Quad Three to Quad One:



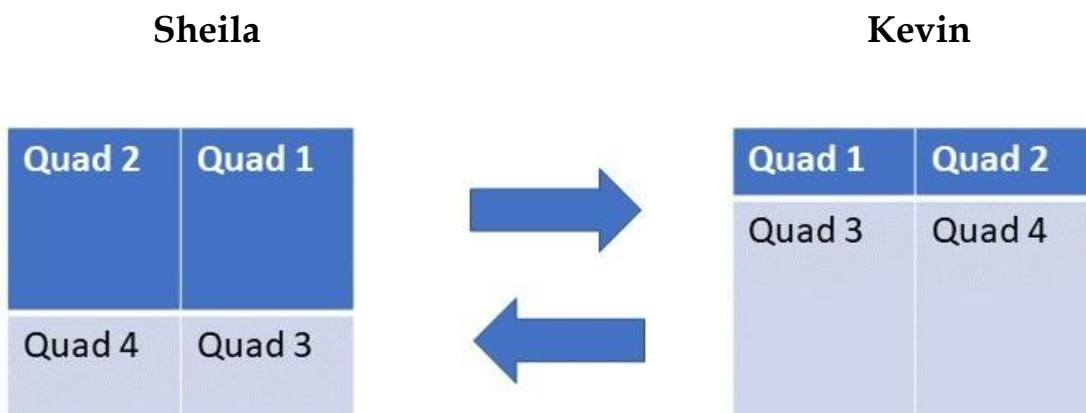
This would lead to the following shift



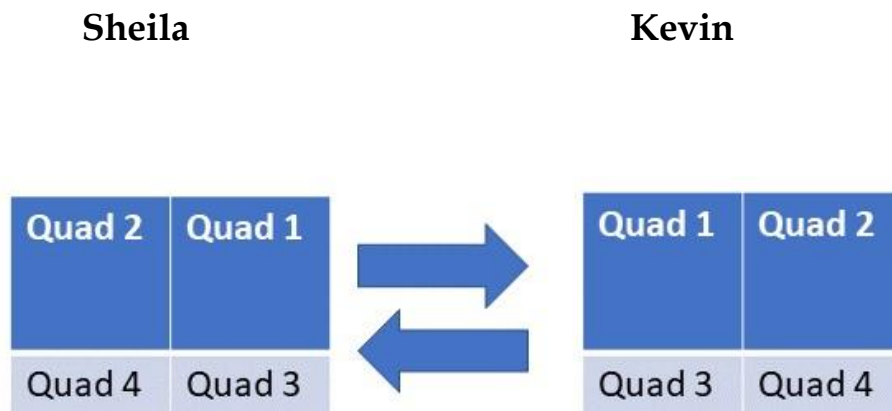
[Note: In my visual portrayal of Johari Windows throughout this book, I will be exaggerating changes in the size of panes. I realize that shifts in the “real” world are often much subtler; however, such subtlety can not easily be represented in these small graphic representations.]

Kevin’s Quad One would enlarge. If Sheila finds this disclosure to be acceptable (I will say more about this later), then she might either share some of her own concerns about Kevin’s competence (moving information from her Quad Three to Quad One) or share more about how she appreciates working with people who are candid about their skills (Sheila’s Quad Three information that is not specifically about Kevin). The first strategy could backfire, because Kevin’s Quad Two might not (and probably does not) contain information about Sheila’s suspicion regarding his competence (though, as I noted above, he might be at least partially aware of this suspicion, given Sheila’s nonverbal expressions).

Given this shock to his second quadrant, Kevin could begin to close up about his lack of experience or regroup by telling a half-truth about how his software expertise will enable him to quickly learn about financial matters (“since so much is now being done by computers”). Thus, Kevin’s Quad One gets smaller as Sheila’s Quad One gets larger (movement from Quad Three to Quad One), when this first strategy is engaged:



If Sheila engages a more appreciative strategy and suggests how much she admires Kevin's candor (move of Quad Three information to Quad One), then Kevin's Quad One might also expand:

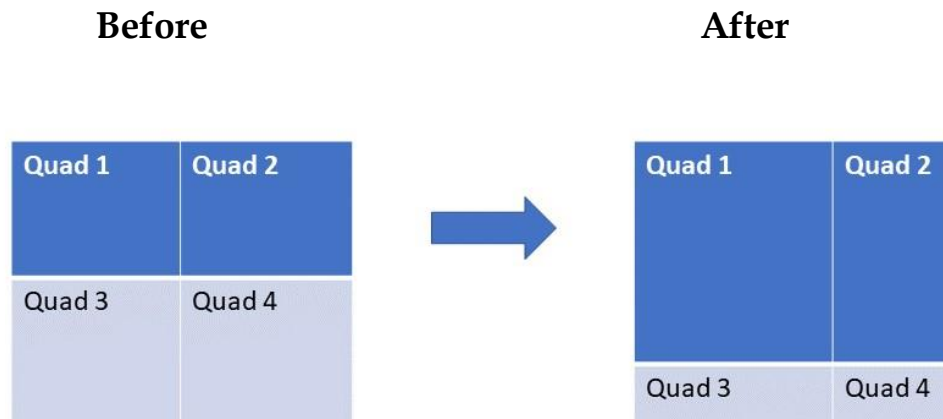


Kevin is more likely to share his concerns (and hopes) openly with Sheila. In this way, both Sheila's and Kevin's Quad One grow larger. They have created a more "open" relationship, with neither having to cut off disclosure of their Quad Three material – nor do either have to offer half-truths or full-blown lies.

Here is where the richness and complexity of Joe Luft's original model comes to play. Sheila and Kevin may have created a larger Quad One relationship as a result of Sheila's appreciative disclosure about her admiration regarding Kevin's candor (Quad Three to Quad One). However, what about Sheila's concerns regarding Kevin's financial competence (his Quad Two blindness regarding Sheila's skepticism)? If Sheila hasn't disclosed her concerns can this really be called an "open" relationship? Will there be a self-fulfilling prophecy (of which I will say much more about this later) in which Sheila's unacknowledged concerns about Kevin's competence will contribute to Kevin, in fact, being less competent in his role as Treasurer? Will there be an "invisible barrier" between Sheila and Kevin? He knows something is wrong (leakage from Sheila's third quadrant), but doesn't know what it is.

Joe Luft's original model is structured in a very dynamic manner, so that a shift in the size of one quadrant changes the size of one or more of the other three quadrants. When Quad One enlarges because of Quad Three disclosure, then Quad Two also enlarges:

Sheila's Window [In interaction with Kevin]



Thus, the original Johari model would predict that Sheila is more likely to be blind to some aspects of herself when she discloses (Quad Three) to Kevin. The movement is primarily from Quad Four (Unknown/Potential) to Quad Two (because of expansion of Quad One). This suggests that Sheila's appreciative disclosure impacts on Kevin's image of her – though she might not be aware of this impact (Sheila's Quad Two). Aspects of Kevin's perceptions of Sheila are "blind" to Sheila. Kevin may begin to more fully realize his potential to learn about financial management as a result of Sheila's appreciation (even without Sheila's full recognition that she has helped him realize this potential). This "opaque" strength (see Chapter Two – Window of Strength) that Sheila possesses (her ability to appreciate and encourage another person's potential) is not yet known by her (movement from Quad Four to Quad Two), but will become known (Quad Two to Quad One) if Kevin provides her with feedback regarding her impact on him.

Luft is ultimately optimistic in offering his highly interactive Johari Window. This optimism,

in turn, provokes some interesting questions. Are Quad Four potentials inevitably liberated with the expansion of Quad One? Does feedback inevitably diminish the size of Quad Two and increase the size of Quad One? Does disclosure inevitably diminish the size of Quad Three and increase the size of Quad One?

Luft also suggests that our Quad One will be larger in relation to some people and smaller in relation to other people. However, Luft believes that some of us tend to be relatively more open with most people than are the rest of us. He describes this as the “modal” degree of openness and suggests that this “modal” stance interacts with shifts that occur as a relationship matures:ⁱ

For each person, the open quadrant, Q1, varies in size within a definite range and around a modal area. For most occasions the modal area characterizes how open he is even though he may behave differently with different persons or with the same person at different times. Compare early and later states of friendship. Or note the large difference in a new group between early and later stages in the development of the group.

The “modal” size of one’s Quad One might be inherited or constructed in childhood. Luft suggests, in other cases, that certain experiences enlarge one’s openness to the world. He identifies these experiences as “true learning.” This very-American school perspective can be contrasted with “learning” that closes us off – which is more likely to be identified by disciples of the British School who label this “the process of de-skilling.” I will have more to say about this in Chapter Five (regarding Quad Three) when I consider the relationship between self-disclosure and insight.

So how would Luft suggest that we enlarge Quad One? What experiences and “true learning” lead to an expanded “modal” Quad One? I will examine this enlargement of Quad One from two perspectives. First, assuming a Continental school perspective, I suggest that enlargement relates to social conventions and to the pressure for each of us

to assume a “persona” or public mask that ultimately blocks authenticity and full expression of one’s true self in Quad One. I then turn to the dynamics that specifically operate in the interaction between two people with differing degrees of openness, as this interaction influences the expansion of Quad One for both parties in the interaction

ⁱLuft, Joseph. *Of Human Interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1969, pp. 15-16.