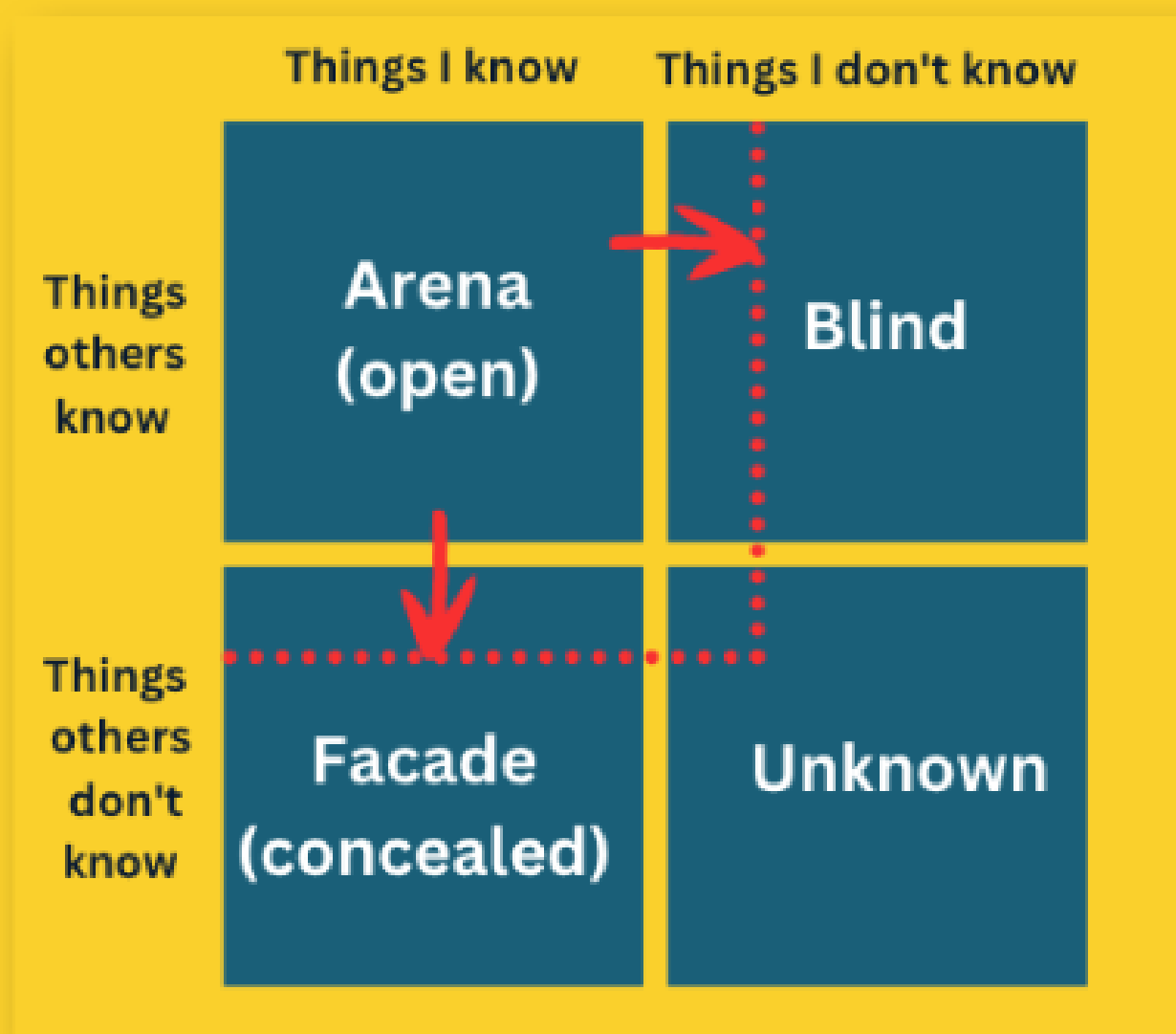




How to Use the Johari Window

...for improving communication, feedback, & closing the perception gap





*"I want you to tell me exactly
what you think of me ... even if
it costs you your job."*

- Manager, New Yorker Cartoon

The problem: WYDKYDK



- Researchers have consistently found **the most frequent cause of career derailment** was "*insensitivity to other people*".
- What makes this so hard? Not knowing "what you don't know you don't know" aka WYDKYDK
- This means:
 - you get misinterpreted
 - you have trouble building trust
 - you come across as inauthentic
 - you are ineffective at interpersonal dynamics

Why do we have WYDKYDK



When we humans communicate:

- We don't tell others what we actually think. They don't tell us how they actually think.

Why?

- We don't want to offend others. This keeps the social machine well-lubed and working, until you reach a point when this becomes a liability.

Additionally:

- Our judgements are subjective
- Emotions dominate, instead of reason/logic
- We have limited awareness of ourselves

It gets worse



- This is true at all career levels, not just executives.
- This problem gets worse as you go higher in the ranks, because the feedback becomes even less frequent and distorted.
- It essentially masks your problems until it blows up in your face one day.



- The solution is to proactively increase self-awareness and elicit more feedback that will help you get better at **interpersonal dynamics**.
- Enter a robust and field-proven but not as well-understood tool:
 - **"The Johari Window"**

The Johari Window



- Developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (Joe/Harry) it captures multiple aspects of the interplay of our socio-psychological selves in communication.
- You can use the tool to get better at:
 - Closing perception gaps
 - Improving trust and deepening relationships
 - Identifying blindspots and derailers
 - Improved feedback



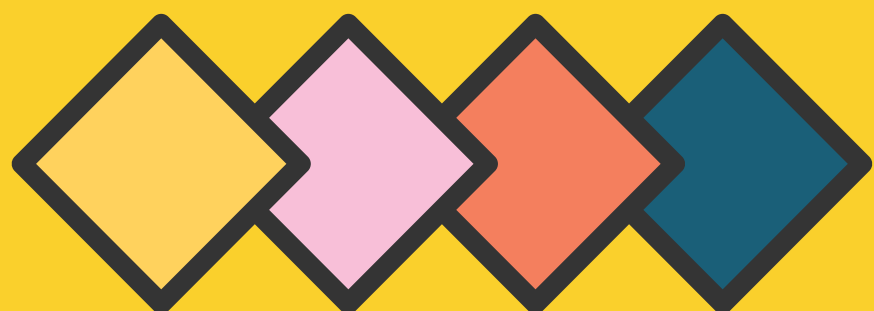
Before we jump in ... a request

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Window primary dimensions



- The Johari window captures our interactions along two primary dimensions:
 - **Self-Knowledge** (things that are known/not known to us, about ourselves)
 - **Others' Knowledge** (things that are known/not known to others, about us)
- The primary improvements that can be gained from the tool also lie along two dimensions:
 - **Increased feedback**
 - **Increased exposure & self-disclosure**

The 4 Panes/Quadrants



Taking these two primary dimensions, the window creates 4 panes or quadrants

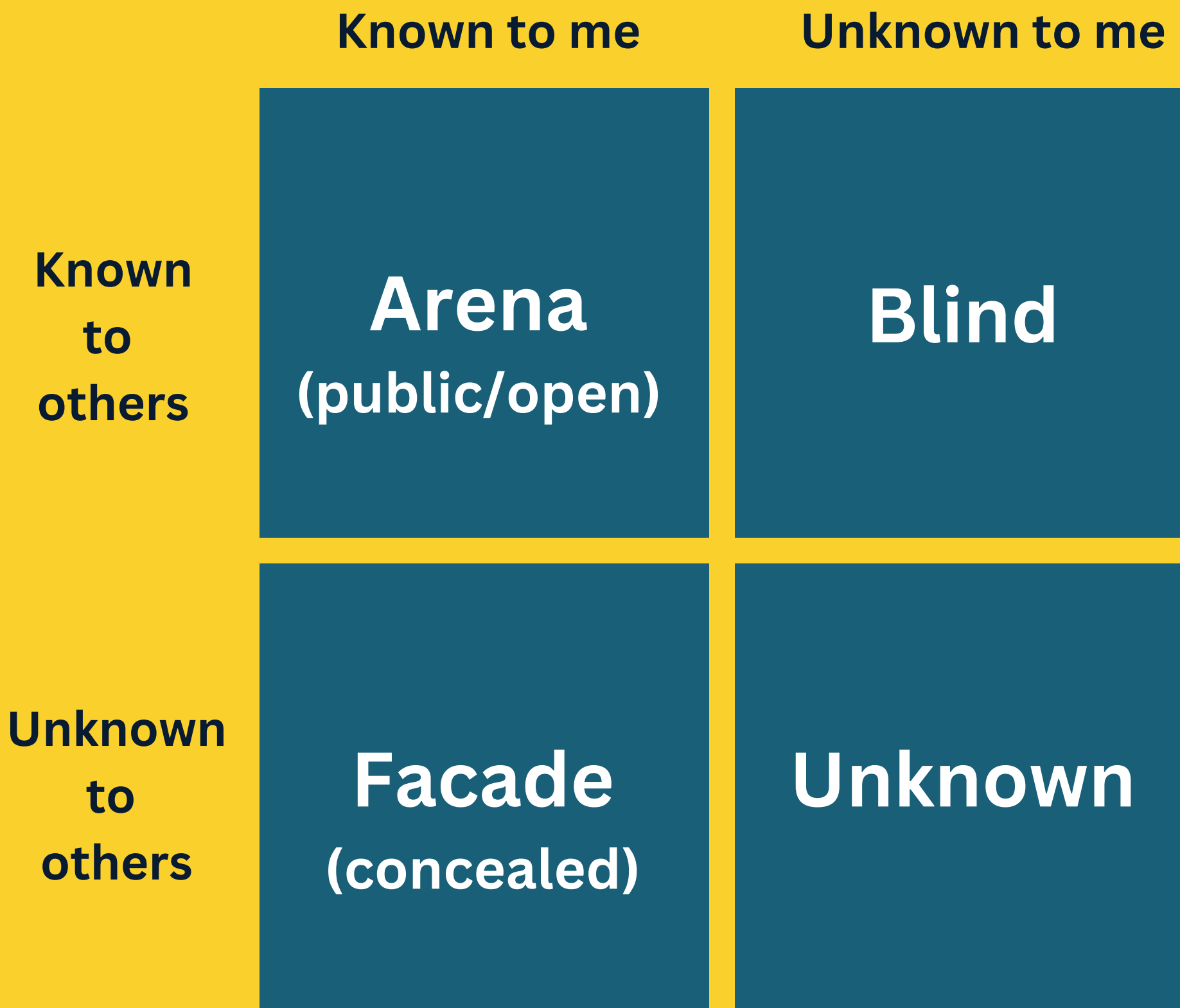
1. The **Arena**
2. The **Facade**
3. The **Blindspot**
4. The **Unknown**

The Johari Window



The Johari Window

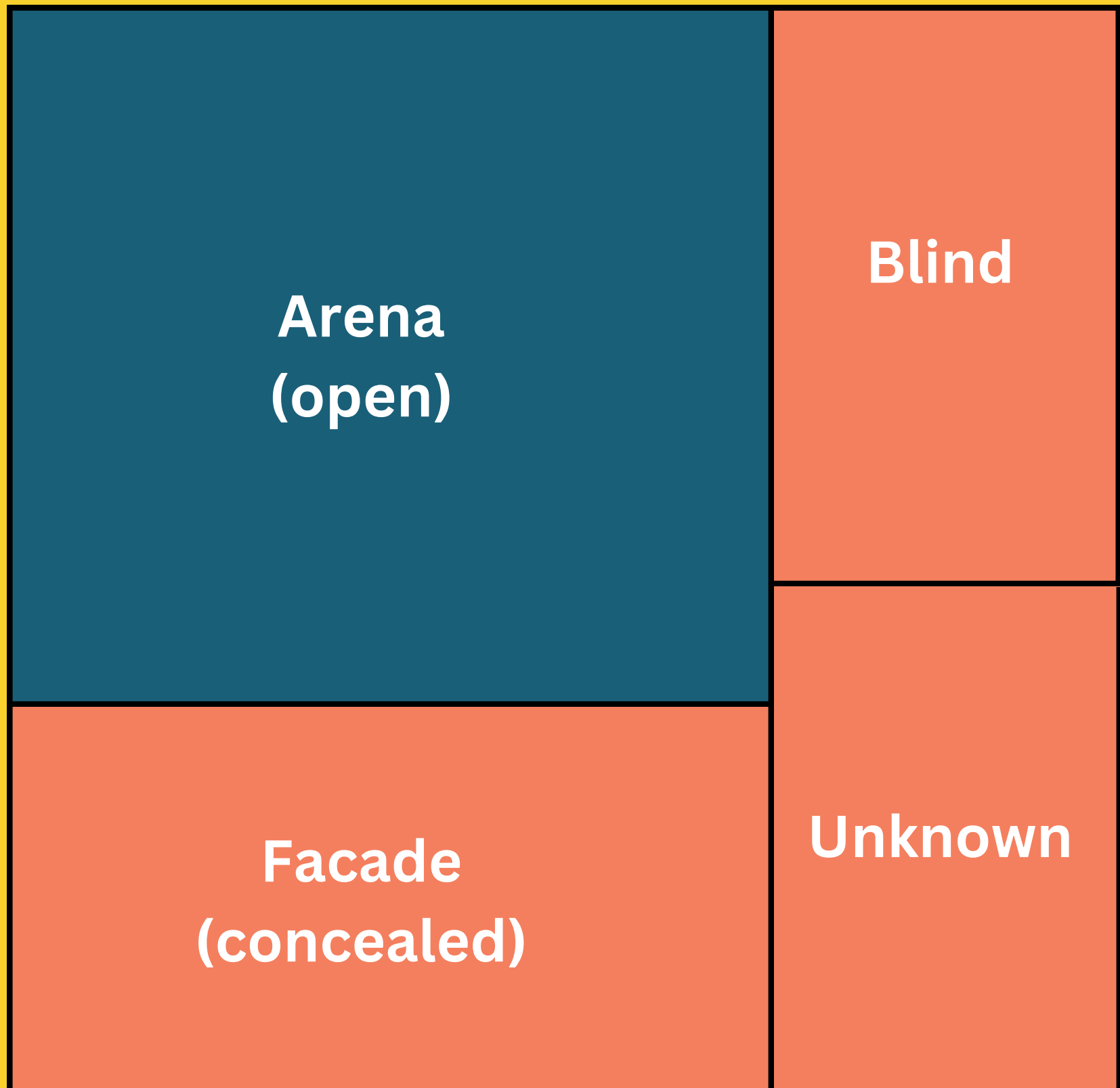
(the 4 zones)





- Note that for most of us, the panes/quadrants are **not fixed and equal in size**. Some are more transparent than others. The lines separating the boxes are **shades that can be pulled** more/less open.
- For most high functioning folks, the Arena/Open pane will be the largest.

Typical size of panes





Lets look at each zone closely.

The Arena



- The part of ourselves that we see AND others see. All information is known to all parties.
- When operating in this zone:
 - We are **naturally trustworthy**
 - We share information easily and are open to feedback
 - We operate freely in this space.
- **Requires confidence and comfort** with ourselves.
- More communication falls in this area, the **more effective we are**. Larger this zone, the more adaptive and wider our repertoire.

The Facade



- This is the private pane. Aspects about ourselves we recognize and are aware of, but that **we choose not to share**.
- Can be unintentional. Problematic if we assume that others are in fact aware.
- Hiding behind/**putting up a facade is energy consuming** and can be tiring when done for long stretches.
- You come across as **inauthentic** and not as trustworthy

The Blind



- Behaviors that others can easily see and recognize but that we are unaware of.
- A large blind spot means:
 - low self-awareness
 - lack of feedback
 - no receptivity to feedback
 - lack of listening skills
- Makes you ineffective because you are unaware what's causing others to react a certain way. ("**Bull in a china shop**")
- **Major learning opportunity** for most folks.
- Requires openness and courage to engage in feedback.

The Unknown



- These are aspects unknown to us and others.
- A large unknown area makes you an unpredictable entity. **You are a mystery to others.**
- This increases the risk of misunderstandings and sending the wrong "vibes".



The Johari Window also shows why honest, critical feedback is not only hard to give, but equally hard to receive.

Good feedback is a precious quantity.
Why?

Why honest feedback is hard to give and receive



- Unless you “reveal” what you see but I don’t, there’s no chance for me to improve on my blind spots. By definition I cannot access them without using external help.
- We hold back information about us. Others hold back information about us, from us. Why? **That’s how we operate socially.** If everyone were to be wide open and honest, communication would become impossible.
- Feedback is hard because fundamentally, **you are going AGAINST socially accepted rules** of concealing, and potentially causing pain & discomfort to the other person.
- But there also lies the biggest opportunity.



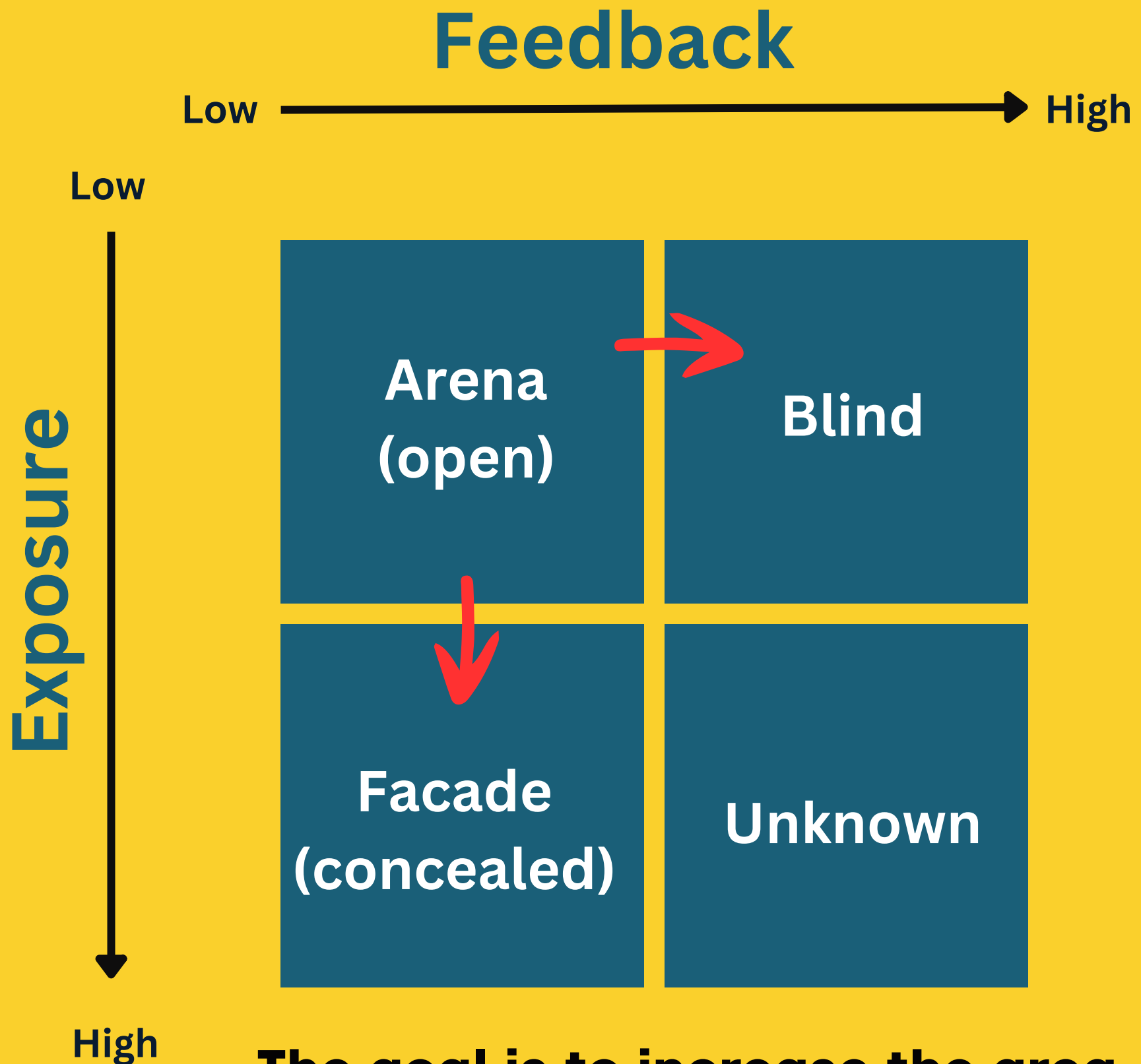
This is where coaching comes in.

The Goal of Coaching



- The primary aim in coaching, and other developmental efforts is to increase your Open/Arena area.
- Growing your CAPACITY means more self-awareness, seeking feedback, and increasing vulnerability and exposure.
- This in effect shrinks the “facade”, and “blindspots”, while simultaneously increasing the “authentic territory” that’s known both to you and others.
- This improves relationships and your effectiveness.

Goal of Coaching



The goal is to increase the area of "Arena" and decrease the areas of "blind" , "facade", & "unknown"



Coaching can help. But you can do this proactively as well. Here are some pointers and patterns to watch out for.

Some pointers



- Change in one quadrant causes changes in others.
- The facade, blind, and unknown zone take up a lot of mental energy
- Psychological safety increases the likelihood that we operate in the Open zone.
- The **ideal Johari window** is one where Arena/Open zone is the biggest. This means your view of your strengths & weaknesses is consistent with that of others. You've closed the "**perception gap**"

How to increase your arena/open zone



- Seek out feedback from your coach, mentor, peers, managers and other stakeholders.
- This is a skill in itself because most folks **will not share the full unvarnished picture.**
- **Practice self-disclosure** to decrease the "facade" pane. This takes practice and tact.
- Seek out activities outside your familiarity/comfort zone. This will give you more feedback about your "unknowns".



Ever wondered why we instantly click with some folks while with others even after years of contact, they remain an enigma?

Watch for the following patterns.

Patterns when we communicate



(adapted from Schein)

1 Open	2 Blind
4 Hidden	3 Unknown

2 Blind	1 Open
3 Unknown	4 Hidden

- (1-1) **Open Communication** - most standard communication.
- (1-2 & 2-1) **Leakage/Unwitting revelations** - signals we pick up that the sender is unaware.
- (1-4 & 4-1) **Confiding/"leveling"** - deliberately revealing/giving explicit feedback.
- (4-4) **Emotional contagion**. Mixed signals. Gut level reactions. Influencing each other without being aware of the source of feelings.

Patterns when we communicate



These patterns are evident in the following statements:

- Let me be frank with you....
- Not sure if anyone told you, but you need to hear this.... (**leveling**)
- Don't broadcast this, but something you need to know about me is....
- Everyone doesn't realize it, but you need to know that... (**confiding**)
- I'm glad both of us are on the same page....
- We seem to be thinking alike... (**open**)
- I have no idea why he's acting that way, and neither does he... (**contagion**)



Wrapping up

In future posts, I'll examine how the Johari Window is **particularly relevant to leaders** and managers.

Self-awareness and interpersonal dynamics are key aspects of the **SELF component** of **organizational competence**.

Thanks for reading!

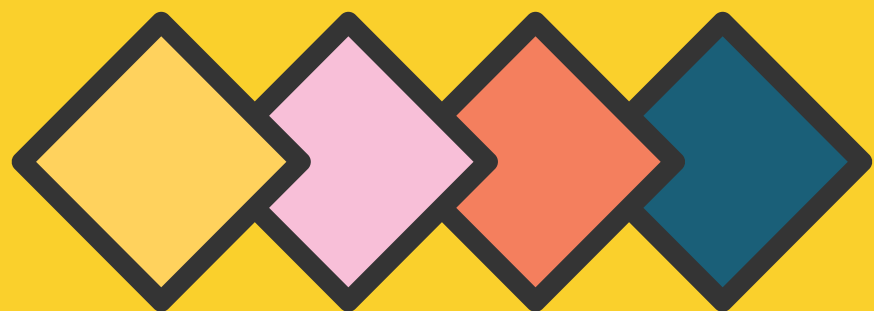


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Sources



- Hanson, P. (1973). **The Johari window: A model for soliciting and giving feedback**
- Luft, J, & Ingham, H, (1961). **The Johari Window: A Graphic Model of Awareness in Interpersonal Relations**
- **Process Consultation Revisited** by Edgar H. Schein
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