Effective Communication;
A Necessity for a Successful Organization
Written By Tom Northup, October 2006

Communication plays a vital role in the success of every organization. Successful CEOs build organizations that attract people who want to perform at the highest level possible. One important way they achieve this is to value trust and mutual information sharing.

Excellent interpersonal communication skills create a more productive work environment while poor skills lessen productivity. Individual and organizational success ties directly to the interpersonal competence of the entire team.
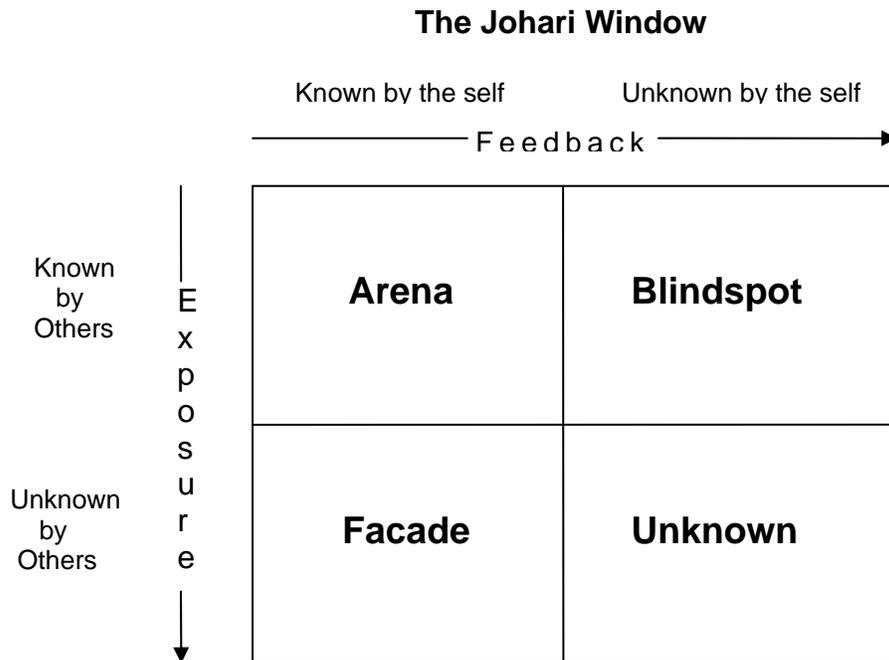
Research also tells us that highly effective managers are excellent communicators who have high levels of interpersonal competence. This level of competence leads directly to high personal achievement.

Further research shows an even more important and strong link between the communication styles of managers and their subordinates. When managers demonstrate high interpersonal competence, subordinates' interpersonal competence tends to rise as well.

The Johari Window Communication Model

A well established and easy to understand model describing interpersonal communication is the **Johari Window** created by *Jo*seph Luft and *Har*ry *I*ngham. This useful tool illustrates interaction styles, helps improve the personal self-awareness of individuals and leads to enhanced mutual understanding between individuals. The model is particularly relevant in today's business environment with its emphasis on interpersonal relationships and teamwork.

Individuals who work with the model will better understand their current communication style so they can use it as a basis to move to standards exhibited by highly effective managers.

The Johari Window

	Known by the self	Unknown by the self
	Feedback ⟶	
Known by Others / Exposure	**Arena**	**Blindspot**
Unknown by Others	**Facade**	**Unknown**

The Johari Window uses a four-part diagram to reflect interaction styles between yourself and others. The four sections represent information processing elements that are significant in creating quality interpersonal relationships.

The **Arena** area includes information known by self and others. In this area, communication and cooperation occurs free from distractions, mistrust, conflict and misunderstanding. Research shows that highly effective managers have a large Arena area, leading to rewarding, effective and productive relationships.

The **Blindspot** encompasses information known by others but unknown by self. Managers with a large Blindspot are not as effective and typically do not listen and talk too much.

One technique to reduce this area and increase the Arena is to actively listen and seek feedback from others.

The **Façade** area has information known by self but unknown by others. This includes sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas and manipulative intentions. A manager with a large Façade section may be characterized as pumping for information.

You can reduce this area and increase the Arena through using a disclosure and exposure process. By telling others how you feel personally and about issues, you enable better understanding, cooperation and trust.

The **Unknown** area contains information unknown by self and others. This may include feelings, latent abilities, aptitudes, experiences, or deeper aspects of a person's personality that influence behavior.

Highly effective managers do not have a large Unknown. They are comfortable with communicating openly with employees, peers and managers around them.

Successful CEOs and their key employees always strive to increase their open free areas and to reduce their blind, hidden and unknown areas.

An organization's culture and working atmosphere have a major influence on employees' readiness to disclose their hidden selves. Most people fear judgment or vulnerability and therefore hold back hidden information and feelings. When management encourages more openness, it enhances mutual understanding and enables better individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

Sample Communication Styles

A major area that impacts productivity and company success is managerial communication style. Dr. Jay Hall of Teleometrics has identified four models of managerial behavior and correlates them to styles that highly effective, successful managers exhibit.

Hall has identified four styles, the Developer, Manipulator, Taskmaster and Regulator. The last three contain within them styles that do not lead to open communication and mutual understanding.

Hall identifies the most effective managers as Developers. They have strong self-awareness and self-confidence along with a deep understanding of their emotions, strengths, limitations, values and motives. They are realistic and honest with themselves and others.

Developers have a large Arena because they are open about their feelings and regularly look for feedback. Through building a culture of openness and sharing power they attract and retain high performing employees committed to their job and company.

Developers are most effective in building high performance teams that generate great success.

The Manipulator tries to control the environment by keeping people around him in the dark. He has a large Façade. Employees may feel defensive and resent this person.

The Taskmaster talks but doesn't listen and may have a large Blindspot. As a result, he often fails to understand or adequately explore issues. Over time employees become frustrated with him.

The Regulator follows rules and does not consider alternatives because he does not want to create unintended precedent and make his job more difficult. Regulators have a small Arena.

Change your communication style

Many people believe that behavior is ingrained and difficult to change. The good news is that we can make personal behavioral changes. The bad news is that it takes time and effort. There is, however, a proven method to create behavioral change that anyone committed to the process can follow.

Using the Johari window model, first establish how you presently communicate. Next determine your ideal by comparing your results to validated models of high performing managers. The resulting gap defines the difference between your actual and ideal self.

If you wish to change, you need to build an agenda to make the desired changes. To make permanent changes practice your new skills until they become routine. Set goals with action steps. Put the steps into your daily schedule so the many competing demands on your time do not derail you.

Regularly track and measure progress to ensure that your results match expectations. You may enhance this process by using a confidant or coach to hold you accountable and keep you on track.

Over time your new skills will become routine.

Summary

Communication plays a vital role in the success of any organization and is affected by both the culture and the level of interpersonal communication skills within the company.

Highly effective communication is a powerful factor in determining a manager's career success and in shaping the nature and quality of subordinate practices. There is a direct correlation between personal success and your individual level of interpersonal communication.

The Johari window is an easy to understand model for interpersonal communication, making it simple to determine how to improve effectiveness.

The most effective communicator is the Developer style. A developer manager has a large Arena, giving him the highest level of self-awareness and mutual understanding.

You can become more flexible in your communication and management styles. Practice new competencies until they become habit. You will have high retention of your new communication skills and regularly perform at a more effective and successful level.

"Communication is the glue that holds organizations together."