

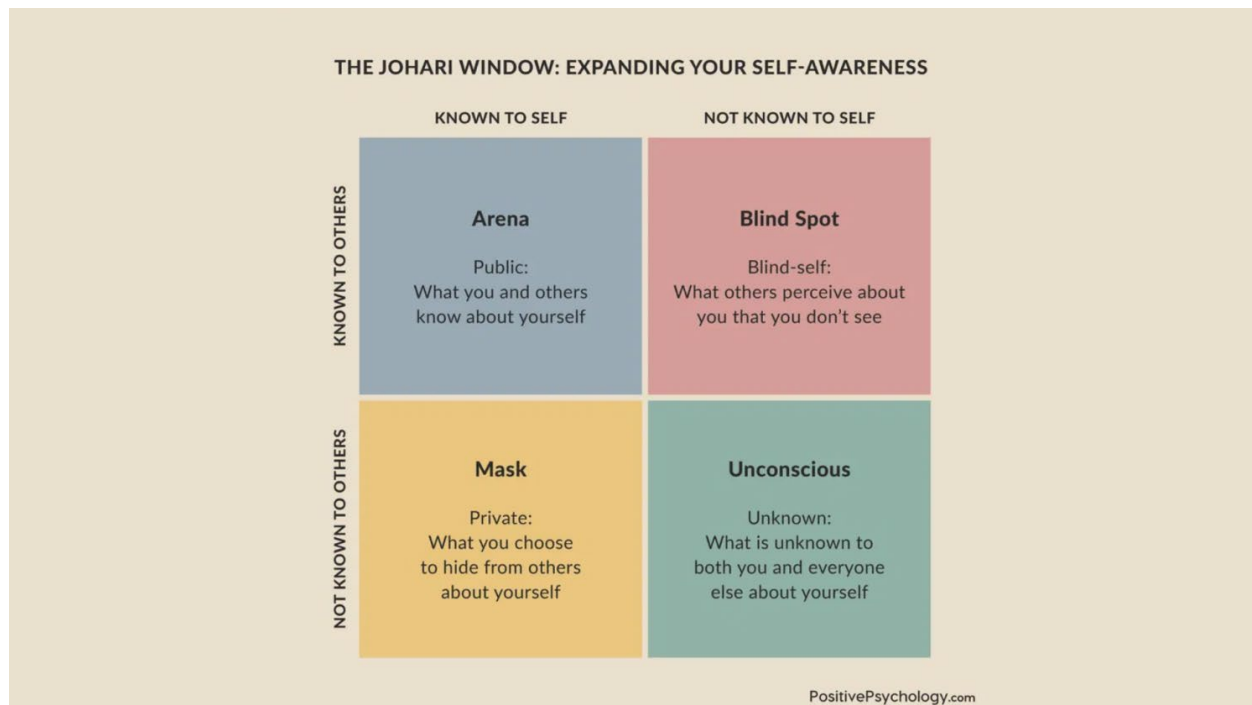
Unlocking What We Don't See



Awareness.is.a.team.effort

In Part 1, we examined how self-awareness enables leaders to identify and mitigate their blind spots, thereby strengthening safety culture. But the Johari Window isn't just for individuals—it's a powerful tool for teams.

When we expand the “Arena” between ourselves and others, we build a culture of trust, accountability, and shared awareness. That's where the real power of the Johari Window comes to life in aerospace.



Why It Matters to Teams

The Arena is where the best teamwork happens. It's where:

- Safety concerns are voiced without hesitation
- Ideas and feedback are shared freely
- Lessons learned are circulated, not siloed
- Situational awareness becomes shared awareness

However, achieving that requires more than good intentions—it necessitates deliberate communication, structured feedback, and a leadership commitment to fostering psychological safety.

The Johari Window aligns closely with another powerful mental model.

In 2002, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously described the challenge of decision-making in terms of “known knowns,” “known unknowns,” and—most critically—“unknown unknowns.” While initially used in a military context, this framework has since gained widespread recognition in risk management, systems thinking, and aerospace safety.

The idea is simple but powerful: the most significant risks often stem not from what we know—or even what we know we don’t know—but from the blind spots we haven’t yet discovered. In aviation, this concept naturally pairs with the Johari Window and reinforces the importance of open communication, curiosity, and shared vigilance when navigating operational uncertainty.

****Let’s take a look at how you might apply this to an upcoming flight:***

- **Known knowns:** what you’re aware of and that you understand (e.g., the scheduled time of a flight)
- **Known unknowns:** what you know to pay attention to but don’t yet understand the details of (e.g., the chance of a delay caused by mechanical issues)
- **Unknown knowns:** understanding that you have but that you aren’t considering (e.g., you aren’t paying attention to the bad weather, but if it was pointed out to you, you would understand that your flight could be delayed because of it)
- **Unknown unknowns:** what you neither understand about nor are considering (e.g., there could be a mouse running loose on the plane)

The goal of a safety-conscious team is to shrink the unknowns—both individually and collectively—by communicating, cross-checking, and staying curious. The Johari Window gives us the language and framework to do just that.

How to Expand the Arena Across the Team

Invite Constructive Feedback Regularly

Build moments into your operation where feedback is expected, not exceptional;

- Ask: “What’s something we could’ve handled better as a team today?”
- Use WYVERN’s Safety Culture Survey or QSMS to uncover trends people may hesitate to speak about openly.

Encourage Appropriate Self-Disclosure

When leaders share lessons learned, others feel safer doing the same;

- “I once rushed that checklist, too—here’s how I learned to slow down.”
- “I didn’t realize my tone came off sharp—thank you for pointing it out.”

These moments shrink the Mask Area and build trust.

✅ Collaborate to Explore the Unknown

Some risks are only discovered when diverse minds come together;

- Cross-functional reviews (pilots, maintenance, dispatch)
 - After-action debriefs where everyone has a voice
 - WYVERN's VSO program can offer an external perspective to uncover systemic blind spots
-

Real-World Example: Maintenance Coordination Blind Spot

An operator experienced repeated delays due to last-minute aircraft readiness issues. Leadership initially believed these were due to external factors—parts delays, vendor response times, etc.

But during a WYVERN Flight Leader coaching session, deeper conversations revealed a blind spot in internal communication. Maintenance technicians had insights about recurring discrepancies and component wear trends, but felt their input wasn't valued during scheduling meetings.

They weren't withholding information intentionally—they just hadn't been invited to the conversation.

Once the operator adjusted their workflow to include maintenance voices earlier in the trip planning process, operational predictability improved, and so did morale.

Blind Spot reduced. Arena expanded. Operational efficiency increased.

Real-World Example: Fatigue That No One Named

A corporate flight department had a solid scheduling system on paper, but pilots were frequently arriving for duty feeling fatigued. Despite no formal reports, the issue surfaced through informal conversations during a meeting with a WYVERN Virtual Safety Office (VSO).

The department leader was surprised. He believed the current system was flexible enough and assumed that if crew members were truly tired, they would say something. But many pilots didn't want to appear "difficult" or "unreliable"—so they pushed through.

This was a classic blind spot: leadership saw what was planned, not how it was experienced. By shifting to more proactive crew wellness check-ins and building a culture where rest was seen as a performance asset—not a liability—the team began operating more safely and honestly.

Blind Spot reduced. Hidden concerns addressed. Fatigue risk mitigated.

Team Reflection Questions

1. What do we know about our organization—and what do we assume?
2. What might team members be hesitant to say out loud?
3. Where are we missing opportunities to learn from one another?
4. Are there patterns that we see but haven't yet discussed?

Bonus: Free Download

Want to try this with your team? Download our [Johari Window Team Exercise Guide](#), complete with a quadrant points, adjective list, and coaching prompts.

If you are not subscribed to our weekly newsletters, subscribe now at the bottom of this page. For further resources and guidance on implementing Safety Management Systems, contact WYVERN, THE industry expert. Attend our [SMS Training Workshops](#) or ask about our SMS software. [Contact us for a FREE SMS demo!](#) Together, we can elevate aerospace safety and create a safer future.

References

*Identify»Unknown.Unknowns«; (2024, July 24). Retrieved from [Anonmalo.com](https://www.anomalo.com/blog/):
<https://www.anomalo.com/blog/>

[PsychSafety.co.uk](#). The.Johari.Window;How.It.Works.and.How.to.Use.It.with.Teams;

[PositivePsychology.com](#). Self_Awareness.Tools.for.Leadership.Development;