

# **WIIFM - Shifting To A “What’s In It For Me” Recruiting Prospective (Spelling out what the new hire will experience)**

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## Shifting To A “What’s In It For Me” Recruiting Prospective (Spelling out what the new hire will experience)

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Compared to just listing dry company benefits, seeing “what’s in it for me” is extremely powerful from a candidate’s perspective.

**Article Descriptors** | recruiting/messaging from the candidate perspective – How to – 4 min read

### The “What’s In It For Me” Messaging Approach Explained

When attempting to sell a product, service, or job to someone with multiple choices, it’s hard to argue against the premise that your messaging will be more convincing if it focuses on “what’s in it for me.”

This new messaging approach has been borrowed directly from marketing, where it has been highly successful. Its primary goal is to attract and land more top performers by improving your messaging and job posts so they are more likely to believe that this job will literally change their working life. This strategy has three primary elements:

- **Drop the “this is what we offer” approach** – stop relying on listing the average benefits and job duties that you think top candidates want. And realize that first, they don’t raise much interest because they are the same for every company that offers a particular job. But second, they also don’t garner much interest because they don’t actually reflect what top performers desire in a great job.
- **Begin highlighting what top performers care about** – by surveying top candidates to determine their job priorities. And then focus your recruitment messaging on their “what’s in it for them” factors that would literally change their working life.
- **Shift the perspective of your messages** – show that the company understands,

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- **Shift the perspective of your messages** – show that the company understands, has empathy, and cares about the candidate’s perspective by beginning to write your messages from the candidate’s perspective (i.e., you will experience this). And stop writing exclusively from the company’s perspective (i.e., we offer this).

This “What’s In It For Me” (a.k.a. WIIFM) strategy is different from the traditional “this is what we offer” messaging approach. It’s designed to stand out and purposely raise a candidate’s emotions. It covers the job factors they care about most, and the information is written from their perspective. Unfortunately, most recruiters and hiring managers assume they know what top candidates expect in a life-changing job. When, in fact, they seldom do.

## The Operational Elements Of A WIIFM Messaging Approach

If you are willing to consider adding this messaging component to your recruiting. Here are the key operational elements of the WIIFM strategy.

- **Understand that currently employed top candidates have high expectations** – when you target the very best who already have a job (the so-called passives). Realize that they have a high threshold to be met before they apply for any new job. And since the approach adds an even higher goal (to convince them that this job will change their working life). This higher threshold means that your messages will have to be much more targeted and well-written.
- **Identify what will make their working life much better** – first, assume you don’t know what top performers expect in a life-changing job. You must start by actually identifying the factors that would make a new job extremely attractive to top candidates. Do that directly by surveying a pool of current and/or past top candidates. Ask them to identify and prioritize the most powerful factors that would really excite them about any new job (or their dream job). I call them “WIIFM factors”.
- **Shift from highlighting “paycheck job factors” to highlighting “what they will experience”** – in their recruiting materials. Most companies decide what to highlight in their job posts (i.e., pay, benefits, PTO, and flexible scheduling). They also put the company first when they emphasize “what the company is looking for” in their job posts. So, if you really want a candidate to be passionate about your open job. Instead of telling them what you want them to hear. Instead, focus on their top priority, “WIIFM factors.” Which often revolve around “the work itself.” My list of top-performer expectations can be found in the following table.

### WHAT TOP PERFORMERS WANT/EXPECT

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## WHAT TOP PERFORMERS WANT/EXPECT

1. Can't put-it-down exciting work.
2. Seeing the impact of your work (purpose).
3. Working alongside top coworkers.
4. Having great managers.
5. A chance to win/to be first.
6. Continuous learning and growth.
7. An opportunity to innovate / take risks.
8. Being an expert / mastery of your field.
9. Working with great tools/technology.
10. An opportunity to implement your ideas.
11. Being constantly challenged.
12. Freedom and a choice of projects.
13. Input into schedule and location.
14. Opportunities to make decisions.
15. Measure and reward performance.

You can learn more about the factors that attract top performers [here](#).

- **Shift your pronoun usage from "we" to "you"** – when possible, reduce your use of the pronoun we (e.g., we have great benefits). Instead, begin writing from the candidate's perspective (i.e., You will experience great managers).
- **Adopt the "Hey, that's me" approach to your job postings** – most candidates see job postings as a cold description of a job and its benefits. However, you should redesign your postings. So when a candidate reads them, they instead think to themselves, "Hey, that's me" that they want. You can do that by adding language to your job posting that covers what top performers will get excited about. For example, "You will be excited about making a difference every day." Or "Even as a new hire, you will enjoy the opportunity to tackle tough projects right away." So when the candidate reads it, they will instantly think, "WOW, it's me that they want."
- **Include powerful employee quotes** – almost any example of a candidate's

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- **Include powerful employee quotes** – almost any example of a candidate’s experience can be made more credible if it includes a quote covering an actual employee’s experience. For example, “I didn’t believe it at first, but the culture of my team was phenomenal.”
- **Videos can help the candidate “feel the excitement”** – in addition to the words that you use. You can further excite potential candidates by showing authentic videos that allow them to see and feel what they will experience if they get the job. Videos become more authentic when they are roughly made by a team member using a smartphone camera. You can learn more about video job descriptions [here](#).
- **Utilize peer interviews** – even after the candidate has applied. It’s important to continue to provide them with proof that this job will change their working life. One of the best ways to do that is to have them participate in a peer interview, where the candidate is interviewed by the whole team (but without the manager). Peer interviews are effective candidate-selling tools. Because employees who “live the job every day” are significantly more convincing than any hiring manager or recruiter.
- **Minimize your use of jargon** – make candidates from outside your company and industry comfortable by avoiding jargon or acronyms that an outsider wouldn’t know.
- **Test the impact of your messaging** – never assume that your messaging can’t be improved. So, periodically test your messaging with a few candidates or your new hires (during onboarding) to determine if your recruiting messaging was exciting and made them feel like your company understood a top candidate’s needs.

### Examples Of WIIFM Phrases

Below, you will find some sample phrases. Note that almost all WIIFM messages should include the word “you.”

- Imagine doing work that is so exciting that “you will hate to put it down.”
- You will experience the joy of working with a highly collaborative team.
- Perhaps you will experience work that is so exciting for the first time that you won’t want to put it down.
- You will thrive under our great managers.
- You will meet and exceed all of your learning goals.
- You will experience our performance culture, which makes heroes out of top performers.

***If you only do one thing** – ask a handful of your new hires during onboarding to list their top five job acceptance priorities. Ask them how many of the five were convincingly covered in your company’s recruiting messaging.*

### Final Thoughts

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## Final Thoughts

Let's face it: most corporations are somewhat arrogant in their messaging. Most recruitment messaging exclusively describes what the company thinks a candidate needs to know. **In contrast, this WIIFM strategy relies on data to find out exactly what top candidates want in a great job. And, then it messages top candidates in a way that can almost feel what they will experience in the job.**

### Author's Note

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Dr John Sullivan is an internationally known HR thought-leader from the Silicon Valley who specializes in providing bold and high business impact; strategic Talent Management solutions to large corporations.



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