



Leadership and Power: WIIFM vs. WIIFT

WIIFM is a commonly held mindset and mode of operation for many folks today. And because you likely have FOMO, you're reading this article with the anticipation of an upcoming definition of WIIFM. Utilizing the WIIFM mindset to introduce this article, I'll make a deal with you. I'll define WIIFM for you if you'll agree to keep reading. See what I did there? I was tasked with writing a leadership article for you, but to get you to keep reading the article, I dangled the definition of WIIFM in front of you because for me, or for any author, the more readers you have, the better it is for you in terms of being recognized and legitimized as a writer and being asked to write again. Instead of me acting for your benefit, to solely share knowledge with you, I acted utilizing the WIIFM mindset and made this opportunity about me.

So, to ease the minds of all, especially my fellow "FOMO-ians" or those who have a "fear of missing out", I'll define WIIFM. WIIFM is an acronym for the question, "**What's In It For Me?**". As I previously alluded to, WIIFM is a very commonly held philosophical belief adhered to by many people today, whether in personal or professional environments. The implication with WIIFM is that unless there's something in it for me, or if I can't benefit from it, I'm not likely going to do it. Now, here comes the leadership part of the article. Leadership is about service or serving others. Leadership isn't about the leader; therefore, a leader shouldn't operate with a WIIFM mindset. Can I be direct? Being a leader or serving in a leadership role affords one a certain level of power, correct? If you're reading this article because you're a current or aspiring leader, ask yourself these self-reflective questions...In my current or future leadership role, do I or will I lead and behave with a WIIFM mindset? Will I use my leadership power **TO**, or will I use my leadership power **OVER**? Leadership power **TO** suggests that you choose to use your power **TO** serve others; that you adopted a "**What's In It For Them**" (WIIFT) mindset. Leadership power **OVER** suggests that you choose to lead with a WIIFM mindset and use your leadership power **OVER** others, so that you will come out on top.

For some, leadership power **TO** and leadership power **OVER** represent a single concept, and in certain arguments, that perspective has some validity however, for this purpose leadership power **TO** and leadership power **OVER** are two distinct perspectives. Using your leadership power **TO** (operating with a WIIFT mindset) serve others requires you to build rapport, invest in, and seek opportunities to serve as a resource to your team members. It requires you to think about the needs of your team members and how you can help them be successful, before thinking about your own needs and seeking ways to advance your own interests. Using your leadership power **OVER** (operating with a WIIFM mindset) others only requires that you think of yourself first and be well versed on what you need to ensure your needs and goals are met before others. WIIFT-minded leaders make the needs of their team members a priority and therefore use their leadership power **TO**!



Service or the ability to serve others begins with a mindset. From there, you act or behave in a certain way; to serve or to not serve others. Think of it this way, attitude drives behavior. If you have an attitude of service (WIIFT), then your behavior will follow. Your role as a leader is to develop and support your team so that they can be successful employees who, in turn, provide a benefit to your organization. You can't do this or serve others if you're only thinking about yourself or possess a WIIFM mindset. I urge you to answer those self-reflective questions and think about the type of leader you either are or desire to be. I also urge you to adopt the WIIFT mindset and use your leadership power TO serve and assist your team members, to help them be successful employees. Make it your mission to be known as the leader who puts their team first; the leader who builds up, encourages, and makes their team members feel seen and valued. By exercising a WIIFT mindset, you'll see how it not only improves their performance, but that WIIFM is indirectly realized.