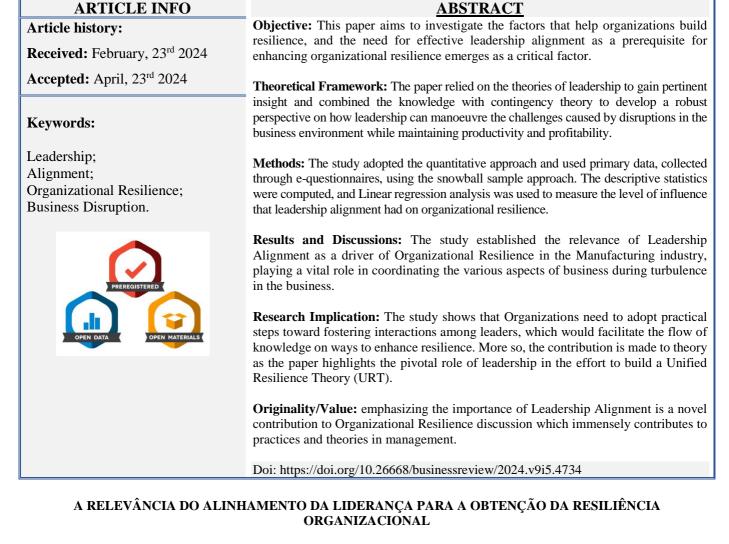


THE RELEVANCE OF LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT TO ATTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE



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RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar os fatores que ajudam as organizações a desenvolver resiliência, e a necessidade de um alinhamento eficaz da liderança como pré-requisito para aumentar a resiliência organizacional surge como um fator crítico.

Estrutura Teórica: O artigo se baseou nas teorias de liderança para obter insights pertinentes e combinou o conhecimento com a teoria da contingência para desenvolver uma perspectiva robusta sobre como a liderança pode manobrar os desafios causados por interrupções no ambiente de negócios, mantendo a produtividade e a lucratividade.

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Métodos: O estudo adotou a abordagem quantitativa e usou dados primários, coletados por meio de questionários eletrônicos, usando a abordagem de amostragem de bola de neve. As estatísticas descritivas foram computadas e a análise de regressão linear foi usada para medir o nível de influência que o alinhamento da liderança teve sobre a resiliência organizacional.

Resultados e Discussões: O estudo estabeleceu a relevância do Alinhamento da Liderança como um impulsionador da Resiliência Organizacional no setor de Manufatura, desempenhando um papel vital na coordenação dos vários aspectos do negócio durante a turbulência nos negócios.

Implicações para a Pesquisa: O estudo mostra que as organizações precisam adotar medidas práticas para promover interações entre os líderes, o que facilitaria o fluxo de conhecimento sobre formas de aumentar a resiliência. Além disso, a contribuição é feita para a teoria, pois o artigo destaca o papel fundamental da liderança no esforço para construir uma Teoria Unificada da Resiliência (URT).

Originalidade/Valor: enfatizar a importância do Alinhamento da Liderança é uma nova contribuição para a discussão sobre Resiliência Organizacional, que contribui imensamente para as práticas e teorias de gestão.

Palavras-chave: Liderança, Alinhamento, Resiliência Organizacional, Interrupção dos Negócios.

LA RELEVANCIA DE LA ALINEACIÓN DEL LIDERAZGO EN LA CONSECUCIÓN DE LA RESILIENCIA ORGANIZATIVA

RESUMEN

Propósito: Este artículo pretende investigar los factores que ayudan a las organizaciones a desarrollar resiliencia, y la necesidad de una alineación eficaz del liderazgo como requisito previo para aumentar la resiliencia organizativa surge como factor crítico.

Marco Teórico: El artículo se basó en las teorías del liderazgo para obtener ideas pertinentes y combinó los conocimientos con la teoría de la contingencia para desarrollar una perspectiva sólida sobre cómo el liderazgo puede maniobrar ante los retos causados por las perturbaciones en el entorno empresarial, manteniendo al mismo tiempo la productividad y la rentabilidad.

Métodos: El estudio adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo y utilizó datos primarios, recogidos mediante cuestionarios electrónicos, utilizando el método de muestreo de bola de nieve. Se calcularon estadísticas descriptivas y se utilizó un análisis de regresión lineal para medir el nivel de influencia de la alineación del liderazgo en la resiliencia organizativa.

Resultados y Debates: El estudio estableció la relevancia de la alineación del liderazgo como impulsor de la resiliencia organizativa en el sector manufacturero, desempeñando un papel vital en la coordinación de los diversos aspectos de la empresa durante las turbulencias empresariales.

Implicaciones para la Investigación: El estudio muestra que las organizaciones necesitan adoptar medidas prácticas para promover las interacciones entre líderes, lo que facilitaría el flujo de conocimientos sobre las formas de aumentar la resiliencia. Además, se hace una contribución a la teoría, ya que el artículo destaca el papel fundamental del liderazgo en el esfuerzo por construir una Teoría Unificada de la Resiliencia (TUR).

Originalidad/Valor: Destacar la importancia de la Alineación del Liderazgo es una nueva contribución al debate sobre la Resiliencia Organizacional, que contribuye inmensamente a las prácticas y teorías de gestión.

Palabras clave: Liderazgo, Alineación, Resiliencia Organizativa, Gestión, Desorganización Empresarial.

1 INTRODUCTION

The challenges of the 21st century are enormous for startup organizations as well as already-established ones. These challenges are in various facets of business activities ranging from the effect of environmental changes to the availability of raw materials, coupled with the effect of insecurity and economic challenges, etc, especially when the cause of the disturbance, such as the COVID pandemic affects multiple aspects of the business at the same time. As such, these organizations are saddled with the responsibility of coping with problems on multiple fronts. These challenges are faced at organizational levels but do not exist at only that level, as it is also evident that individuals who work in these organizations are affected by adverse conditions which in turn affect their input at work. For instance, Kakiashvili et al (2013) showed that occupational stress has deleterious effects on affected individuals, some of which are associated with the physical and mental health of affected persons. Such individuals bring suboptimal mindsets and inputs into the organizations that they work with, and it could cause poor work performance and high turnover (Bridger et al., 2013). Disruptions around the world have also necessitated the investigation into resilience as a concept. Over the years, there has been a gradual withdrawal from traditional ways of carrying on business, especially with increased innovation in technology. This puts pressure on employees to unlearn, learn, and relearn in rapid succession which not many are able to cope with the pace. As a result, industries are seeking ways to adapt to changes which adversely affects product and service delivery (Kruk et al., 2015) in organizations.

The need for survival during crisis takes the front burner in organizational quest and all members are expected to deploy their most useful arsenal during such periods, so that the firm can bounce back to the state of normal operations as stated by Holling (1973). Among several other things that happens during crisis, of particular importance is the need for firms to learn how to cope with adversity, overcome the challenges and position it in ways that enables it to overcome other challenges that might arise in the future (Wildavsky, 1988), and one of the ways through which this is readily achieved is through effective leadership. According to Mumford et al. (2007), leadership during crisis is particularly relevant to the extent to which it leverages on exercising social influence on the individuals that they work with, beyond the symbolic role of leaders providing direction and guidance, during crisis, leadership is expected to be effective to the extent to which it can collate, analyze and deploy relevant information during crisis, in ways that the organization can make relevant decision (Boin et al., 2013). This

shows the need for leaders in organizations to align with members of their team and more importantly, with leaders across other departments, so that relevant information arising from the crisis can be readily shared, analyzed, and used for effective solution mapping. In literature, alignment has been postulated to aid performance, with several authors asserting that it provides managers with useful decision-making kits (Broadbent & Weill, 1993; Sabherwal & Chan, 2001; Benbya & McKelvey, 2006; Weiss et al., 2006). However, the dominant alignment discussion revolves around the four domains highlighted by Leonard (2008), the four domains being; Business strategy, IT strategy, Organizational and Infrastructural process, and IT infrastructure and process. However, these domains do not provide details on how managers can leverage alignment during a crisis, as such, this paper aims to provide insights on how organizations can attain leadership alignment during crisis and deploy the outcome in enhancing organizational resilience.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

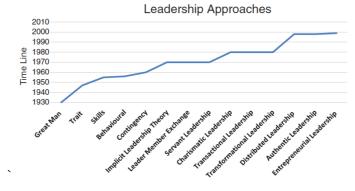
Studies such as Waldman et al. (2001) show that leadership helps to explain the extent of progress that an organization can attain in periods of crisis, this is postulated to be influenced by the followership that such leaders elicit from subordinates. Given that firms have missions and visions that they strive towards, the crisis comes as a distraction from such goals, against which the firm has to sail. To carry along all that is required for organizational profitability, the leaders of the organization must be able to communicate desire and display competencies needed at such times. This directly implies that the extent of leadership effectiveness is a predominant factor to consider during a crisis. This stance was also echoed by Halverson et al. (2004) who found that self-sacrificial behavior in leaders was judged positively by team members during a crisis, but was otherwise received negatively when uncertainty was absent. This showed that the actions of leaders provide a pathway to developing resilience in organizations and this implies that understanding the steps required suggests actions and structures that firms need to put in place to become resilient. According to Boin et al. (2013), leaders in periods of crisis must take five (5) steps in combating the situation, according to the study, the steps are; the need to have an adequate understanding of the crisis, effectively coordinate all parties involved and affected by the crisis, seek to make meaning of the problem, provide hope and confidence to stakeholders and be accountable on progress made. These steps are seen as possible ways through which leaders can navigate crisis while taking into

consideration the legal and moral requirement of the organizations that they represent as shown by Leonard and Howitt (2009). Though these steps provide insight for overcoming crisis but do not take into consideration the multifacedness of contemporary organizations, they provide solutions from the position of a leader overseeing a large group, whereas in contemporary organizations, leaders exist at several levels and the need to collaborate would present a more realistic framework. Hence achieving resilience will draw more from the relational resources of leaders than the cognitive skills that such possess. The place of relational skills during a crisis is evident in literature but the process of attaining it is not fully explored, for instance, Doerfel et al. (2010) showed that during a crisis, leaders are expected to draw on both tangible and intangible resources within the organization to combat challenges, and among the intangible resources captured is social capital which forms the bedrock for relationship and interconnectedness with other people. Such interconnections are seen as a viable means of building resilience. It is important for scholars to investigate how social capital which encourages information flow enhances organizational resilience. In a bid to contribute to the discussion, this study leverages the Relational Activation of Resilience (RAR) model by Teo et al. (2017).

3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The studies on leadership have span through several years, with contributions from different authors at various points in time. The discourse has led to increased knowledge about the impact of leadership and how it can be effectively deployed to help organizations and groups attain or achieve desired results. Leadership evolution through the years is depicted in the graph below, showing the trend and knowledge updates, starting with the Great man Leadership theory.

Figure 1



Evolution of Leadership theories over time

Source: Author, 2022

Great man theory: this theory was mainly driven by the feat achieved by some men at the time and how their abilities attracted the admiration of many. Grint (2011) reviewed the history of leadership had posited that the Great man theory was centered around the study of men who stood out of the pack, however, antagonists of the theory were able to show that though it provided a basis for the study and understanding of leadership but it was unable to explain leadership in details and was considered to be chauvinistic. In a bid to provide a more detailed understanding of leadership, the Trait theory was propounded.

Trait theory: using the trait theory to explain leadership led many scholars to begin to consider the traits that men who were termed 'great' possessed. As a result, scholars were able to outline some traits that is expected of a leader and it included qualities such as:

- intelligence: it is expected that the leaders possess cognitive abilities to enable him/her to effectively capture the problem, understand the required solution, and then channel resources in the direction to provide the needed solution;
- alertness to the needs of others: a leader must be sensitive to the need of the followers, understanding the challenges that they face and the limitations they combat in a bid to achieve dreams and objectives. This gives leadership the human face that followers can relate to. Being aware of the situation and conditions that members face and having significant empathy to feel what they feel provides the leader with the opportunity to help;
- insight: Insight speaks to the leader's ability to think deeply and foresee situations before the changes occur. The ability of the leader to envisage trends and changes that could occur and help the followers to position themselves favorably;
- initiative: by initiative, we mean the ability of the leader to start a course of action which is aimed at helping the group to attain the desired level of performance. The leaders should have the mental capacity and social influence to make the group start a course of action;
- responsibility: The leaders should take charge and explain whatever happens in the group, especially when the expectations fall short of what was desired. However, the praise should be shared with all group members.

Though the trait theory was widely adopted, however the study by Northouse (2010) showed that the traits theory had significant loopholes. The skill theory attempted to enhance leadership understanding in the areas where the Traits theory had lapsed.

Skill theory: The skill theory has some similarities with the trait theory, however, unlike traits that are inborn or innate in individuals, the skill theory posits that the skills required for good and effective leadership can be acquired or learned. This provided another perspective in

literature that departed from the initial assertion that leaders are born. The skill theory opened the chapter that leadership can be learnt. Mumford et al (2000) opined that the key skills for leadership are:

- problem-solving skill;
- social judgement skill;
- knowledge skill.

The skill approach to leadership provided a broader perspective and shifted focus from the thought that leadership is just for a few selected people, arguing that since everybody can learn, everyone can end up as a leader.

Behavioral theory: The major proponents of Behavioral theory include Northouse (2010) and Wright (1996). The behavioral theory was a departure from studies on leadership that focused on what leaders have, and moved towards considering things that leaders do. In these studies, researcher looked critically at how leaders behave towards their subordinates in different context. They were able to group the leaders' behavior into three (3) main groups which they later identified as leadership styles, which are:

- the autocratic leadership style which involves telling the employees what to do;
- the democratic leadership style which encourages participation in decision-making;
- the laissez-faire leadership style which is a hands-off approach, allowing subordinates to determine their course of action.

Contingency Theory: having highlighted the weaknesses in previous theories, Scholars moved towards a contingency theory, with the aim of addressing the flaws in other theories, examples of such scholars are Cogliser and Brigham (2004). The crux of the contingency theory is that there is no optimum leadership style but that with the results achieved from leader-follower association which is a function of the context under which the association took place. The argument is that leaders should possess an array of skills that enable them to switch from one form of leadership style to another when the circumstances change because there is no ideal leadership style for all times. It is in line with this thought that this paper seeks to evaluate the level to which leaders who possible adopt different leadership approaches to align with one another in a bid to find lasting solutions to challenges.

From the literature, we see that resilience needs to be worked out by organizations, through arrangement and re-arrangement of resources, both tangible and intangible, in a bid to outlive adverse conditions. This led to the development view of resilience which implies that the concept can be activated under different circumstances (Doerfel et al., 2010). As a result,

the Relational Activation of Resilience model developed by Teo, Lee and Lim (2017) lays credence to how organizations can deploy the rearrangement of leadership in ways to foster interconnectedness, as a way of achieving resilience. The RAR model takes a social constructionist perspective of leadership, with the aim of exploring how a discursive leadership orientation can contribute to the process-based, communicative perspective of resilience. It is premised on three key pillars: organizations as networked structures, leaders as embedded actors with social influence within these networks, and resilience as the process of developing relational networks that allow the organization to adapt and restore function (Teo et al., 2017). Further confirming the role that communication plays in building resilience but in this case, highlighting the place of network between leaders. However, the model did not give a detailed process on how the relational skills of leaders lead to resilience, providing the gap that this study attempts to explore.

4 METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the work reflects the aim of the study as explained by Reason and Bradbury (2001), as it intends to provide an objective investigation of the role of leadership alignment in building resilience. As a bid to elicit the right information, adequate attention was given to the profile of respondents that made up the sample, ensuring that they possess the right information on how the organizations they work with respond to disruptions during crisis. Based on this, the respondents were either team leaders or managers in their respective departments, across different industries. This was consciously used to ensure that the outcome of the study could be generalized. To be eligible to participate in the study, each respondent needs to lead a team of a minimum of five (5) members and must have liaised with senior managers during crises in the organization. Given that the study seeks to investigate the sample between the dependent variable (Organizational Resilience) and the independent variable (Leadership Alignment), it adopted the use of primary data, collected through equestionnaires. Using the snowball sample approach, the links were shared with selected eligible respondents using purposive sampling methods, who in turn shared with others within their industry. A total of 34 completed responses were received out of which 12 respondents were considered not eligible, leading to a sample of 22 respondents. Therefore, the data analyzed for the paper is made up of a sample of 22 respondents (Boddy, 2016) who have led teams and liaised with senior officers in their firms during crisis in a bid to find solutions.

5 DATA ANALYSIS

The outcome of the study showed the level of understanding in organizations about the concept of resilience, as many team leaders had basic understanding of resilience, though about 21.3% still held the opinion that resilience involves the ability of the firm to insulate itself from happenings in the environment, to mitigate adverse effects on its operations, however, a high proportion, 72.1% understand that resilience revolved around the ability of the firm to adjust and overcome challenges posed on the business as a result of external disruptions. In agreement with the literature, the survey showed that there are drivers and inhibitors of organizational resilience. Respondents showed that high level of bureaucracy and poor feedback mechanisms in organizations during a crisis are inhibitors to enhancing resilience, i.e., being that the shock or crisis from the environment needs to be appropriately captured and analyzed, any action or policy that hinders any of the stated processes makes it difficult for the firm to build resilience. This further emphasizes the place of communication captured in literature (Brown & Trevino, 2006). However, effective teamwork and collaboration at all levels were postulated as the main driver of resilience (43.2%), followed by the possession of requisite skills needed to combat challenges posed by the crisis (39.2%).

In terms of leadership, respondents unanimously agreed to the fact that effective leadership plays a significant role in a firm's bid to enhance resilience, though the sample differed on which of the leadership styles is most suitable for building resilience, with most of them highlighting that transformational leadership (35.7%) and situational leadership (32.8%) are the most effective leadership styles for building resilience. This stance was supported by the opinion of the level of exchange that takes place between leaders and members under this leadership style. The study further elicited responses from the sample on the effect of adopting different leadership styles by leaders in different units and teams, this brought to the fore the need for alignment, as the tendency for different leadership styles to exist in organizations is high. About 67.7% of the sample opined that alignment, which was defined as the structure put in place by organizations to foster collaborations (especially informal collaborations) among leaders, is more readily achieved at unit levels, as each team or unit is expected to discuss and strategize extensively on how to handle its challenges without necessarily considering the adverse effect that the solutions arrived at the unit/team level might have on other units in the organization or the firm as a whole.

Based on the data collected, the need to create structures that enable leaders in various units to interact and discuss challenges in a conducive and relaxed atmosphere was supported showing that it will enable each unit leader to articulate their perception of the crisis, in terms of source, cause, effect on his/her team, teams' reaction or solution to the crisis and requirement from the firm to achieve desired result. When all departments are present, they are able to give an opinion on the shortfalls of the proposed solution, which helps leaders to reach a more appropriate solution with minimal adverse effects. Using linear regression analysis, the effectiveness of leadership alignment (independent variable) had a standardized β – value of 3.245 with a p-value of 0.001 on resilience (dependent variable). This supports the assertion that effective leadership alignment would drive a seamless flow of communication within an organization, which is needed in a bid to enhance resilience.

6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Given the increasing level of disruption in the business environment, the need for organizations to build resilience has attained unprecedented levels, however, literature (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021) shows that practitioners and academics agree on the need for resilience but the "how" to build resilience is still not established in contemporary studies, as a result of the above, this study highlighted and proved the need for effective leadership alignment as one of the ways that organizational resilience can be enhanced. There is, therefore, the need to show a pathway on how to attain alignment which will in turn drive resilience. This paper discusses the use of the leadership alignment diamond, as a model for driving leadership alignment in organizations that aim to build resilience. The model is shown below;

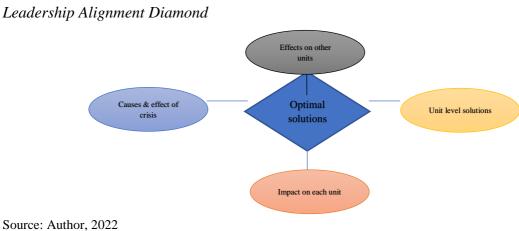


Figure 2

This model shows that organizations can build resilience by adopting stepwise process that fosters effective flow of communication in ways that culminates in optimal decision making as a means of combating crisis that the firm faces. The steps as shown in the model are discussed below;

Capturing the source and impact of crisis at the unit level: at the onset of crisis, it is important that critical evaluation of the source(s) of crisis be carried out, which also portends the tendency for each unit to understand the source of crisis from a different perspective. At the unit level, an attempt should be made to examine the "what" and "why" of the crisis, this helps to understand the steps that the units can take to address the challenges they are currently facing. More so, it is important to know the extent to which the crisis is affecting the activities of the unit, so that commensurate actions are taken. At this stage, leaders in each unit could leverage their leadership styles to elicit cooperation from members, so that information and how the unit can fare under current circumstances is shared. The more information the leaders are able to generate at this point, the more successful the rest of the process will be.

Evaluate the impact of the crisis at each unit level: in a crisis, the adverse effect(s) should be clearly stated and measured so that firms can ascertain the effectiveness of the solutions that they have proffered. At the unit level, the extent, that is, "how" the crisis has affected the unit should be stated and clearly understood by all affected. In this way, each person within the unit can leverage their skills and competencies to advise on the more effective means of combating the challenge, though this might seem to take away the "elegant perspective" of what a leader should be it ultimately provides the leader with work tools needed for sound judgment and assessment of the situation.

Proffering solutions at the unit level: having discussed at length and understood the situation, the unit needs to brainstorm on solutions that would help it sail towards desired organizational outcomes. In this process, there is a tendency for many options to be generated, each should be constructively critiqued and amended in a bid to find lasting solutions. At the end of this, the feasible solutions are taken to the next level for further consideration and amendment.

Addressing the impact of each unit's solution on other units: at this point in the model, leaders across different units discuss the solutions proffered at their unit levels, this creates the opportunity for other units to see how the solutions reached at the unit level has impact on other units and the organization at large, either in terms of the need for more skills, resources, cost or time overruns, which could be undesirable for the growth of the firm, though it appears to be

profitable at the unit level. This is one of the major benefits that leadership alignment brings to resilience because it engenders the systemic perspective in the solution-seeking process. The scrutiny of solutions from the unit levels provides insights from which parts are drawn to create a big picture which serves as an organizational compass out of the crisis.

Resolution of differences and adoption of the most feasible solution: Finally, after constructively evaluating the solutions and ameliorating the adverse effects of some of the solutions on other units and the organization as a whole, a holistic approach to solving the problem is adopted and a solution reached which helps the organization solve the current problem and positions it in ways that enables it to overcome similar challenges in the future.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The need for resilience is growing and becoming more important as the business community is attacked on various fronts, from environmental disturbance to economic imbalance and social insecurity. As a result, all efforts to achieve resilience need to be deployed. Practitioners still assert that alignment holds a significant explanation of how firms can cope, but decry the dearth of literature on how it can be attained. This paper, leveraging on alignment literature shows that emphasis on the four domains, according to Leonard (2008), as a means of attaining resilience does not paint the entire picture, as it does not capture turbulent times such as exist in today's business world. As such, the need to further blur lines of actions in the workplace to allow the free flow of information portends a more feasible solution. This can be achieved through the use of the leadership alignment diamond model discussed in this paper, which postulates that collaborations and facilitating inter-unit conversations on how to overcome crises will yield many more benefits for the firm. To drive leadership alignment in organizations, it is recommended that organizations inculcate cultures that aid communication flow, and flat-organizational structures, which encourage employees at all cadres to share information and ideas needed for organizational growth. Such cultures encourage inter-team discussion and workshops, giving every member an idea of how their input in the organization either strengthens or weakens the organization, i.e. enhancing a system approach. Adopting a system approach to building resilience, also generates the need for further blurring of boundaries which organizations need to inculcate in designing work schedules. During a crisis, emphasis should be placed on "what needs to get done", not necessarily on "whose role it is to carry out the task". Therefore, employees within the organizations need to focus on the relevance of their tasks to building resilience, not on the designations and job descriptions. Such collaboration is encouraged when the leadership alignment diamond model is adopted, given that it provides platforms for interaction across departments, units, and teams. During such interactions, each stakeholder has the opportunity to view the crisis through the lens of another professional and learn how such professionals deploy their skills in tackling challenges, fortifying the observer with knowledge of how the solutions proffered by the other professionals can have adverse effects on him/her and what needs to be done to avoid creating another problem in the process.

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