Transforming and Leading Organizations

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Abstract: Healthy organizational culture, creativity, "thinking outside the box", trusting communication, and effective problem solving all go hand-in-hand. Creating and maintaining a healthy culture in a network, team, group, or organization can be key to success. Far more attention needs to be given to how networks, teams, groups, and organizations can maximize their effectiveness, particularly when confronted by particularly daunting problems, challenges, and threats, even including crisis situations.

This presentation reviews some lessons that can be gleaned from ways in which networks, teams, groups or organizations have risen to major challenges. Some ways that leaders and facilitators can create, nurture, and help sustain the health of an organization will be outlined. The approaches to leadership used by those facilitating or guiding these efforts will be highlighted and the general characteristics of the individuals and groups involved will be described.

The attributes that distinguish an unhealthy organizational culture from a healthy one will be noted. Examples that will be used to illustrate points will include The Manhattan Project, the efforts of the ground crew in the rescue of the Apollo 13 astronauts, and more recent examples involving Mayor Giuliani's role in 9/11 response efforts, Verizon's role in 9/11 response and continuity of operations efforts, and the rescue of the Pennsylvania coal miners. This presentation addresses the following questions: What made these group efforts successful? What lessons can be learned and applied to present and future challenges?

Paper:

Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures

One way of looking at healthy and unhealthy organizational cultures is to consider Gerald Caiden's definition of bureaupathology (as derived from James Thompson). [i] Any or all of the following characteristics of bureaupathology can be found in an unhealthy organizational culture:

Process is more importance than purpose;

Authority is more important than service;

Form is more important than reality; and

Precedence is more important than adaptability. [ii]

By contrast, purpose, service, reality, and adaptability are seen by Thompson and Caiden as being hallmarks of healthy organizational cultures.

Herbert Shepard provides another way of looking at organizational culture with his "Primary" and "Secondary Mentality Assumptions". [iii]

Shepard's Primary Mentality Assumptions:

Coercion
Cut-throat competition
Compromise of principles

Shepard's Secondary Mentality Assumptions:

Cooperation
Collaboration
Consensus-seeking behavior [iv]

In unhealthy organizational cultures, primary mentality assumptions are the norm. In healthy organizational cultures, secondary mentality assumptions are the norm.

Healthy and unhealthy organizational cultures can also be viewed in light of Ruth Benedict's concepts of high and low synergy groups and societies. [v]

Benedict's Concept of Low Synergy

A low synergy group or society is one in which the interests of individuals and the interests of the group as a whole are at odds.

Benedict's Concept of High Synergy

A high synergy group or society is one in which the interests of individuals and the interests of the group as a whole are in harmony. [vi]

In keeping with these concepts, unhealthy organizational cultures are those characterized by "low synergy" and healthy organizational cultures are those characterized by "high synergy."

The concept of "synergy" was defined more fully by Abraham Maslow in *Eupsychian Management* as "the resolution of the dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness, or between selfishness and altruism." [vii]   This way of viewing synergy can be found in all of Maslow's writing on creating and managing healthy organizations and organizational cultures.

Mary Parker Follett offered her own complementary insights concerning the nurturing and maintaining of healthy organizations and healthy organizational cultures. In Mary Parker Follett's view, the role of the leader or manager is to unleash creative energies in ways that nurture the healthy development and contribute to the highest purposes of individuals, organizations, and society in general. [viii]

With her concepts of "power over" and "power with", Follett drew an important distinction between healthy and unhealthy approaches to leadership and management.

Mary Parker Follett's Concept of "Power Over"

A "power over" approach to management and leadership is characterized by an authoritarian approach to the wielding of power.

Mary Parker Follett's Concept of "Power With"

A "power with" approach to leadership and management empowers others,
nurturing the development of their capabilities and increasing their capacity
to take on and carry out increasing responsibilities. [ix]

From Follett's perspective, organizations with healthy organizational cultures have leaders and managers who use power in nurturing and empowering ways. The use of "power with" approaches can be key to transforming unhealthy organizational cultures into healthy organizational cultures. The use of "power with" approaches to managing and leading can be key to unleashing creative energies, and sustaining the health of healthy organizational cultures.

Maslow found these distinctions between "power over" and "power with" particularly important. He wrote of the nature of the motivation of a person who embraces a "power with" approach. He felt that the nature of the motivation of leaders and managers can play a major role in the healthiness of an organization's culture. Maslow coined a term for the kind of motivation that psychological healthy leaders and managers and self-actualizing individuals have. He called such motivation "metamotivation." [x]

Abraham Maslow's Concept of "Metamotivation"

Maslow defined "metamotivation" as
"being as concerned for the welfare of others as one is for one's own welfare."
Self-actualized individuals are metamotivated. [xi]

Maslow would certainly agree that organizations that have healthy organizational cultures have leaders and managers who act in "metamotivated" ways not only in crisis situations, but in non-crisis situations as well.

A model of leadership based on Maslow's concept of "metamotivation" was developed by Paula D. Gordon in her Master's thesis, *Leadership in Task-Oriented Work Groups*. [xii]   The metamotivation model of leadership developed in that thesis served as the basis of a theory of developmental change and change agentry. That theory is developed in Chapter 2 of her doctoral dissertation: *Public Administration in the Public Interest*. [xiii]

**A Metamotivational Leadership Model
(Gordon as Based on Maslow)**

The "metamotivational" approach to leadership and management can be characterized in the following way:

The "metamotivated leader or manager" is one who helps foster and sustain

~ a collaborative culture characterized by honesty, trust, and openness;

~ a culture that is conducive to creativity and "thinking outside of the box";

~a culture that empowers individuals and nurtures their development

~a culture that empowers individuals and nurtures their capacity to assume increasing responsibility in carrying out the mission of an organization;

~ a climate conducive to decisions and actions that are in the best interests of

individuals in the group, the organization, and society as a whole; and

~ a common sense of mission, what Follett refers to as the "invisible leader". [xiv]
Such a common sense of mission can be instrumental in both energizing and
driving the efforts of an organization.

Some Characteristics of Healthy Organizational Cultures

What are some of the characteristics of healthy organizational cultures?

Healthy organizational cultures can be seen as having the following characteristics:

~ In carrying out the mission of the organization, those in leadership, managerial, and facilitative
roles in healthy organizational cultures use non-threatening, non-coercive, and educational
approaches that reflect ethical purposes and values.

~ The actions of those in healthy organizational cultures are not driven by
negative motivators such as shame, fear, guilt, anxiety, distrust, or hatred.
Leaders and managers in healthy organizational cultures are not inclined to act in
controlling, manipulative, and stress-inducing ways that foster such responses.

~ Lessons are continuously being learned from experience, including difficult experiences
involving communication breakdowns, and other problems, challenges, crises, and failures.

~ A supportive climate fosters risk taking and learning from difficult or seemingly insurmountable
challenges, crises, problems, and failures.

~ "Messengers" who convey "bad news" or who uncover and report on wrongdoing or problems
are not "killed". Andrew Grove of Intel speaks of the consequences for the free flow of
information in an organization when "messengers" who convey "bad news" are "killed". [xv]

~ When things go wrong, individuals are not scapegoated.

~ When errors, accidents, or failures occur, there is support, forgiveness, and understanding for
those involved.   Determining what went wrong and why or understanding what seems to have
gone wrong requires openness and trust and the ability to communicate effectively.

To expand on the last point: if people are not listening to one another, if the discourse is driven by
accusations based on unfounded assumptions, misunderstandings, and miscommunications, it
may impossible to find out what actually happened in a given situation. Where there is no sense
of fairness or fair play, openness and trust will also be lacking or at best, difficult to sustain.
When individuals involved in discourse assume an adversarial posture, the openness and trust
necessary to getting at the truth will necessarily suffer. (Deborah Tannen and before her, Walter
J. Ong, shed light on the roots of adversarial posturing and how it affects human interaction. [xvi]
Their insights complement those of Benedict, Follett, Maslow, Caiden, and Shepard when the
latter describe unhealthy organizations and unhealthy organizational behavior).

When people are "convicted" without even a hearing, let along a "fair trial", the chances of getting
at the truth of what actually happened may well be nil. The chances of individually or collectively
recognizing and addressing problems become difficult at best in an organizational culture that is
lacking in open and trusting communication.

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**Some Ways in Which Unhealthy Organizational Cultures
Can Be Inadvertently Fostered**

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The Challenge of Friendly Competition

If not sensitively handled, efforts to integrate "friendly" competitiveness or "entrepreneurial internal markets" as described by William E. Halal [xvii] can devolve into cutthroat competition. If such efforts are not guided by the highest of purposes and values, they can lead to a skewing of an organization's values and mission and turn a healthy organizational culture into an unhealthy one. The mission, values, and health of the organizational culture of government agencies can be affected in a negative way when agencies are required to compete with the private sector (or with other parts of government) in order to keep services from being outsourced.

**Special Challenges Posed by the Mixing of Dissimilar
Organizational Cultures in An Organization**

Attempts to merge two or more organizations that have dissimilar organizational cultures can present major obstacles to organizational health. Such difficulties can occur when an "industrial" organization decides to adopt attributes of "smart" or "quantum" organizations. These terms are borrowed from a typology of organizations developed by Rene Tissen, Daniel Andriessen, and Frank Lekanne Deprez appearing in their book, *The Knowledge Dividend*.[xviii] In that typology, they parse out the various ways in which these three types of organizations can differ**.** According to their typology, these three types of organizations have what can be seen as being diametrically opposing value systems and cultures. If there are different types of organizations functioning under the "common roof" of one organization, those in charge need to have special understanding of how to bring about harmony between and amongst the different organizational cultures.

In their book, *Organizing Genius*, Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman describe what went right and what went wrong between the Xerox Corporation and the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), a research and development "adjunct" of the corporation. [xix] No bridge was built between the two dissimilar organizational cultures. PARC's efforts failed to have the result that they might otherwise have had. PARC and Xerox were not moving forward together with a common sense of direction and mission. While what PARC accomplished was extraordinary, the ultimate impact of PARC's efforts was not.

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Intermittent or Standing Threats to Organizational Health

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Threatened or intermittent lay-offs as well the periodic firing of the "lowest 10%" of an organization can drastically affect the efforts of an organization and the healthiness of its culture. Any of these can be sources of untold stress and conflict within individuals and within organizations. A kind of schizophrenia can become pandemic amongst employees. While part of their efforts are focused on doing their best to contribute to the success of the organization overall, another part of their efforts can be directed at impeding the efforts of others in the organization whom they may view as threats to their own job security and status in the organization.

Different approaches taken by leaders and managers can reflect and generate conflicting motives. At one level or "on paper", the organization may seem to share characteristics of a high synergy organization, but in actuality, large numbers of those in the organization may be acting in ways that are motivated out of self-interest and survival. Such patterns of behavior can be found in team efforts as well.

Edwards Deming in his discussion of the deadly diseases of management provides additional insights concerning factors that can undermine the health of organizational cultures. His list of deadly diseases of management included the deleterious effects that annual performance reviews can have. [xx] A reason for Deming's abhorrence of annual performance reviews is that by putting undue importance on short term goals, long term goals and purposes are too often lost. Also the results of some actions may not be evident for years. The person who was successful in bringing about such long term results may have been fired long ago for having "failed to perform".

Many Lessons Can Be Gleaned from the Management of Crises

Much can be learned from studying crisis situations that were handled well. Leadership and management challenges that are dealt with successfully in a crisis can provide major insights into everyday management challenges. Some examples worthy of study include:

~ The Manhattan Project. (See especially the description of The Manhattan Project provided by Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman.)[xxi] Of particular note in the case of The Manhattan Project is the role played by Follett's "invisible leader".   Bennis and Biederman write about Richard Feynman, a young physicist who had gone to Los Alamos to work on the Project. He along with the other young physicists assembled did not know the purpose of the project that they were being asked to work on. They set about working on solutions to various problems they were given. Soon after the Manhattan Project was launched, Feynman went to J. Robert Oppenheimer, the head of the Project, and demanded that the group be told why they were there and what the overall purpose of the project was. Oppenheimer broke down and told Feynman and the others. When they understood the importance of the mission and how important it was that they work quickly, they all began working as hard as they could. With an understanding of the significance of what they were doing, they committed themselves 100% to the Project.[xxii]

~ The efforts of the ground crew in the rescue of the Apollo 13 astronauts. (See especially the film "Apollo 13" and the book by Gene Kranz, *Failure is Not An Option*.)[xxiii] The ground crew absorbed as if by osmosis their leader's sense of purpose and resolve to bring the astronauts back to earth safely. This was also a task that required extraordinary expertise. The leader in this case had to be able to work with experts from many different areas of specialization. He had to be able engage them in a collaborative problem-solving process, while enabling, empowering, and encouraging them to "think outside the box". He had them use simulations as well as brainstorming to come up with solutions to the problems that the astronauts were confronting on Apollo 13. Gene Kranz facilitated the group's efforts in a way that unleashed their creative energies and enabled them to get the astronauts back safely.

~ The efforts of Mayor Giuliani and his staff in response to 9/11. (See especially Mayor Giuliani's book, *Leadership*.) [xxiv] Mayor Giuliani, like Gene Kranz, was similarly able to imbue his team with a common sense of purpose and resolve. Because of the networks and relationships that the Mayor had built up overtime he had the best possible working relationship with many of the participants in this monumental team effort. Because of the preparation and the exercising that had been done for a wide variety of possible emergencies, the participants in the team effort were as well prepared as possible for the improvising they had to do and the actions they had to take. Good working relationships, open communication, a common sense of mission, a deeply ingrained dedication to serving the public, and plain and simple caring and good will contributed immensely to the successfulness of these efforts.

~ The role that Verizon played in 9/11 response and recovery efforts. (See especially a presentation by Chuck Lee of Verizon and an article about Mark A. Weitleitner, also of Verizon, for descriptions of that company's response efforts.) [xxv] The actions taken by Verizon were extraordinary. There seemed to be several keys to the success of Verizon's efforts in helping restore telecommunications in the affected area. These included courage, risk-taking, "thinking outside the box," experience, skill, and the exercise of initiative, intuition, ingenuity, and good

judgment. These factors along with a commitment to serving the public combined to make Verizon's efforts successful.

~ The efforts of the team leading the rescue of the Pennsylvania coal miners in the Que Creek mine disaster (For an account based on the notes and first hand descriptions of some rescue team members, see Andrew Morton's book *Nine for Nine: The Pennsylvania Mine Rescue Miracle*.) [xxvi]   The most striking factors that seemed to characterize the efforts of the relatively small team of persons who "drove" rescue efforts include the following: The team members demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to take the most flexible possible approach to decisionmaking in a constantly changing situation. Whole new sets of possible options had to be considered and re-evaluated at every juncture owing to the many unforeseen things that happened. In addition, individuals helping the team engaged in simultaneous web searches in an attempt to gather information needed in order to build a critical piece of equipment. That piece of equipment was eventually built and welded together on the spot. Without it, it is unlikely that the rescue attempt would have succeeded. Key factors in the success of this group's efforts included experience, skill, knowledge, a common determination to succeed, a spirit of collaboration, the abundant application of ingenuity and intuition and good will, and an extraordinary capacity to make decisions in a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment.

~ The support efforts provided by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), SAP, and E-TEAM during the fires in California that occurred in the fall of 2003. These groups came together and extemporaneously mounted information collection and monitoring efforts. They produced data sets and made these available to emergency managers who had frontline responsibilities for responding to the fires. Hewlett Packard also played a valuable role by providing the computers that the groups used.   (For some details concerning these efforts, see a November 2003 ESRI press release.) [xxvii]   Here again, factors were at play that were also found in other of the group efforts mentioned here. Perhaps, unique to this situation was the fact that there had been no exercise that had prepared these different groups to organize in the way they did and provide the kind of support services they provided to those in key positions of responsibilities for tracking, containing, and putting out the fires. A mix of private and public sector resources were brought together on the spur of the moment to address a monumentally large number of wildfires. This collaborative effort was remarkable in its inventiveness and spontaneity. The rapidity of the launching of such useful support services was extraordinary. These efforts played a significant role in helping to address this large scale disaster.   Individuals saw what needed to be done, joined forces, and did what they could to contain and stop the fires.

Just as much can be learned from efforts that go well, much can be learned from studying situations that were not well handled, including situations that arose owing to a variety of factors that are synonymous with unhealthy organizational cultures. Disasters that could have been prevented include the Johnstown Flood,[xxviii] the Bhopal disaster,[xxix] and the Centralia #5 mine disaster.[xxx] In these instances, common factors can be found including a breakdown in communication or the absence of effective communication; a failure to recognize a problem or address a problem; a failure to assume responsibility and take action; and an absence of a concern for life, health, the environment, and the public good in general. Flawed group decisionmaking processes have also been implicated in both the Challenger and Columbia disasters, as well as in numerous other disasters and catastrophes.[xxxi]

Much also can be learned from "The Dish," an Australian film based on actual events involving the Apollo 11 manned mission to the moon.[xxxii] This film provides insight into how a team that had been totally dysfunctional was able to transform itself into a fully functioning team with a healthy organizational culture. The transformation came about when the team was faced with a series of major challenges that forced team members to work together to do all they could do to carry out their support role in the Apollo 11 mission.

Some Concluding Thoughts

A healthy organizational culture provides a supportive environment conducive to open, honest, and trusting communication; collaboration and cooperation; the application of common sense, experience, knowledge, wisdom, ingenuity, and creativity; and the realization of individual and organizational potentials.

Metamotivational, "power with" and "high synergy" approaches to leadership and management can be instrumental in unleashing creative energies and can play an essential role in cultivating and sustaining a common sense of mission. "Power over" approaches to leadership and management, coercive tactics, and cut-throat competitiveness can have just the opposite results.

Building healthy organizational cultures, transforming unhealthy organizational cultures into healthy ones, melding dissimilar organizational cultures into healthy organizational cultures, and maintaining the health of healthy organizational cultures are all essential to maximizing the potential of organizations and to unleashing the creative energies of individuals and organizations alike.

[i] Gerald E. Caiden, *The Dynamics of Public Administration*, New York, Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, Inc. 1971, p. 8

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] Herbert Shepard, "Changing Interpersonal and Intergroup Relationships in Organizations." In *Handbook of Organizations.* Edited by James G. March. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965: 1115-1143. Edited by James G. March. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965.

[iv] Ibid.

[v] Ruth Benedict as cited by A.H. Maslow, "Synergy in the Society and in the Individual." *Journal of Individual Psychology*. 20 (November 1964): 153. For his own writing about Benedict's concept of synergy, Maslow relied on notes from a lost manuscript of Benedict's published in Ruth Benedict, "Synergy: Patterns of the Good Culture," *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970): 320-333 and T.G. Harris, "About Ruth Benedict and Her Lost Manuscript," *Psychology Today* 4(1970): 51-52.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Abraham Maslow, *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*. Homewood, Ill.: Irwin-Dorsey Press, 1965:20. This book has been reprised under the title of *Maslow on Management.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

[viii] Mary Parker Follett, "Power" in Henry C. Metcalf and L. Urwick, ed. *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1941: 95 - 116.

[ix] Ibid.

[x] Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Metamotivation: The Biological Rooting of the Value-Life*," Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 7 (Fall 1967): 93 - 127.)

[xi] Ibid.

[xii] Paula D. Gordon*, Leadership Behavior in Task-Oriented Work Groups*. Masters Thesis, University of California at Berkeley, School of Public Affairs, 1969.

[xiii] Paula D. Gordon, *Public Administration in the Public Interest: A Prescriptive Analysis of a Democratic Humanist Paradigm of Public Administration.* Doctoral Dissertation. American University (Washington, D.C) School of Government and Public Administration, 1975. (Available in digital form at academic libraries through the ProQuest Digital Dissertations service).

[xiv] Mary Parker Follett, "The Essentials of Leadership" reprinted in *Classics in Management*, Harwood F. Merrill, ed., American Management Association, New York, 1960: 331-332. (Reprinted from Mary Parker Follett, *Freedom and Coordination*, Chapter IV, L.Urwick, ed. Management Publication Trust, Ltd., London, 1949: 47-60).

[xv] Andrew Grove, "Computing Technology Trends", Speech before the Economic Club of Detroit, Detroit, MI, 09/10/97. C-SPAN tape: 97-09-12-20-1, ID: 90842.

[xvi] Deborah Tannen*, The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*. New York: Random House, 1998, and Walter J. Ong, *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981.

xvii William E. Halal, *The New Management: Democracy and Enterprise Are Transforming Organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996.

xviii Rene Tissen, Daniel Andriessen, and Frank Lekanne Deprez, *The Knowledge Dividend: Creating High-Performance Companies Through Value-Based Knowledge Management*. London: Pearson Education Limited, 2000: 131.

xix Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman, "A Computer with a Rebel Heart" in *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1996: 63-86.

xx Edwards Deming, Available at http://www.endsoftheearth.com/Deming14Pts.htm#Seven. Accessed January 10, 2004.

xxi Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman, "The Manhattan Project" in *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1996: 171-195.

xxii Ibid.

xxiii Gene Kranz, *Failure is Not an Option*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

xxiv Mayor Rudy Giuliani*, Leadership.* New York: Miramax, 2002.

xxv Chuck Lee, Speech to the Executive's Club of Chicago, December 13, 2001. Available at http://newscenter.verizon.com/speeches/leespeeches.vtml. Accessed January 10, 2004, and Ben Charmy, "Digging Out of the Rubble," (with an interview of Mark A. Wegleitner), C-Net News.Com. Available at http://news.com.com/1200-1070-975482.html. Accessed January 11, 2004. Also see Mark A. Wegleitner, Senior Vice President, Chief Technology Officer, Verizon Communications. Presentation at the McGraw Hill Homeland Security Summit & Exposition in Washington, DC, June 6, 2002.

xxvi Andrew Morton, *Nine for Nine: The Pennsylvania Mine Rescue Miracle 2002*. London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd., November 2002.

xxvii ESRI Press Release Available at http://www.esri.com/news/releases/03_4qtr/fires.html. Accessed January 10, 2004.

xxviii The Johnstown Flood, "A Roar Like Thunder", Johnstown Pennsylvania Information Source Online, Available at http://www.johnstownpa.com/History/hist19.html. Accessed January 11, 2004.

xxix Encyclopedia: Bhopal Disaster, National Master.Com. Available at http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Bhopal-Disaster. Accessed January 11, 2004.

xxx John Bartlow Martin," The Blast in Centralia #5: A Mine Disaster No One Stopped*," In Ideas and Issues in Public Administration - A Book of Readings*, pp. 2-22, Dwight Waldo, ed., New York: McGraw Hill, 1953: 2-22.

xxxi "Groupthink, Revised Edition" CRM films, 1991 and The Columbia Accident Investigation Board Report, 2003. (Final volumes released October 28, 2003.) Available at http://www.nasa.gov/columbia/home/. Accessed January 11, 2004. Also see Irving Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2nd ed., 1982.

xxxii "The Dish," Warner Brothers film, 2000.

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