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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, THE SWEET SPOT OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract: The gap between education and employability can be viewed as resulting in the gap between 'qualified' and 'successful' and can be traced to whether a society ignores or acknowledges emotions. In business, emotions are not reflected in balance sheets but ego, anger, enthusiasm and compatibility can break or make deals, boost productivity and creativity can provide a competitive edge. The ability to get along with others is based on emotional intelligence and attracts collaboration, loyalty and preferred status; contributing to Leadership and inspired team performance. Hence business schools have embraced the 'intelligence' of emotions and accepted their role in growth and progress.

Recent advances in imaging technology have helped neuroscience take a quantum jump in the study of the functioning brain and revealed working secrets of emotional processes that can be applied for anger management, ego balance, empathy and attunement. Business schools may succeed in enhancing employability of individuals based on skills and experience but careers can fizzle out due to health problems, toxic relationships, excessive demand and lack of coping ability. Emotional Competence lends stability and maturity to individuals and creates sensitive organizations that generate a culture which prevents stress and burnout.

This paper seeks to achieve a shift in attitudes towards the importance of developing and applying Emotional Intelligence in management tasks through incorporation of workshop based experiential learning of Emotional Competencies along with acceptance of the biological factors that come into play in individual and organizational behavior. Emotional Management is the sweet spot that incorporates applicable Neuroscience.

Keywords: Imaging technology, Brain mapping, Emotional Intelligence, Neurosciences

Emotions Asset or Liability

Intelligence and emotions are not mutually exclusive phenomena. On the contrary, they enhance each other. In evolutionary process the ability to crunch numbers, analyze the results, imagine and conceive complex design, compose music and excel in sport developed later than the ability to feel the sadness or joy of a friend and to respond with appropriate expression. We observe emotion and empathy in rats¹ and altruism in birds; and examples of bravery in life in the jungle. Human intelligence developed in the neo-cortex (new outer brain – in evolutionary context) with retention of and refinement of emotional ability. Natural Selection chose to retain emotions hence they must be essential for survival of mankind but we often find emotions getting in our way and making us ill. Is anger necessary? Is ego a driving force or a braking mechanism? Does empathy empower or weaken? Should a leader let emotion show or pretend he does not have any?

Questions like these still confound the intellect though both intelligence and emotion have been around for ages.

Acceptance of reality often requires corroboration from science. With advances in imaging technology using magnetic resonance and positron emission studies coupled with computers that can identify and filter signals from areas of heightened activity and display them spatially, today's neuroscientists can study a working live brain and proceed beyond the 'dead' end of post-mortem study. Exciting new evidence is helping to put together a jumble of jig-saw pieces and reuniting diverse specialties such as Neurology, Endocrinology, Immunology and Psychiatry. From this wealth of information we can now soak up what is applicable and relevant to Psychology and Behavioral Science and incorporate into Management education.

Shift in Attitude towards emotions at the Workplace

Due to the confounding nature of emotion it was conventional to conceal them and sweep them under the carpet. Feelings were like the elephant in the room. Everyone knows it is there but no one speaks about it. There was fear (which is surely an emotion) that emotions will confuse and distract us; that they will cloud judgment and undermine authority and hence feelings were given no place in business. Some cultures would tolerate emotion in personal life and expect people to repress feelings at the workplace, generating stress and psychological discomfort.

Medical students are known to suppress empathy at brain level in order to deal with the distress caused to self when in the presence of others in distress.² It was found that they could not turn empathy back on as the repression happens at a subconscious level. This demonstrates that it is either not possible or not conducive to psychological health to be one person at home and quite someone else at work.

Today we have the findings of neuroscientists and behavioral scientists to demonstrate that emotions assist us in decision making³. Though emotions are known to hijack the thinking brain, at most times they connect us with our values and help tap a pool of motivational energy that 'star' performers use. Our fears make us cautious and we prudently design fallback options. Love makes us overcome fear and take that leap of faith with a safety net in place. Passion is the essential ingredient of leadership and what raises work from mediocrity to excellence.

It is difficult to imagine life without emotion. Patients suffering from Cotard's syndrome are unable to connect to the emotional core of the brain due to damage or disease in the connecting neuron pathways. The condition was earlier named 'Cotard's delusion' because though the patient is apparently well and intelligent, therapists find it impossible to convince the patient that he is alive!⁴

Let us accept the reality of emotions and appreciate the wisdom of Nature for retaining the physiology of emotion through the process of evolution. Since the scope and spread

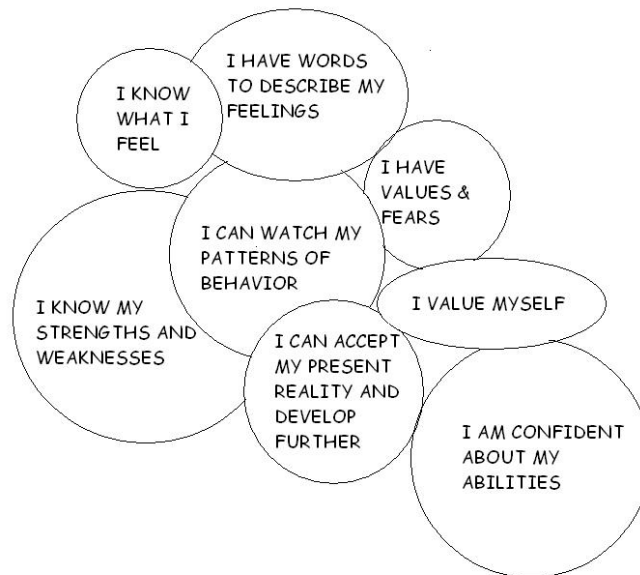
of emotional involvement is extensive, a convention has been developed among EI gurus to organize the competencies in 4 clusters.

EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

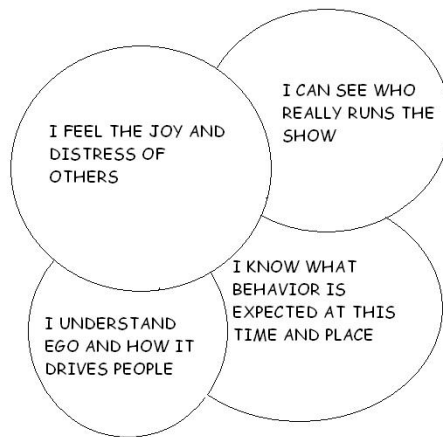


Embracing and acknowledging the principles of Emotional Intelligence leads to unraveling of the jumble of feelings that runs through every aspect of life. There is no longer the need to pretend that feelings don't exist or don't matter. Not having to repress feelings is a liberating experience. We can use the now available energy (earlier used in repression) to understand and regulate or 'manage' emotion both in the self and in others. The term 'Management' is used for resources and assets e.g. 'Financial Management' and in context of this discussion 'Anger Management'. Just as we 'Balance' revenue and expenditure we must learn 'Ego Balance' and emerge with profits such as Influence, Trust and Respect; all without the prop of authority.

SELF AWARENESS CLUSTER



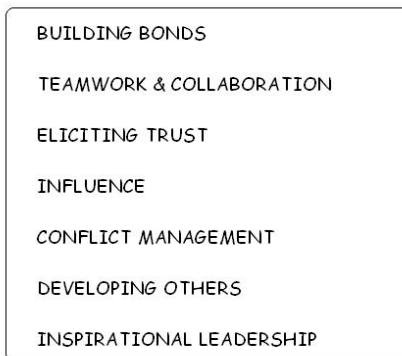
EMPATHY CLUSTER



SELF MANAGEMENT CLUSTER



RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT CLUSTER



Anger and Ego are Essential for Living Assertively

Anger and dissatisfaction drives people to create change and progress so it must be regarded as an asset. Anger well managed is directed to creative and collaborative action rather than towards destructive reaction against persons, things or self. Self-directed or repressed anger can result in formation of 'anger trait' in the personality and causes physical disease as the hormones released during anger (norepinephrine / noradrenaline) have direct impact on the heart and blood vessels.⁵

Ego drives ambition and aspiration to excel. Individual ego can be coalesced with team ego and similarly transferred upward to form national pride. Self-worth and self-love ensure that individuals will not stoop to demean themselves by going against universal values such as honesty. Self-worth should be guarded and boosted zealously from cradle onward as a National Treasure.

The Emotional Mid-Brain has a life-saving Role

Under the influence of strong emotions, the thinking parts of the brain cannot function. Often we look back on actions and realize that what we did in that moment of anguish / fear / anger / helplessness; was directed by the subconscious. This level of the brain is remarkably efficient and swift – like a commando with immaculate training to act as a life-saving mechanism. Nature does not trust the slow processing of the thinking brain during threatening situations so it shuts down to allow the commando mid-brain to override the system. The phenomenon is commonly referred to as 'hi-jack'⁶ although it really is a life-saving emergency mechanism. Other emergency drills that we have to learn like military maneuvers, fire safety protocols and evacuation procedures have to be practiced repeatedly as many times as required for neural circuitry to be consolidated and the drill to be relegated to the subconscious, so it can be retrieved during distress when the brain cannot think.

Revelations in Neuroscience of Emotion

The anatomy and chemistry of emotional hijack is now clearly understood. The tissues that participate in emotional regulation are known and we can devise ways to exercise and strengthen them. The exercises are to be done with awareness about emotional competencies at a time conducive to learning at a neuronal level and not in times of stress.

Tissue building happens while people are relaxed and having fun, energized by curiosity and goaded by challenge to emerge from comfort zones. When demand outstrips the resources challenge turns to stress⁷ which releases catabolic hormones (cortisol) causing tissues to weaken and break down. Coaches who are aware of Emotional Intelligence

Learning are essential in professional schools as they can guide students to build resilience which will be called upon in times of crisis.

The time required by the brain to deal with a flood of emotion linked hormones has been studied. The ability to delay reaction by enough time to allow the neurons to recover from an episode of flooding depends upon work done by a robust strap of neurons (orbito-frontal cortex) that is strengthened during exercises in delaying gratification. The action of the OFC is to calm the ruffled emotional center⁸ (amygdala) so it stops producing chemicals of 'upset'. Once the hormones of emotion are mopped up the thinking brain can reclaim its supply of nutrients and restart function. It is then enabled to consider various intelligent options of response and is freed from the shackles of predictable reaction patterns that originate in the amygdala. Learning to pause and consider is an essential step in EI training.

Career growth /derailment

It is said that I/Q gets you hired but it is the E/Q that pushes you up the professional ladder. For both employees and entrepreneurs E/Q could determine the gap between 'qualified' and 'successful'. When one displays predictable patterns of reaction he/she fails to qualify as a manager because managers are expected to 'respond' rather than 'react'.

During a steady climb up the hierarchical ladder climbers experience increasing demands on emotional competence and lower demands on technical competence because technical tasks are then delegated. While building skills it is important to train for where you want to be rather than for where you are at. A leader's job is 100% emotional competence with equal emphasis on the four quadrants of Emotional Competencies Framework. Professionals need to be aware about how and where to train in EI Competencies because each person has to take responsibility for her / his development.

Career derailments can usually be traced to reasons related to inability to handle interpersonal problems; unsatisfactory team leadership during times of difficulty or conflict; inability to adapt to change or elicit trust (The Center for Creative Leadership, 1994).

Awareness and training in emotional competencies has been successful in spite of the perception that emotional competencies cannot be taught because it has been found that they can be learned.

Burnout

Qualified and eminently 'employable' individuals when placed in demanding and stressful positions deliver at high productivity for a while but run the risk of 'Burnout'⁹. This phenomenon may manifest as physical illness, disillusionment, lack of respect for others, cynicism, toxic behavior, callousness and hankering for change. People who

cannot strike up supportive relationships at work, those working in dangerous environments and professionals expected to deliver high levels of care and concern for long hours (e.g. nurses) are especially prone to burnout. Organizations and employers who are aware about the causes of burnout will be able to design systems of support to prevent it and retain some valuable workers.

Stress Prevention

Sensitivity and awareness about emotional chemistry can help individuals and organizations to prevent stress at points of generation, rather than to allow stress to build up and then organize stress relief camps. The usual suspects that notoriously cause stress are unregulated emotion and reaction patterns, ego issues and the inability to digest and deal with criticism. Resultant relationship problems multiply and complicate issues spiraling stress into a consuming vortex.

Ego problems generate in the subconscious and often individuals are clueless about why they react in certain ways. The physiology of social pain (such as rejection) and physical pain have been studied and it has been found that social discomfort activates the same parts of the brain as evolutionarily created for sensing physical pain¹⁰. Activation in those regions will naturally cause a fight or flight reaction: avoidance, aggression, vindictiveness and wanting to hurt back, while the body reacts with increased blood pressure, higher heart rate, increased blood sugar and tensing of muscles.

Emotional Intelligence training helps people to identify toxic patterns and break them. With practice we can learn to identify the triggers and choose not to jump on the rails of repetitive and ingrained reaction and benefit by not having to control the resultant damage to relationships that invariably follows.

Relationships are based upon empathy and the unit of empathy and social intelligence is the mirror neuron. Their discovery in the late eighties¹¹ and subsequent research has demystified empathy, trust, intention and thought. There is now scientific evidence that fulfilling long-term relationships have psychological, hormonal and immunological benefits¹². Quality relationships protect biological systems from succumbing to the toxic effects of stress.

Health and happiness

Mitigation of stress prevents a host of diseases and contributes to good health. Apart from ego hassles, misdirected anger and learning to deal with criticism which is also connected with ego balance, sadness is known to generate and exacerbate disease.

When people function at levels lower than capability they experience deep sadness, perhaps even if they are unaware about their real potential. Inability to get along with others, to strike up and maintain long-term relationships erodes a person's image and proves detrimental to career growth. Low EQ persons will find fewer opportunities coming their way in comparison to popular colleagues. Poor interpersonal relation with

superiors and team causes people to withhold talents and not give their best, resulting in mediocre performance in spite of high potential.

Emotional Intelligence helps individuals to actualize their potential. Mentors and team leaders who are aware about emotional blocks to talent expression benefit from leveraging the best from team members and create organizational environments conducive to unleash creativity.

Working at top form and being in flow¹³ are situations that release endorphins in the body. Being creative is also an endorphin releasing activity, as is laughing whole-heartedly, helping people and contributing to a cause. Physiologically the benefits from these activities are the same as reaped from aerobic exercise and meditation. Endorphins are the hormone of happiness. They are indigenous pain-killers. Endorphins improve intelligent brain function, relax the heart and normalize blood pressure, boost the ability to fight infection and to repair worn out tissues. Happiness engineers positive health.

Organizations that pay hefty health bills or finance health insurance for employees find it prudent to focus on occupational health hazards and institute preventive health measures. Raising awareness about Emotional Intelligence helps by helping people to actualize potential and raise satisfaction / happiness levels and through minimizing stress and protecting people from the toxic action of chronic exposure to hormones of negative emotions. Prolonged action of cortisone, adrenaline and noradrenaline (hormones of stress, fear and anger respectively) causes damage to brain tissue and immune cells apart from the more well-known effects of damage to heart, kidneys, blood vessels and blood sugar metabolism.

Smart organizations embrace Emotional Intelligence to improve team-work and raise productivity, stay ahead of the competition by unleashing creativity and reduce costs through lower attrition. A pleasant surprise comes in the form of reduction in expenditure on medical bills.

Personal Growth

Unlike I/Q, emotional intelligence continues to grow. Another name for EI (E/Q) is 'maturity'. People being groomed for supervisory roles and for leadership require being strong or trained in EI Competencies. We now know that these competencies are based on the development of relevant areas of the brain and they can be exercised to grow in size and vitality just as athletes train groups of muscles relevant to their sport. Coaches and trainers who have knowledge about the 'applicable neuroscience' of emotional intelligence will be able to design courses and exercises aimed at developing and maintaining the pathways that contribute to decision making, understanding others and eliciting trust.

Individuals empowered with the knowledge of emotional intelligence can begin their leadership exercise¹⁴ by leading the self before beginning to lead others. Basic understanding about ego as a concept helps to finely adjust thought processes to result in balance. Individual psychology is complex and confusion at this level becomes a stumbling block in the path to personal growth. Training in the realm of dealing with emotions helps bring clarity so people can get out of their own way. Clarity begins with Self Awareness

Growth of a personality can coincide with spiritual growth. Scientists may not have found a 'God-spot' in the human brain but they have discovered that artificial stimulation of a certain gyrus results in 'out-of-body experience'¹⁵. We can infer that the ability to step away and view the self objectively exists in the wiring within the brain. With practice we can learn to use this capacity at will to assess ourselves without bias and attachment and put the self in perspective with the universe.

The existence of 'mirror neurons' explains how we connect with others without any hardware connections. These cells enable us to assess intentions of others and feel what they feel. They empower us to attune to others and resonate with them. Swami Vivekananda said that our connectedness is a fact of life. Today we know how. Appreciating and leveraging this connectedness is an ingredient of spiritual growth.

Mirror neurons for communication / Building Bonds

Communication skills are taught at professional schools and executive development programs. The substrate of communication is a network of nerve cells connected to special sense organs and to many muscle systems. Actors and dancers use every muscle in their body to communicate – actually everyone does. Body language and facial expressions express more than we are able to control resulting in unintended communication. Some messages pass below the radar of conscious communication and carry insidious messages that engender or erode trust. The receiver of communication need not be trained in perception, but the message finds its way and is interpreted non-verbally. This phenomenon forms the basis of emotional contagion. Relationships depend on this subtle exchange of information, even professional relationships.

Emotional Intelligence training puts us in touch with the vast subconscious and makes us sensitive to the fact that others have it as well; as do teams and organizations.

Chemistry of Trust

Instinctively animals and humans (especially babies) know whom to trust. The physiological system of a mother who breast-feeds a baby is awash with a hormone called oxytocin. The same hormone is found to be secreted even in males during social bonding. Another name for oxytocin is 'hugging hormone'¹⁶ though it can be generated even with a warm hand-shake, authentic smile, eye contact and other body signals of acknowledgment. Researchers test the effects of oxytocin in the lab using a nasal spray

and have found that exogenous application of the hormone via the nose results in heightened generosity and acts of caring¹⁷.

Influence

Influence belongs to the person who can elicit trust and is found to be dependable in dealings, a person who is visibly in control of reactions and conducts him/her-self appropriately and is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. In other words, an emotionally intelligent person wields influence regardless of authority.

Conflict Management

Emotions are contagious¹⁸. Though expressions of fear and anger grab attention instantaneously, humans have a natural preference for a happy face. In times of strife we prefer the company of a person with calm demeanor. If a manager can exude a sage-like aura, the ruffled feelings of persons involved in conflict gradually relax and their thought process expands for the purpose of negotiations in the authentic presence of a peaceful personality.

Inspirational Leadership

The phenomenon of 'Authentic Presence' manifests when a person lives in the 'here' and 'now' and gives away all of his attention. The gift of attention is valued higher than material gifts, but we seldom have the generosity to give all of it away. Some mental energy we selfishly keep to our-self, hooked on to self-consciousness, distracted by insecurities and looped in a labyrinth of self-doubt or even engaged in gloating about how wonderful we are. Part of this exclusive attention is used in hiding who we really are so we can shield our vulnerability behind designation badges. But leadership is not about how an individual *performs* or the position occupied; instead the focus is on *being* a leader i.e. having certain attributes.

A person may occupy a position of authority and keep losing self-control and fly into a temper or indulge in inappropriate behavior. Such a person loses respect and fails to inspire. A person who fails to exercise empathy cannot sense the values lying in non-verbal core area of the brain of persons who look up to him as a leader. How then can he align the individual and the purpose of the organization? How can he convert his vision into a collective dream? Inspirational leaders share and communicate their vision by touching personal chords. The individual then resonates and carries forth the vision motivated by his personal version of the collective dream. Transparency of the leader's personality and values is emulated to create a thousand new leaders. If the so-called leader's personality is cloaked in pretense he fails to inspire followers.

Strengths are seldom hidden. It takes courage to expose vulnerability. Any lack of transparency uses up mental energy. Once a conscious decision is made to allow vulnerability to show, there is levity as experienced with forgiveness. Energy consumed by cloaking and covering is suddenly set free and abundantly available for use on the task and for listening to others.

Intuition

Another gift of Emotional Intelligence that empowers is Intuition. There is no hard supportive evidence but intuition says 'I just know'. Access to this wellspring of internal wisdom is available to persons who have a well-developed Insula (a part of the brain that is also associated with empathy and becoming aware of physical effects of emotion such as heart rate and breathing). Study of intuition demonstrates that intuition is reliable but not good to use as evidence, so it has to be used prudently, with a safety net / exit route in place. Those who rely on intuition to evolve before the time has come, to invest in futuristic technology, to take risks and decisions when the outcome is unknown, should study the neurology of intuition and make use of exercises that develop the Insula.¹⁹

Catalyzing Change

Catalysts of change find resistance frustrating. Study of Emotional Intelligence explains why people resist change based on innate fears. Addressing unnamed fears, empathy expressed as concern helps to elicit trust and draws people out of comfort zones to grow and change in time to remain relevant.

Teamwork & collaboration

The ability of the brain to communicate wirelessly at the subconscious and conscious levels connects societies. Evolutionary patterns show explosive growth of the anterior part of the brain in humans compared to their nearest cousins. This houses most of the 'wetware' required for humans to socialize and collaborate. This evolutionary pattern suggests and beneficial physiology of relationships proves that humans were not designed to be alone. Their linguistic capability and talent for converting language to symbols enables recording and sharing. Thus equipped for collaboration and pooling of talent and knowledge humans do not have to reinvent the wheel but can take up where the previous generation left off towards continuous advancement.

Nurture of a new generation

The new generation will benefit greatly if we can keep abreast of what is new in education. For far too long we have taken emotions for granted and refused to acknowledge their critical role in decision making. We have gone overboard in denouncing anger and ego and named them as 'deadly sins' not realizing that they are essential for survival. Professionals in the business of providing care have been forced to throttle intrinsic empathy so that they can protect themselves from burnout. If teachers and doctors and employers and governments stop caring what will become of us?

Out of all the multiple intelligences enumerated by Howard Gardner²⁰, Emotional Intelligence is the one that is active (though immature) at birth. Values and fears are laid down in infancy and the process continues at varying pace throughout life. Education really begins under parents and other care-givers. It is incumbent upon EI coaches to spread awareness about emotional competency training far and wide. Children raised by emotionally aware parents start off with a definite advantage.

Business schools have taken the lead as organizations have been quick to detect the enhancement of productivity and performance that came with improved team dynamics. They say that ‘money talks’. Current evidence based studies demonstrate the return on investment made on EI education. The results are not immediate because emotional learning is slow and experiential. Every participant does not take away the same learning. Courses have to be customized for the type of profession and their unique skill-set requirement. Since the demand on EI competence rises with the position of authority and responsibility groups attending together should be roughly from similar backgrounds and seniority.

Emotional Intelligence has been around forever. Charles Darwin studied emotions in 1872 (*The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*) but the term was coined by Mayer and Salovey²¹ only in 1993 and the concept popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995 in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence and why it can matter more than IQ*, which sparked corporate interest.

Management Education is a good place to begin with training in Emotional Competency, though it must be simultaneously taken to schools, medical colleges and hospitals. Perhaps Management Schools can take an initiative to reach out to these. Eventually each prospective parent must acquire EI training so as to make parenting a proactive cradle for the nurture of future professionals with secure styles of affiliation, transparent personalities exuding authentic grace; having values that endure. Schools and teachers must have enough EI education to sustain and enhance self-esteem in children from which grows unshakeable integrity.

Management Schools advise graduates to work for 2 or 3 years before they come to study Management as a subject. Time spent in real working world gives them a taste of the *laboratory of life*. It is there that we realize what proportion of experience makes demands upon technical competence and how often emotional competence is called into play. On an average people experience that emotional competencies are used 80% of the time while technical expertise is called for only 20%. Should we be spending a proportionate time and effort on EI Education?

The subject of Emotional Intelligence has been regrouped with contemporary relevance, backed up with evidence based studies from diverse fields of Neuroscience, Biochemistry, Behavioral Science and Management Education. They underline the critical role of the brain in individuals and societies as well as business organizations. Emotional Intelligence based learning could be regarded as the ‘sweet spot’ of Management as well as of Education. There is nothing ‘sweet’ or ‘soft’ about the so-called soft skills. These attributes are encrypted in genetic configuration and hard-wired into neural networks. Ignore emotions at your own risk.

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