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destination brand blueprint update



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destinations are products too

The concept of building a product brand goes back more than a century. Whether it is Ford, Campbell's Soup or Kellogg's Corn Flakes, conventional wisdom indicated that brands were product driven and advertising focused. Today's thinking has changed all of that. But the thought that a city, such as Santa Monica, is a brand still strikes people as unusual. Isn't a brand something that you can see, hold or touch? Not exactly.

"The idea that business is strictly a numbers affair has always struck me as preposterous. For one thing, I've never been particularly good at numbers, but I think I've done a reasonable job with feelings. And I'm convinced that it is feelings alone that account for the success of the Virgin brand."

—Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group

"The work the CVB is conducting to establish a brand promise for the city—what we stand for and what people can expect when they visit—is of critical importance for us as a city and a tourist destination. We want to be at the top of visitors' must-see lists because the tourism industry is essential for the city to be able to continue existing citywide programs while also creating new ones that benefit the entire Santa Monica community."

—Councilman Robert Holbrook, City of Santa Monica

"Being a brand is the only way to stand out in a crowded marketplace. It is nothing more (and nothing less) than creating a distinct personality and then telling the world about it."

—Tom Peters, Author, *In Search of Excellence* and *Re-Imagine*

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Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau (SMCVB) was one of the first in the United States to fully embrace the emerging idea that destinations are products to be purchased. A successful destination brand clearly defines the community's unique and distinctive attributes that have both emotional and functional benefits to its visitors. It is not enough to have a great beach or a beautiful pier, as in the case of Santa Monica. As Richard Branson states, the destination must convey a certain *feeling* to the visitor that transcends the city's physical attributes.

Now, cities across the country are following this formula as destinations face stronger competition for the tourism dollar and the **visitor's** time. Competition is fierce, even among visitors to the Los Angeles region. With so many attractions within the LA basin, many with strong name awareness, it is critical that Santa Monica as a travel destination develop a strategy that will differentiate itself in the marketplace and provide a strong and more competitive advantage.

In order to survive in today's tough marketplace, a destination, like a business, must treat its brand identity as a strategic asset, one that is just as critical as the hotels, restaurants, attractions, arts and entertainment that make up the destination product. For Santa Monica to compete effectively in the future, the destination must seize control of its destination brand, own it, live it, protect it, and distinguish it in order to maintain and expand the city's visitor market share.

This Brand Blueprint will not only explain what a destination brand is, but tell the Santa Monica brand story from its development to its execution. Beginning in 2004, the community began this process when it undertook the first steps in destination Brand Assessment and the development of a destination BrandPromise®. SMCVB is now accelerating this process by bringing the brand to life throughout the entire community.

the destination BrandScience™ strategy

“Destinations do matter and they are destinations for a reason. How can a destination compete? By having an effective and meaningful brand. Santa Monica is a leading-edge destination that recognized the value of branding before many of its contemporaries. I applaud them for what they have accomplished and their visionary approach to lure people to their city.”

—Michael D. Gehrisch, President and CEO,
Destination Marketing Association International

“Santa Monica has taken the first critical steps in creating a genuine destination brand. Now comes perhaps the most rewarding, yet challenging aspect: to deliver a community-wide brand experience that transcends simple marketing messages. Santa Monica must now focus on “living” its very special and unique California cutting-edge beach style culture with dedication and purpose. From valets at upscale hotels and city police officers to owners of art galleries, restaurants and boutique shops, everyone, and that means everyone, has an important role to play in the vitality of the Santa Monica brand.”

—Gary Sherwin, President, Believable Brands

“Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau is ahead of the industry curve in recognizing the benefits of utilizing the Destination BrandScience Methodology to create a strategy for future success. This enlightened approach involved all community stakeholders in the development of a promise.”

—Duane Knapp, President, BrandStrategy Inc.

The Destination BrandScience™ strategy followed by Santa Monica is:

- **Brand Assessment**
- **BrandPromise**
- **Brand Culturalization**
- **Brand Blueprint**

Why go through this exercise? Simply put, a quality destination brand is critical to the success of the Santa Monica tourism industry. This Blueprint is designed to assist the community in understanding not only the brand development process, but also its very significant role in bringing the brand to life.

By collectively understanding and delivering on our BrandPromise, Santa Monica will stand stronger and more unified to face its competitive challenges in a strategic fashion.

Additionally, this Blueprint will help serve as an important tool for SMCVB in its marketing efforts by clearly identifying its strengths and unique selling propositions in an emotional way that connects with key visitors.

It is important to note that this is a community-wide initiative that will involve city leaders and residents, the business community, and all others that depend on a vibrant and healthy economic flow to Santa Monica. While SMCVB spearheaded this brand initiative, it is the community as a whole that delivers the distinctive Santa Monica experience.

Recently, the research company Chadwick Martin Bailey articulated what Santa Monica looks to garner in a recent study on word-of-mouth marketing. Their study indicated that word-of-mouth advocates serve as one of the best and most compelling marketing tactics available today. The study also said, “An advocate is an evangelist, not content to merely pass along or comment on the latest ‘thing.’ The advocate is driven by a **heartfelt belief** that you should try this product and is ready, willing and able to explain why.”

The experience they have determines the success of the Santa Monica destination brand. The Santa Monica community must work together to deliver the Santa Monica brand to the world.



the destination BrandScience™ process

Stakeholder Perceptions

This is a summary of the entire **Destination BrandScience** process and the steps that were taken by Santa Monica to develop its brand program:

Brand Assessment



OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the Brand Assessment is to determine among key local stakeholders as well as visitors and non-visitors their feelings, perceptions and attitudes toward Santa Monica as a travel destination and visitor product.

Through the use of multiple individual interviews and focus groups, the following information was obtained and is summarized here.

- **Get honest** about the destination from the visitor's or customer's standpoint.
- Learn how **your business community stakeholders** feel about Santa Monica and get consensus on the process.
- Research the real and perceived attributes of Santa Monica's competition.
- Ascertain how city leaders, **including elected officials and city staff**, view the Santa Monica experience.
- Identify and understand what is truly unique and distinctive about Santa Monica.

WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

- Conducted interviews with key stakeholders including city staff, business leaders, political leaders and residents on perceptions of the Santa Monica brand and creating project consensus.
- Conducted focus groups with key visitors and meeting planners in Chicago, New York and London on perceptions, attitudes and feelings regarding the Santa Monica visitor product.

WHAT KEEPS SANTA MONICA FROM BEING THE BEST DESTINATION:

- "We need to develop 'local' enthusiasm for our destination."
- "Santa Monica is the place for the regional homeless to hangout and panhandle."
- "City Council actions."
- "There doesn't appear to be a master plan for the city as a destination."
- "Santa Monica's beach is not clean, safe, or easily accessible."
- "Santa Monica is successful in spite of itself."
- "There is a trend in Santa Monica toward 'mean-spirited.'"
- "There is a current lack of consensus in the community regarding what Santa Monica should be as a destination."

Top 10 Strengths

- 1 Friendly/healthy people
- 2 Beach
- 3 Shopping
- 4 Experience/atmosphere
- 5 Cleanliness/safety
- 6 Attraction/sightseeing
- 7 Weather
- 8 Location
- 9 Transportation
- 10 Visitor services

Top 10 Perceived Weaknesses

- 1 Homeless/solicitors/teen drop-outs
- 2 Traffic
- 3 Expensive
- 4 Lack of experience/atmosphere
- 5 Lack of public transportation
- 6 Cleanliness/safety
- 7 Need more restaurants
- 8 Grumpy or mean locals
- 9 Weather
- 10 Grocery stores

- Worked with Duane Knapp, BrandStrategy Inc. and GMA Research to develop and analyze the data and conduct stakeholder interview sessions.
- Compared stakeholder views with results from consumer and meeting planner focus groups identifying commonalities and conflicting views and ideas.
- Reviewed Santa Monica’s competitive set locally and regionally to determine distinctive product attributes.
- Reviewed all existing visitor marketing materials about Santa Monica produced by SMCVB on current messages.

BrandPromise



OBJECTIVES:

To define travel destination Santa Monica’s distinctive and unique visitor experience through emotionally charged words. The idea is to capture the distinctive essence of Santa Monica for the visitor and use this Promise as the guiding star and focal point for all community decision-making and tourism marketing.

WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

- Reviewed assessment data to determine words that frequently appeared to describe Santa Monica from both focus groups and stakeholder groups.
- Prioritized those key attributes that incorporate the full scope of the varied components of the Santa Monica experience (from people to places).
- Developed a BrandPromise paragraph that will be the focal point and guiding star for all brand and marketing initiatives.
- Communicated and gained community consensus on the final BrandPromise statement.

THE SANTA MONICA BRANDPROMISE:

Santa Monica...the best way to discover L.A.; an unforgettable beach city experience filled with eye-catching people, cutting-edge culture and bold innovations. *It is the essence of the California lifestyle.*

“Yahoo! is thoroughly committed to communicating its brand tenets to this community, and we see it as a necessary step following the move of our media businesses to Santa Monica. The city has been an amazing partner in this process, and the fact that Santa Monica is so cognizant and accommodating in those efforts just reinforces our decision to base Yahoo! Media Group here.”

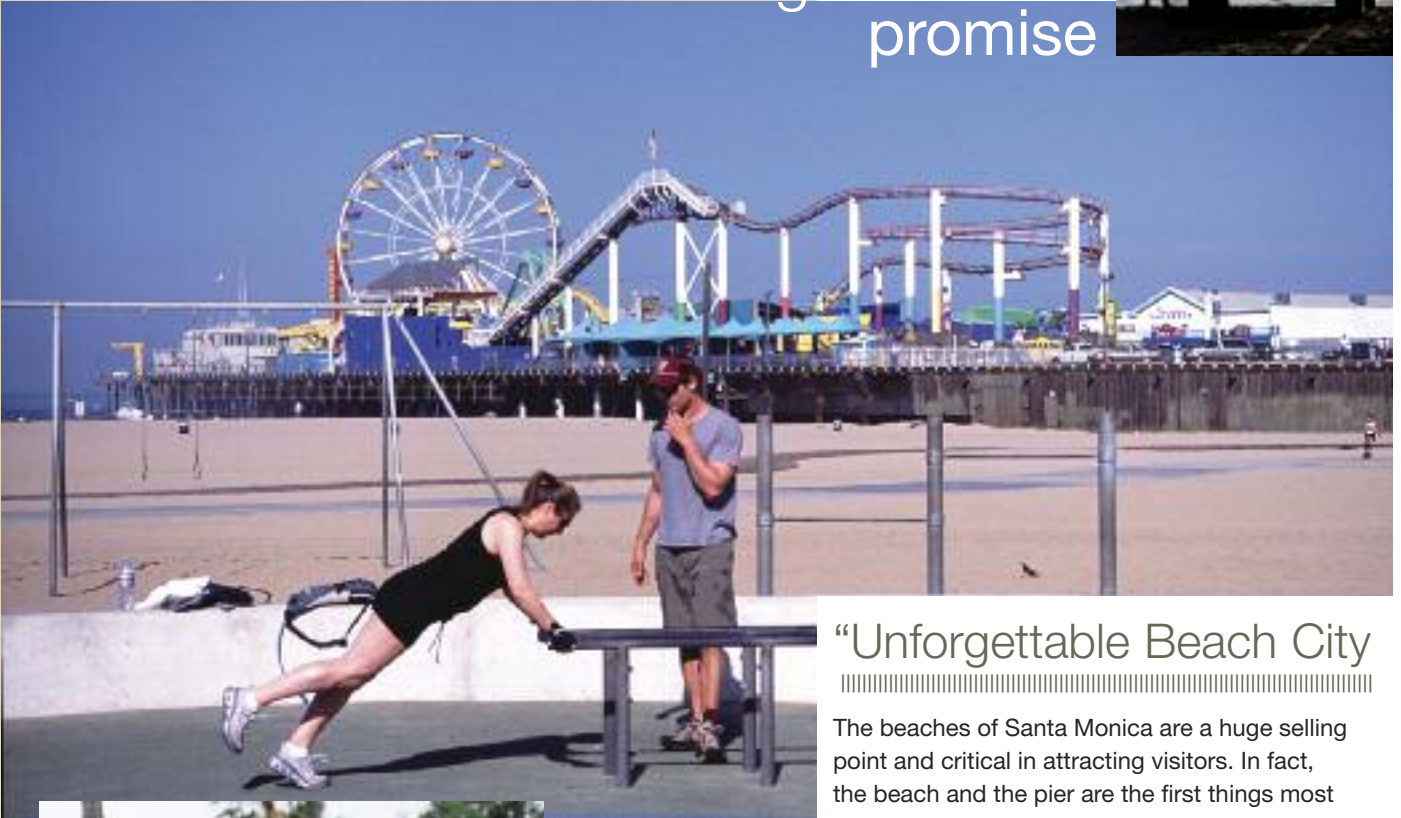
—Jennifer Trzepacz, Chief of Staff, Yahoo! Media Group

“Santa Monica is a beach town with brains and beauty! A place for the arts with the welcome addition of PACMA—an intimate performing arts center and music academy, that along with KCRW makes education and the arts paramount to our city, with Santa Monica College at the helm. The brand initiative will get our message out to the world that we are more than just another pretty beach and have many ways to discover and explore this varied city.”

—Dale Franzen, Director of Performing Arts Center and Music Academy Santa Monica College

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delivering the brand
promise



“Unforgettable Beach City

The beaches of Santa Monica are a huge selling point and critical in attracting visitors. In fact, the beach and the pier are the first things most people associate with Santa Monica. In order to be regarded as an “unforgettable beach city experience”, Santa Monica must make improvements to our Beach.

According to research conducted by Lauren Schlau consulting in the Fall of 2006:

- 20% of local residents haven't visited a Santa Monica Beach in the past two years
- Cleaner water quality and cleaner sand would motivate more visits to Santa Monica Beaches by visitors and residents, indicating we need to raise awareness of sand-raking and the positive water quality statistics
- Less than 30% of those surveyed visit the beach with someone under 18, indicating that there is a lack of “kid-friendly” programs



- The top amenities that could enhance the Santa Monica beach experience are
 - Beach trash recycling bins
 - Beach umbrellas, canopies, or chaise lounge rentals
 - Beach oriented events, contests, or festivals
 - Planked walkways right onto the beach
 - Higher quality vendor services
 - Better directional signage to get to the beach/easier access



“Eye-catching
People”
“Unforgettable”
“Experience”



- The tourism industry in Santa Monica supports over 12,000 jobs
- Many of the people who work in Santa Monica in the hospitality industry do not live or “play” in Santa Monica and they are the biggest and best part of the destination brand
- Visitors will ask hospitality employees for recommendations, information about city laws, directions, and things to do
- Many hospitality employees love the city they work in, but they might not know the big picture and what Santa Monica is as a brand
- Every hospitality employee, from a waiter, to a front desk person at a hotel, to a lifeguard, to a taxi driver should be a Santa Monica destination brand ambassador

Top Associations with Santa Monica

LOS ANGELES	NEW YORK	CHICAGO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pier • Restaurants • Promenade • Shopping • Nightlife • Movies • Beaches/beach front properties • Rollerblading/ biking • Running steps • Good place to live • Montana Ave. (nice area to walk around) • Pedestrian friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach • Pier • Sailing • Boulevard • Rollerblading • Muscle Beach • Restaurants • Rollerblading/ biking • Running steps • Don't know much about it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pier • Beach • Tattoos • Spread out, not like a city; completely different lifestyle • Boats • Surfers • Rollerblading

Key Product Challenges

- Image barriers perceived as:
 - Homeless capital, not safe or clean
 - Congested, hectic, no parking
 - Not viewed or known necessarily as a vacation destination (no golf resort)
- No strategy or BrandPromise, lack of agreement regarding the destination with community
- Stakeholders' views are incongruous in some key areas, but believe that Santa Monica should develop a strategy for the destination
- Despite publicity, not well known or understood as a destination in Chicago, New York, or London

Key Product Advantages

- The destination has much to offer: beach, pier, location, retail, hotels, spas, restaurants, fun, excitement
- "People" place: celebrities, pedestrians, active, diverse
- Mild beach climate
- Pier—highly recognized attraction
- Progressive city perception
- Location (near most Southern California destinations) and proximity to LAX
- Significant "latent" positive destination brand equity that offers positive potential

Brand Culturalization

OBJECTIVES:

To develop a tangible program of action that will take the BrandPromise and bring it to "life." Through customized training programs and a clear understanding of what Santa Monica means to individual businesses, these programs will assist the community by delivering a consistent and united BrandPromise for residents and guests alike through education and improvement to the overall guest experience.

WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

In 2006 and 2007, the following Brand Culturalization programs were the focus of delivering on the Santa Monica brand promise:

Beach Summit

Santa Monica CVB initiated a series of meetings with City of Santa Monica staff and business leaders to discuss the following topics regarding the beach experience:

- Amenities and Services
- Safety Perceptions
- Environmental Stewardship

These meetings led up to the first annual Beach Summit in September of 2006, an open community discussion to brainstorm ideas on how to improve the beach for residents and visitors.

Santa Monica City staff and local business leaders initiated a number of programs as a result of the Beach Summit, including:

- Providing a "trash valet" service in busy areas of the beach during summer (Friday thru Sundays, 3:30–8 p.m.)
- Santa Monica residents passed Measure V in November 2006, which adds a tax raising revenue solely for urban runoff management and pollution prevention activities to protect Santa Monica Bay, beaches and ocean resources
- Expanding the marketing of beach amenities via City's website (www.smgov.net/osm/Beach_Amenities.htm)
- Working with Perry's Beach Cafes and concession stands to upgrade the facilities and food menu and establish a new Perry's brand identity
Planned Completion Date: 2007/2008
- Moving forward with the "Beach Greening" Demonstration Project, which converts a section of impermeable surface in the 2030 beach parking lot to turf for off-season recreational uses
Planned Completion Date: 2008
- Developing a Beach Map
Planned Completion Date: 2008

- Improving pathway and freeway signage for how to get to the beach
Planned Completion Date: 2008
- Starting construction for the “Annenberg Community Beach Club” at Santa Monica State Beach
Planned Completion Date: 2008/2009
- Constructing several new beach restrooms
Planned Completion Date: 2009/2010
- Improving public access through construction of accessible beach walkways
Planned Completion Date: 2010
- Establishing a bus drop on Main Street for tour buses, allowing more access to the beach for visitors on tour buses
- Implementing trash bag program for beachgoers entering beach parking lots to improve beach cleanliness
- Allowing for more spontaneous beach events (not promoted in advance) so beachgoers can participate in fun activities while at the beach

Guest Contact Service Training

An affordable training program for all Santa Monica guest contact employees is being designed with a focus on the Santa Monica brand, knowledgeable customer service and cultural awareness to further the understanding of various ethnic and cultural groups visiting our destination.

In 2007, SMCVB established collaboration with the City of Santa Monica, Chamber of Commerce, and Santa Monica College to launch this program according to the following framework:

- Short Version Course—3-hour free course, including a City orientation tour
- Long Version Course/Certification—10–12 hours, course credit will be given

SMCVB formed an educational committee with more than 40 community members and held a series of meetings to establish the following:

- Curriculum contents
- Best practices in the delivery of program materials
- Content and design direction for resource guide
- A job bank to support a more informed and trained hospitality work force
- Naming for program—“I Know Santa Monica”
- How to market the program to employees and businesses and how to measure the program’s success
- Recognition for completion of the program including opportunities for scholarships

The “I Know Santa Monica” program will continue to change as the destination changes. Another aim for this program is to increase awareness of hospitality as an industry to students in high school through a partnership with Santa Monica College.

Program Launch Date: Fall 2007

Santa Monica Brand Image Rating

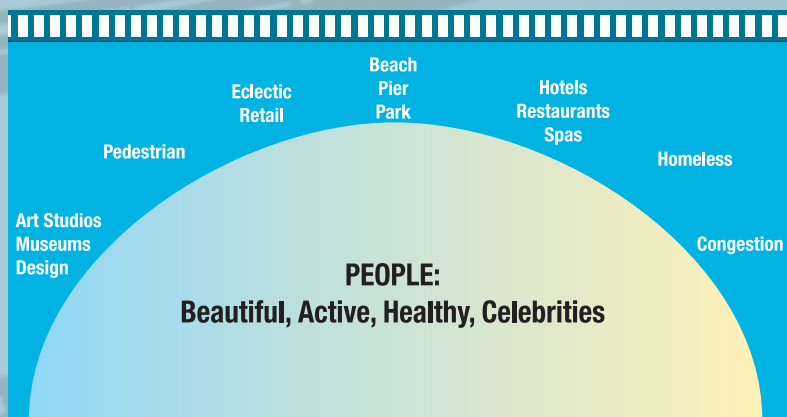
	LOS ANGELES	NEW YORK	CHICAGO
Rated Santa Monica 8 or above	10	2	1
Rated Santa Monica 6–7	2	3	3
Rated Santa Monica 5 or below	0	6	7

SCALE: 1 = Really Negative; 10 = Really Positive

Santa Monica Brand Paradigm

COMMONLY HELD BELIEFS	NEW BRAND PARADIGMS
There isn’t much to see or do; it’s only a day visit to the pier and promenade.	Santa Monica is a travel destination on its own, whether for business or leisure travel.
Santa Monica is a sleepy beach town.	Santa Monica has a beach town feel and the amenities of a world-class city.
Santa Monica is too expensive.	Santa Monica has a wide selection of services that range from affordable to luxury.

The BrandPromise Bridge



Creative ~ Chic ~ Urban Aesthetics ~ Happy ~ Excited ~ Fun ~ Active ~ Not Safe/Clean/Stress ~ Uncomfortable ~ Anxiety

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Convention & Visitors Bureau

SANTA MONICA CVB STAFF:

Misti Kerns, CMP, CDME
President/CEO

Alison Best
Director of Sales

Kim Baker
Marketing Manager

Dawn Smith
Public Relations Manager

Joston Theney
Hospitality & Conference Services
Manager

Dana Batmanghelich
Retail Operations Supervisor

Mary DeHoyos
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Cheryl Bagby
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Shirley Carroll
Executive Assistant

Hannah Schnell
Sales Assistant

Lara Tabor-Chanley
Public Relations Assistant

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a final note:

The key to **Santa Monica's** continued success as a world-class destination is a unified commitment to understanding the destination's brand, its importance and its ability to provide the city with a competitive advantage. Santa Monica is fortunate to have a strong and vibrant business and resident community that is committed to its long-term success. The purpose of this **Blueprint** is to further this success by outlining the **Destination BrandScience** process and to aid businesses in the community to grow and develop while protecting the community's vital assets and spirit.

Together, as the Santa Monica community, we can make our destination a stronger and more economically viable community in which to visit, live and work.

Thank you!

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project timeline

PROJECT INCEPTION

2004–2005 WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

- Collaborated with Duane Knapp of BrandStrategy Inc. to develop a framework and process for Destination Santa Monica brand development.
- Conducted a Brand Assessment with key stakeholders, visitors and non-visitors.
- Developed a destination BrandPromise.
- Communicated the findings of the project to civic and business leaders.

BRAND CULTURALIZATION PLAN

2005–2006 WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

- Conducted Brand Summit March 24, 2006

2006–2007 WHAT SANTA MONICA DID:

- Conducted First Annual Beach Summit September 14, 2006
- Progress on Guest Contact Service Training Program
 - Held 6 meetings of Education Committee
 - Developed course curriculum and corresponding videos
 - Established business plan

2007–2008 WHAT SANTA MONICA WILL DO:

- Launch Guest Contact Service Program Fall 2007
- Hold Second Annual Beach Summit Fall 2007
- Establish brand style guide Fall 2007

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