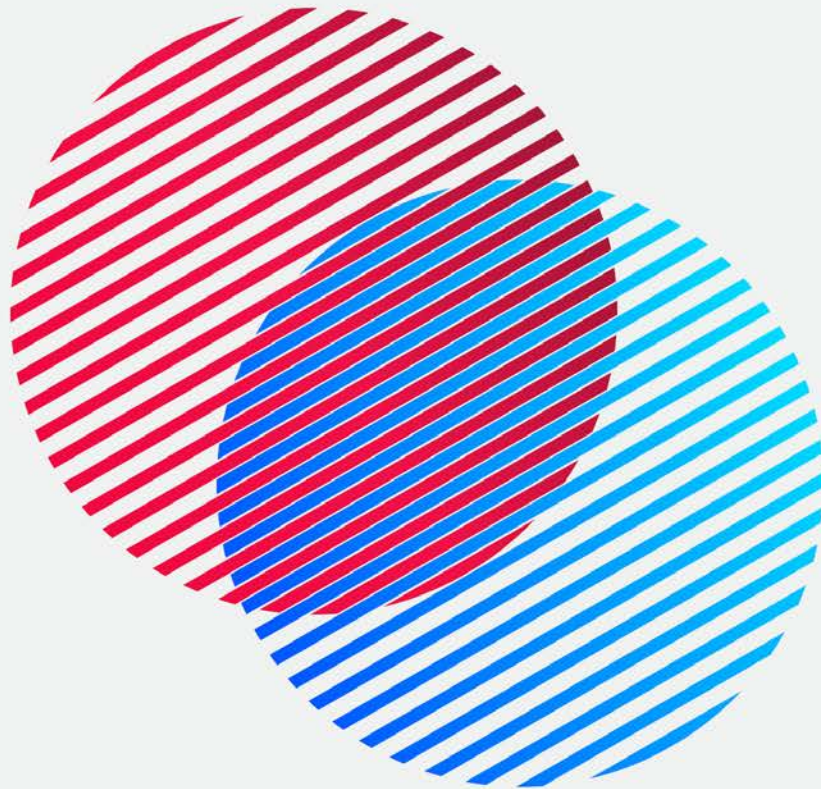



A MODERN BREED PRODUCTION

HYBRID VIGOUR



FOR THOSE FORGING
A NEW WAY OF WORKING

ERIK KRUGER



*"Intersectional innovations
change the world in leaps along
new directions."*

Frans Johansson

Between Cubicles and Space

Advancement happens at the intersection of diverse ideas.

In 1960, Robert Propst gave us the Action Office II, an office setup that would allow for a more dynamic work experience.

At the heart of the Action Office II was acoustic panelling, of different heights, that would block noise created by telephones, typing, and people talking.

Over time, the Action Office II evolved, and what was supposed to isolate us from noise ended up isolating us from others, as manufacturers increased the height of the panels and created cubicle culture.

As with most things, this way of working had its advantages and disadvantages, but for good or bad, cubicle culture was the way we worked for way too long.

And then a shift happened. We decided that we needed to encourage collaboration and innovation, and to achieve this we needed to knock down both the literal and figurative walls that were keeping us apart, and the cubicles were torn down, replaced with open office spaces.

Of course, we soon realised that open offices were not quite the panacea we had hoped they would be. Open offices create distractions, cause interruptions and provide little privacy.



Eventually, what we realised was that perhaps the best iteration of an office space doesn't lie at either extreme, but rather at the intersection.

Today, you will find that co-working spaces such as WeWork seamlessly integrate cubicle culture with the open office, allowing for a more integrated and curated working experience. Big unwavering open spaces allow for collaboration and networking, whereas smaller breakaway rooms create the perfect environment for deep thinking and serious discussion.

A close-up portrait of Steve Jobs, showing his face and hands clasped together. The image is heavily tinted with a red color. He is wearing his signature round glasses and has a beard. The text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

*The reason that Apple is able
to create products like the iPad
is because we've always tried
to be at the intersection of
technology and the liberal arts.*

Steve Jobs

Hybrid Vigour

As with many of the best things in life, the best solutions and advancements live at the intersection of extremes, of ideas, of thinking.

At the intersection, we find hybrid vigour.

The formal definition of hybrid vigour is “improved or increased function of any biological quality in a hybrid offspring.”

This simply means that when two different breeds of the same species are combined, the offspring inherits the best traits of both.

This term was first introduced to me by our dog trainer.

We adopted our dog, Axel, from a shelter and were unsure of his breeding. Everyone thought that he had some Belgian Malinois in him, but we wanted to be sure. So, we tested his DNA.

What came back was that he was 60% German Shepherd and 40% Alaskan Malamute. I was disappointed that he wasn't more purebred.

But then our trainer told me that crossbreeds are often genetically superior because of hybrid vigour. So, in Axel's case, he is a German Shepherd, but without the sloping back typically associated with the German Shepherd breed. This means that he might be less likely to develop health issues such as hip dysplasia than his purebred counterparts.



Leaders and teams around the world are now starting to wonder what work might look like as we re-open businesses, economies, and borders.

I believe that the answer lies at the intersection.

We have been embracing hybrid vigour in business for years without ever knowing it.

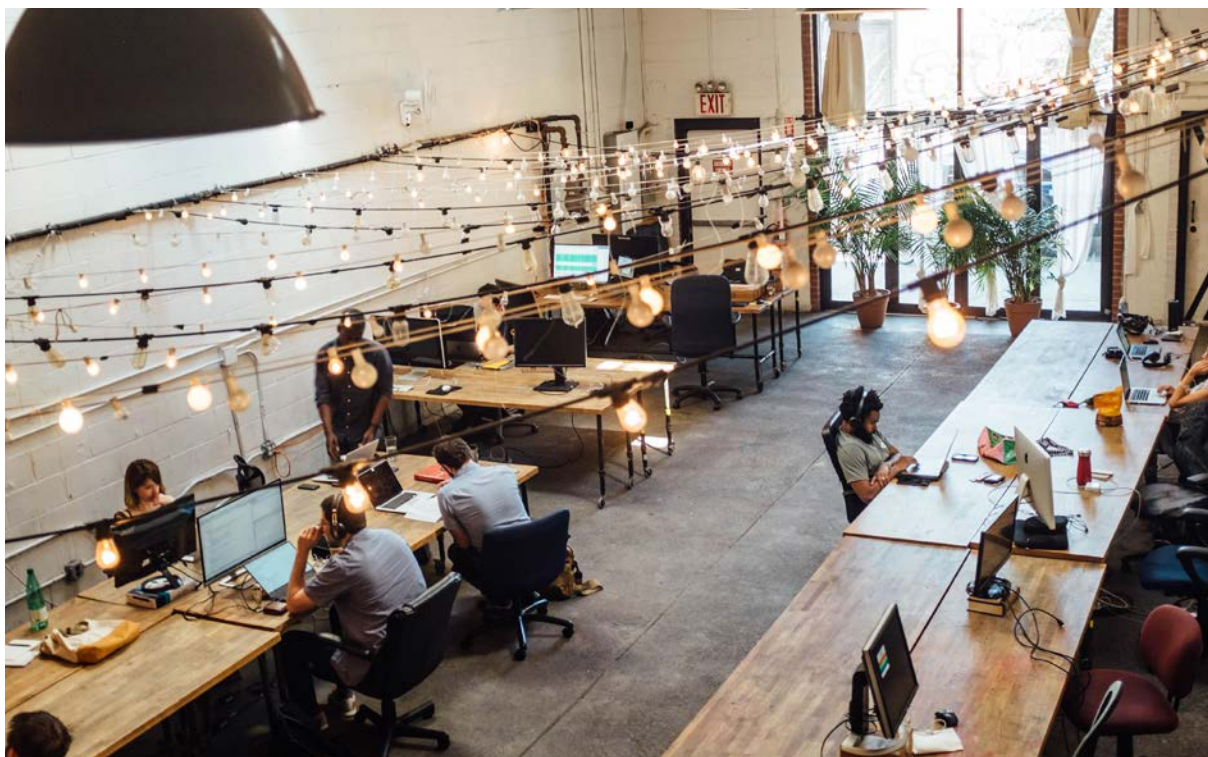
It's what happens when we create teams consisting of women and men.

When we create teams with ethnic diversity.

When we create teams that embrace age diversity.

It's what happened to the modern workspace when cubicles met open offices.

And it is the opportunity that is right in front of you today.

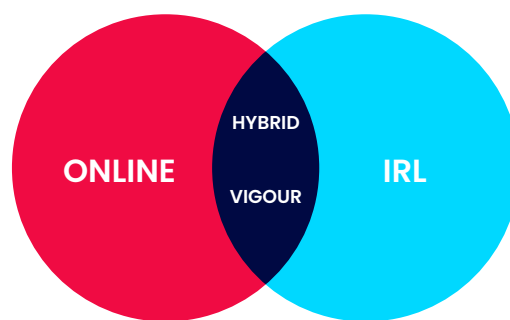


Hybrid Teams

The worst thing that can happen to your team post COVID-19 is that they operate the exact same way as before. Not only will it be a massively missed opportunity, but also a regression in your evolution as a team.

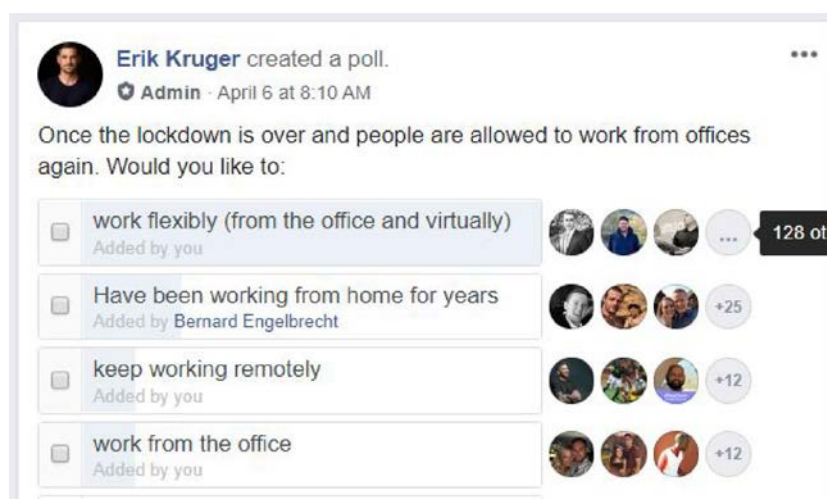
A team with hybrid vigour is a team operating at the intersection – the intersection of diversity, hierarchy, leadership, and more.

However, for our purposes, we will be discussing the hybrid vigour of teams that are as adept at working online as they are at working online. And because they have range in how they operate, they can curate what the working experience looks like by effortlessly blending virtual and IRL (in real life) teaming.



In a Facebook group I started I recently asked how people would prefer to work once lockdown is lifted. The options were to work from home, to work at the office, or to be flexible in the approach.

The outcome was telling but not surprising.



Although this is a small-scale experiment it has been echoed by almost every team engagement I have had since.

It's useful to understand that the context in which the team operates satisfies different deeply held human values.

Remote work resonates with our need for autonomy. Dan Pink taught us years ago that people require autonomy, mastery, and purpose to feel fulfilled.

When we are allowed to work from home, we get to live the value of autonomy by creating and directing what our day looks like.

However, studies have shown (depending on the sources that you read) that between 30% and 70% of remote workers experience loneliness.

Which brings us to our second value – belonging.

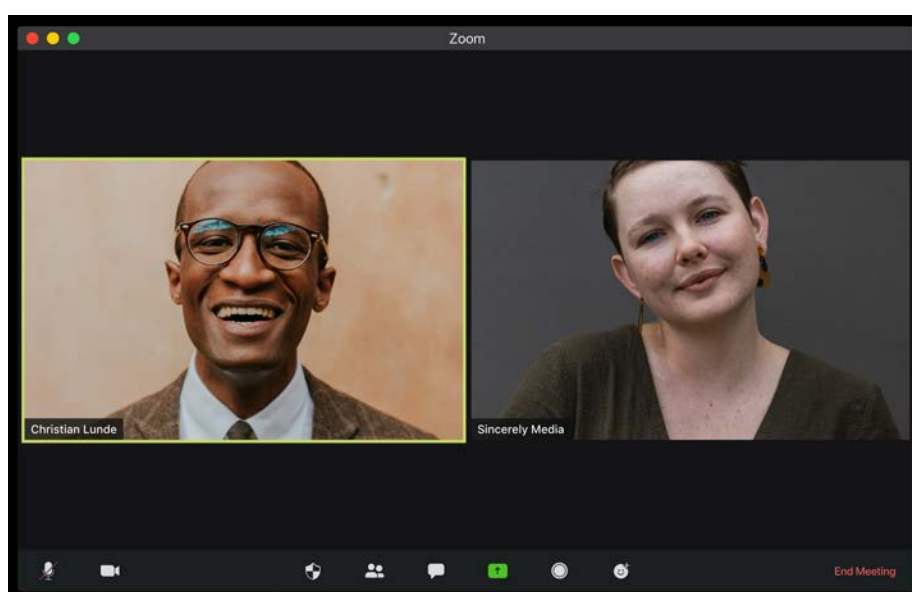
Since the earliest days, we have wanted to spend time around the campfire together. Our need for connection always drives us closer to each other. This is something that the lockdowns across various countries has reinforced.

We need to belong to a community.

A tribe.

It just so happens that we most often find our tribe at work.

In combining these human values, you can see how hybrids create the perfect environment in which individuals can flourish.



Finding The Intersection

Hopefully by now you are convinced that Hybrid Vigour is the way to go and you are starting to wonder what this might look like for you and your team members.

You are ready to embrace the call from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to “reimagine the workplace.”

If so, then there are four different phases that you might want to consider as you build your hybrid offline and online teams:

- 1. Competence Phase.** This phase is the reason why I encouraged teams to become really good at operating as virtual teams while in lockdown. You can only find the intersection of two different ways of working if your experience with this has reached a certain depth.
- 2. Splicing Phase.** This is the phase where, as a team, we sit down and interrogate the intersection. It requires us to ask which elements of each way of working are worth keeping? What is the sweet spot for performance? Every team that enters this step will create a different outcome.
- 3. Execution Phase.** During this time, we are implementing what we discussed in the previous phase.
- 4. Iteration Phase.** We continuously check in with the team to iterate on how we are working together. There is no reason for the team's operating system to be static. Perhaps there are times when we default to a more virtual way of working and sometimes, we prioritise belonging, cohesiveness, and being around each other.

The ultimate hybrid team is flexible.

For some teams, this might mean that they are fully virtual and meet in person 2 or 3 times a year like the teams at Buffer. Perhaps they meet for a full week once a year like the teams at Automattic.

Maybe it means working from the office 3 days a week and spending the rest of the time working from home.

Perhaps it means that during certain sprints we prioritise one way of working and that how we meet largely depends on what the team needs (both personally and professionally) to be at their best.

Cultivating Personal Hybrid Vigour

Hybrid Vigour is available to us all and if individuals cannot embrace it in their personal lives it will be challenging to adopt it in their professional lives.

Here are three traits of people who embrace Hybrid Vigour.

INSTANT EVOLUTION

Earlier in my career I worked as a Physical Therapist in Intensive Care Units at various hospitals. During that time, I often saw patients who had suffered a myocardial infarction (also known as a heart attack).

What always struck me was the response that patients had to the event.

I'm oversimplifying this to make a point, but in general, there were two types of patients.

The first group wanted to get into a wheelchair as quickly as possible so that they could go outside and smoke. Even though their lifestyle was probably a contributing factor to the heart attack, they either could not, or would not, make any changes to it.

The second group of patients, however, were completely different. They underwent what I call an instant evolution. They would immediately stop bad lifestyle habits, create a new set of values, and embrace healthier rituals.



The reality is that we have all suffered a global, collective heart attack of sorts.

And that leaves you with a choice today.

Will you sustain your previous ways of doing and being, or will you undergo an instant evolution?

Individuals who undergo an instant evolution can change direction instantly and as required and figure out the finer details and nuances in the process.

I have seen many leaders and teams undergo an instant evolution during this time. From totally revamping their business models, to the rapid adoption of remote work these leaders and teams changed course and haven't looked back.

ENCODING

No-one knows what the future is going to look like. Sure, there are scenarios and some brave souls are laying their predictions on the table, but no one actually knows.

It's truly uncharted terrain.

This means that we cannot use the future as a guide.

Our old operating system allowed us to project where we would like to go in the future based on a 1, 3, or 5-year time horizon and then decode (breakdown) that future so that we could work towards it today. You simply cannot do that at this stage.

There is no way to know how you, your team and your business will still need to adapt and shift in the weeks and months to come.

Therefore, do not decode.

Encode.

Encode the very best decisions and actions every single day to create a future that, although uncertain, at least has a fighting chance.

There are five different actions that you could take to encode a new future.

The first is to **exploit** – your current areas of strength and capability. What can you do every single day that pushes your unique talent stack to new levels? (A quick reminder since we so often only use exploit in a negative way. Exploit ~ make full use of and derive benefit from (a resource) – Oxford Dictionary)

The second action is to **explore** – to look for new opportunities and potential collaborations.

The third is to **enable** – this means securing certain resources that will enable you to continue to operate or perhaps to operate in a different way. This could also be finding a coach or mentor that enables you to think or act differently.

The fourth is to **build** – use what you have and think of new ways to configure it. Think about how you can improve your current offering.

The fifth is to **remove** – there are many things that are making you weak and you would benefit from eliminating it from your life. What I have seen is that we are excellent at tolerating mediocrity. But ultimately, the weakness that you tolerate creates risk and makes you vulnerable. An easy thing to remove might be subscriptions that are unnecessarily eating in your money. A more difficult thing would be to remove team members that aren't performing well.

Inspired by Niko Canner

What this has looked like for me is:

- Writing. A lot. It has helped me to stress test my thinking and to share it with a wider audience.
- Collaboration. Taking the aforementioned writing and sharing it via webinars for clients or on other people's platforms.
- Building on my current offerings and turning them into a digital first-offering.
- Speaking to people who are friends but also mentors to keep me focused and moving in the right direction.

Viktor Frankl says, "Between stimulus and response there is a space and, in that space, lies our greatest power. The power to choose how we respond."

We love to tell people, don't react, respond. Pause and determine what your next actions should be.

And that's true today still.

Don't just knee jerk react.

Thoughtfully respond.

But do so quickly.



PLAYING TO WIN

I was watching a webinar by **Verne Harnish**, founder of Entrepreneur's Organization, when he said that we have to shift from playing not to lose to playing to win.

This wasn't something that I hadn't heard before, but it was something that I had forgotten.

As we so often do.

But it was exactly what I needed to hear to galvanize me into action.

So, I wanted to pay it forward and remind you that you must play to win.

Especially now.

If you keep telling yourself that now is not a time to sell, then guess what, you won't sell anything. If you keep telling yourself that things will go back to normal, then you will wait and wait and wait yourself into dismal failure.

You must switch gears.

Now is the time to move aggressively forward.

It doesn't mean that you are tone deaf to what others are going through. Or that you become pushy, needy, and desperate.

But it does mean that you start actively working towards a new future. Find ways to be helpful to others, while at the same time building your business.

Playing not to lose is a valid strategy for businesses at times.

However, it's barely ever a great strategy for human beings.



The Way Forward

"Men build too many walls and not enough bridges."

Joseph Fort Newton

The way forward is to be more flexible than ever before.

To see the bridge that connects disparate ideas and 'best practices' and to walk along it freely and enthusiastically. Sometimes resting in the middle, other times exploring the furthest end before walking back across again to where you started.

But humans like certainty.

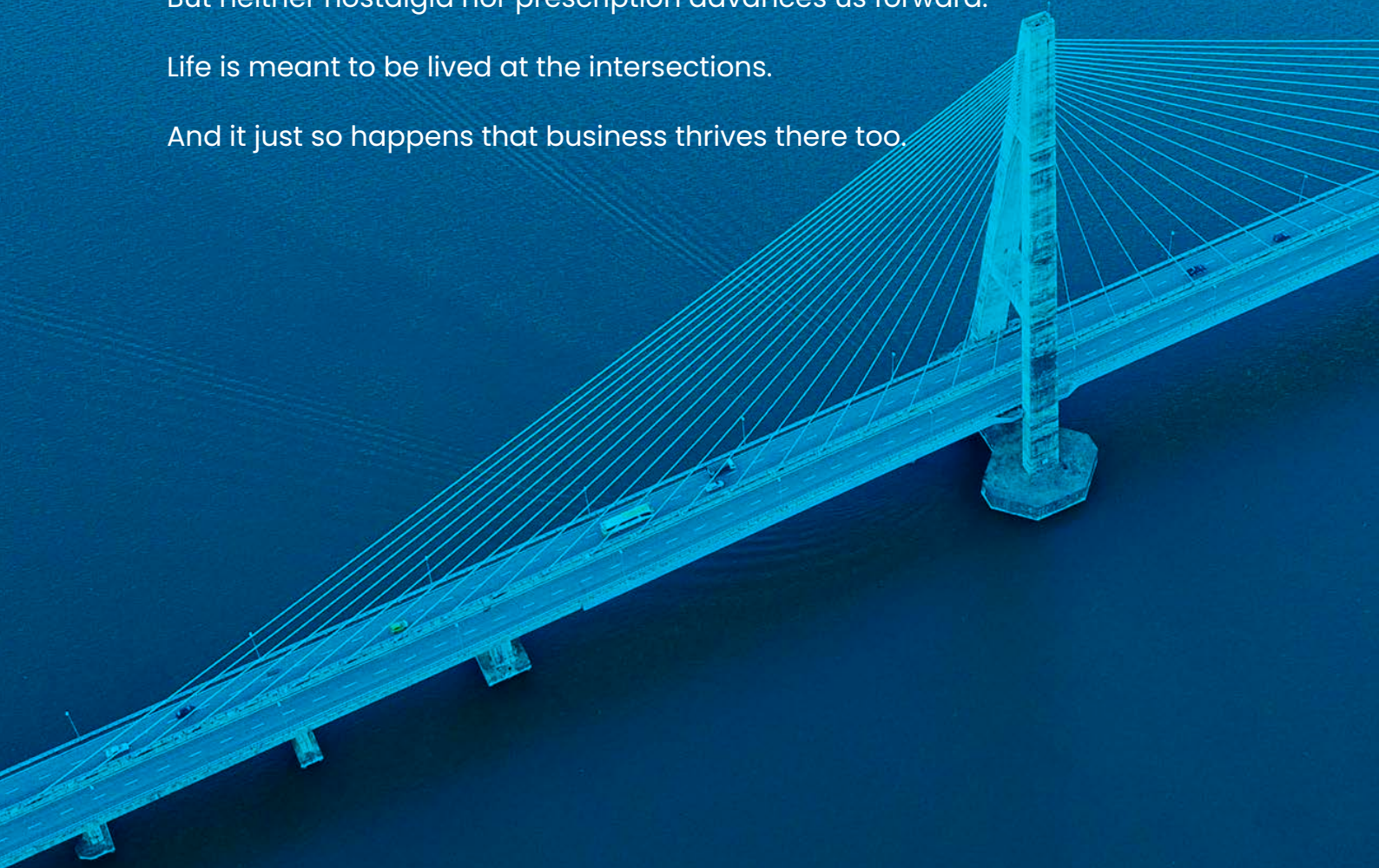
And there is a certainty that comes from saying, "things have always been done this way."

There is also a certainty that comes from saying, "here, now do it this way."

But neither nostalgia nor prescription advances us forward.

Life is meant to be lived at the intersections.

And it just so happens that business thrives there too.





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