

Resistance To Change Among First Line Managers In Multinational Organizations In Malaysia

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This study was carried out to examine the relationship between resistance to change among the first-line managers and first line managers' competence, perceived cost and benefits of the change, and the level of involvement in change. Attempts were also made to determine the influence of demographic factors (i.e. age, marital status, gender and education level) on the resistance to change. A close ended structured questionnaire was circulated among the first line managers to randomly selected multinational organizations in Malaysia (Penang Island) and out of 250 questionnaires that were distributed, 112 were returned and used for statistical analysis. The major findings of the study showed that the more competent first-line managers are less resistant to change. It was also found out that if first line managers are given more authority on the perceived changes in the organizations they are less likely to resist changes. The first-line managers with higher career level are found to be less resistant to organization change. As for the demographic factors, only age and education level of first-line managers found to have influence on the resistance to change. The researchers found that the older managers with higher level of education are more resistant to the changes. The findings will be useful for stakeholders of multinational organizations to formulate appropriate policies to tackle resistance to change among first line managers in the multinational organizations in Malaysia.

1.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this research was to examine the impact of the perceived benefit and cost of change, involvement in change and competence of first-line managers on the resistance to change. Resistance to change has been identified as one of the conclusive factors that determine if a first-line manager succeeds or fails on change implementation in the organization. Organizations must response to changes like growth and renewal; how to pursue excellence; and how to arrange for the next millennium within the context of multiracial and multi-religions society (Yeoh, 1998). The failed change efforts commonly blamed the competence of the manager which in turn drives the search for and selection of change of management solutions (Griffith, 2002). According to Gill (2001), the implementation of the change often fail because of poor management which include poor planning, monitoring, control, lack of resources, lack of training, incompatible corporate environment and policies of the organization. According to Robbins and Millett (1994) the competitive factors or innovations are the main factors that make the industry change to new equipment, tools or operating method. Along the

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way, there are employees who resist companies' changes. They somehow say it out loud and express their opinions about the changes. There are some who just complaining among colleagues and there are some who just quiet and keep it to their heart. Pheng (1999) indicated that resistance to change is one of the primary reasons why change fails or why success is not achieved in the change process. More specifically, the inability of the first-line managers to deal with resistance to change has been as a primary cause for change projects to fail. This study focuses on the resistance to change among the first-line managers. There are three reasons for focusing on the first-line manager. First, this group is widely recognized as playing an important role in the change processes. Second, they hold the effective key on the eventual success or failure of major change; and third, this type of managers connects directly with the employees and spends most of the time with them. Specifically, our interest is in the relative importance of three factors as determinants of resistance to change amongst the first-line manager. The three factors are competency, perceived cost and benefit of change and level of involvement in change. The first-line managers are directly responsible to deal with the employees if they refuse to change. According to Higgs and Rowland (2000), many organizations failed to carry out change effectively. They estimated that as 70% of change initiatives fail. Malaysia is affected directly by the changes that take place in the world, because it is one of the developing countries that adapts to the open economic strategy.

Therefore attempt is made to answer the following questions in context of Malaysia: i) Is there any relationship between demographic factors (age, gender and education level) with the resistance to change? ii) Is there any relationship between the perceived benefit and cost of change and resistance to change among the employees? iii) Is there any relationship between the level of involvement of the first line managers and their resistance to change? And finally is there any relationship between the competence of the first-line managers and their resistance to change?

2.0 Literature Review

According to Smith (2005), in the late of 1940s the phenomenon of organizational resistance to change has become a distinct field of study. One of the most well documented findings from studies of individual and organizational behavior is that organizations and their members resist change (Robbins and Millett, 1994). One of the concepts discussed, written about, and analyzed most frequently in recent years has been organizational change and the related concepts of resistance to change and management of change (Mason, 2006). Smith (2005) mentioned that change in organizations as any where else involves moving from a known state to a new state. Meanwhile, Mason (2006) defined change as "making a material difference in something compared to an earlier state, transforming or converting something, or simply becoming different". Sometimes changes could be initiated as a result of competencies values and aspirations instead of just reactions to external forces. Burns (2000) added that in recent years the speed and the size of the change has increased significantly and he argued that the changes come in all shape, size and forms and for

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that reason, it is difficult to manage the changes successfully because there is no accurate picture or fixed strategy to change. Generally, change can be planned or unplanned responses according to the internal or external forces affecting an organization. The critical goal for most organizations is to change successfully the climate and culture and these types of changes are more difficult than operation or technology change (Mason, 2006). There are also managers who have carefully plan to change and they have studies every stage of the changes and have tried to put solution for it. They have determined what change is needed and how to overcome the resistance to change by seeing the benefit of the change and cost, and also opportunity cost (Bolognese, 2002). According to Giangreco and Peccei (2005) resistance to change is not always bad and could sometime lead to a better decision. For the better decision, first line managers should be preoccupied by changes to bring in either threats or opportunities to the companies.

2.1 Organizational change and Resistance to Change

Typically, the concept of organizational change is in regard to organization large change, as opposed to less significant changes such as adding a new person, delegate, and etcetera. Examples of organization large change may include a change in mission, vision, restructuring operations, new technologies, mergers, major collaborations, new programs and re-engineering. Mason (2006) mentioned that there are four principal indicators for major organization change they are: 1) a change to the organizational structure, 2) a new product or service, 3) new management, and 4) new technology. Mason (2006) also classified changes as these: i) structural changes: occurs when there is an alteration to the company's organizational structure. This reorganization may occur due to a merger or acquisition or it may be the result of a restructuring. ii) cost changes: are those that occur when an organization attempts to reduce costs in order to improve efficiency or performance. iii) process changes: are implemented to improve efficiency or effectiveness of organizational procedures; and iv) cultural changes: are the least tangible of all the types of change, but they can be the most difficult. An organization's culture is its shared set of assumptions, values, and beliefs. Resistance to change has traditionally been viewed in relatively negative terms, as a sign of failure (Armenakis and Harris, 1995), or as a problem to be eliminated or minimized (Carnall, 1991; McCrimmon, 1997). Resistance to change is an essential factor to be considered in any change process since a suitable management of resistance is the key for change success or failure (Pardo del Val and Martines, 2003). Berham (1966) defined resistance as, "an aversive motivational state, initiated when one perceives that ones' freedom is threatened, and directing thought and action toward regaining the threatened freedom". However, because of its ambiguous nature, and it is difficult to study one area of change in total isolation (Mullins, 2005), the present study will focus on the resistance of culture change among the first-line managers in terms of their demographic characteristics (age, gender and education level), competency of the first line manager, their perceived cost and benefit and level of involvement in change.

2.2 First-Line Managers' Competency and Resistance to Change

Stolovitch and Keeps (1992) referred to competency as "a match between the knowledge and skills of a company's employees and the role requirements". Sherman, Belcourt, Bohlander and Snell (2001) also refer to competencies as "the skills and knowledge required to perform a job". Meanwhile Bellis (1998) defined competency as "a skill or cluster of skills performed to specific criteria (standards of performance) within an indicated range of contexts, by integrating appropriate knowledge and understanding and the ability to transfer the skills to other related contexts." Lombard and Crafford (2003) defined competency as "the ability to apply the required skills, knowledge, attitudes, attributes and values in the unique conditions and circumstances of an organization adhering to prescribed control guidelines (e.g. law, rules, policies and procedures) using the available equipment and tools and to such an extent that specific outcomes are achieved according to the required performance standards". There is a correlation between the units of competence identified by Lombard and Crafford (2003) and it is very important for first-line managers to deal effectively with resistance to change. According to Lombard and Crafford (2003) there are a few elements of competency that the first-line managers should possess in order to overcome resistance to change. The first-line manager elements of competency to deal with resistance to change are: Analytical skills, Entrepreneurial skills, Business acumen, Communication skills, and Problem solving and decision-making.

2.3 First line managers' perceived cost and benefit of change and resistance to change

Individual's resistance level can lead to different levels of acceptance of change through its influence of the behavioral, cognitive and affective conditions. The expenditure of an individual's effort is determined by expectations that an outcome may be attained and the degree of value placed on the outcome in the person's mind (Porter and Lawler, 1968). As such, a person's attitude towards change and subsequent behavior stem from a process by which the perceived outcomes of a change are compared with the individual's goals and values (Lines, 2004). There are six elements of perceived cost and benefit of change. The six elements are: job responsibility (Giangreco and Peccei 2005; Pugh 1993; and Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel 1985) job authority (Pugh 1993; and Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel 1985) , job status (Pugh, 1993; and Stanislao and Stanislao 1983), career (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005), job security (Stanislao and Stanislao 1983); and remuneration and social integration (Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel, 1985).

2.4 First-line managers' involvement in change and their resistance to change

Managing organizational change is, at the core, about managing people. Ignoring or discounting employee perspectives and responses to change is not good management (Smith, 2005). Successful adaptation to change can be moderated by several factors such as stockholder alignment including individuals and teams, smooth knowledge

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transfer and good communications (Martin, Quigley and Rogers, 2005). Change can create a lot of fear among employees. An increased in communication may be used to calm employees and encourage their continued support. To minimizing resistance to change the first-line manager can create an environment where people share their fears openly and honestly (Lombard and Crafford, 2003). Gill (2001) mentioned that the lack of communication or ambiguous messages may result in misunderstanding of the process of change. There are four elements of employees' involvement in change. The four elements are; involvement in planning the change (Kent 1992; Gill 2001; Kossek 1989; Kirkpatrick 1994; Dunphy and Stace 1990; and Martin, Quigley and Rogers; 2005; Stanislaos and Stanislaos, 1983; and Hirschheim and Newman, 1988) ; involvement in implement the change (Judson, 1991); training (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979); and support by superiors (Kanter, 1983)..

3.0 Research Methodology

The variables of interest in the present study are competency, perceive cost and benefit of change (job responsibility; job authority; job status; career; job security and remuneration; and social integration) and involvement in change (involvement in planning the change; involvement in implement the change; training; and support by superiors) and the relationship with the resistance to change among the first line manager.

There are four independent variables Firstly, the competency of the first-line manager which is adapted from Lombard and Crafford (2003). The other two remaining variables are adapted from Giangreco and Peccei (2005), which are, the first-line managers' "perceive cost and benefit of the change" and "their level of involvement in the change". "The perceive cost and benefit of the change" variable has, six components, which are, job responsibility; job authority; job status; career; job security and remuneration; and social integration. The "level of involvement" has four components, which are involvement in planning the change; involvement in implement the change; training; and support by superiors.

3.1 Research hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed thus far, the following hypotheses have been formulated for the present study. The hypotheses are segregated according to the dimensions of the independent variables.

3.1.1 First line managers' competency and resistance to change

There is a correlation between the competence identified by Lombard & Crafford (2003) and the importance for first-line managers to deal effectively with resistance to change. (Biegun, 2002, Prosci, 2003; Archilles; Harris & Harris, 2002) proves that there is a correlation between the competence and resistance to change.

H1: Competence of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

3.1.2 First line managers' perceived cost and benefits of change and their resistance to change

A person's attitude towards change and subsequent behavior stem from a process by which the perceived outcomes of a change are compared with the individual's goals and values (Lines, 2004). Understanding the change and make the employee know where he or she will go and what will do after change, in general make the picture clear is very beneficial to leaders and project managers in order for them to manage projects effectively (Peters, 2006).

H2a: Job responsibility of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

H2b: Job authority of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

H2c: Job status of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

H2d: Career of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

H2e: Job security and remuneration of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

H2f: Social integration of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change.

3.1.3 First line manager involvement in change and their resistance to change

According to Giangreco and Peccei (2005), staff members may feel neglected when they do not participate in the conception of a new idea. The assumption is that the lack of influence over the decision-making process can be a source of resistance to change. To minimize the resistance to change the first-line manager can create an environment where people share their fears openly and honestly (Lombard, C., & Crafford, A., 2003). Thus, the next hypotheses read as:

H3a: Involvement in planning the change of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change

H3b: Involvement in implement the change of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change

H3c: Training of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change

H3d: Support by superiors of the first line manager is **negatively** associated with resistance to change

3.2 Research Design

There were two main measurements used. The first questionnaire was adapted from a study by Lombard and Crafford (2003), which measures the competency of the first line manager's and the relationship with resistance to change. This questionnaire is also used by Burton (2000). The second measurement examined the perceive cost and benefit of the change and the involvement in change and the relationship with resistance to change. This measurement is an adaptation by a study of Antonio Giangreco and Peccei (2005). The sample consisted of 250 employees that were randomly selected from various international organizations in Penang. Only first-line managers were selected from the chosen organizations.

3.3 Data Collection

The researchers obtained the primary data through distributing a total number of 250 questionnaires to first line managers who were selected from the multinational organizations operating in Penang, Malaysia both from service and manufacture sectors. The filled-in questionnaires were collected back on the spot or a day after, depending on the situation in each of the organizations. 112 questionnaires out of 250 questionnaires distributed were completed. The questionnaire (answered by first line manager) comprises six sections. The first section of the questionnaire was the demographic data of the respondents. Section B included questions about resistance to change. Section C consists of fifteen items measuring the competency to deal with change. Section D and E consists of twenty one items measuring the perceived the cost and benefit of the change. Section F consists of eleven items measuring the level of involvement in change.

4.0 Survey Results

4.1 Overview of Data Gathered

250 questionnaires were distributed. However, there were 138 questionnaires were not returned or uncompleted. It gives a respond rate of 44.80% (112 were fully answered and usable). Demographic factors are divided into six categories which is age, gender, marital status, race, education level and current position. From a total of 112 respondents, in term of age, majority of them were in the range of 20 to 30 years old and 31 to 40 years old (50 respondents, 44.6%), followed by 8 respondents (7.1%) in the range of 41 to 50 years old and 4 respondents (3.6%) are above 50 years old. Most the respondents who participated in this study were male (61 respondents, 54.5%), followed by female 51 respondents (45.5%). The respondents' status indicated that 56 of them were married (50.0%), while in the single categories were 54 respondents (48.2 %) and 2 were respondents were divorcees (1.8%). The respondents in this study were dominated by Chinese managers, 46 respondents (41.1%), Indian 28 respondents (25 %) and Malay students were 25 respondents (22.3%) whereas the others were 13 respondents (11.6%). In term of education level, there were 58 managers hold degree

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qualification (51.8%) and 54 respondents (48.2%) hold master degree and there was no respondent who hold doctorate or diploma qualification. Most of the respondents were from the other department managers (41 respondents, 36.6%), HRM managers were 17 respondents (15.2%), supervisors 16 respondents (14.3%), sales and marketing managers 15 respondents (13.4%), finance and accounting managers were 12 respondents (10.7%) whereas the customer relationship managers were 11 respondents (9.8%).

4.2 Goodness of Measures

4.2.1 Factor Analyses

With regards to validity, a procedure called factor analysis allows the researcher to ensure whether the number of items can be reduced to a number of concepts that were initially hypothesized. Three factor analyses were run to verify the postulated dimensions of the independent (competence of the first line manager, perceive cost and benefit of change and involvement the first line manager in change), and dependent (resistance to change) variables, utilizing the VARIMAX rotation. The factor analyses were diagnosed and found to have met the necessary statistical assumptions as indicated by their high Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure in conjunction with the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix possessing values above .5. Sufficient unique loadings (for more than one extracted factor) and ability for each item to account for a minimum of 50 percent of its variation were conditions set in retaining the items. The examination of the three-factor solution of the (resistance to change) revealed a combined total variance explained of 51.565 percent. Majority of the variation was taken up by value (78.352%), followed by competency (44.512%).

4.2.2 Reliability Analysis

The items that represent each individual factor were subjected to reliability analysis. The computation of the Cronbach's alpha would determine the extent of agreement between respondents for each dimension. A higher score will indicate a higher reliability, with a range from 0 to 1. Most dimensions in this study have high levels of reliability and are well above the cut-off value of 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) with the lowest registering a value of .77 (level of involvement in planning and level of involvement in implementation) and the highest job authority (.97). The rest of the variables job status (.93), resistance to change (.93), job responsibility (.92) followed by competency (.91), job security and remuneration (.91), social integration (.89), training and support by superiors (.85); and finally career (.80) have satisfactory alpha value. The alpha coefficients are reported in the similar tables of factor analyses to ease the comparison between the representative extracted factors and their reliability scores.

4.3 Discriminate and Predictive Validity

Pearson correlation was used find out the interrelationships among independent variables and dependent variable. Resistance to change was highly correlation with competency, job reliability, job authority and career.

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Correlation between Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Resistance to Change	1								
2. Competence	.583 **	1							
3. Training	.058	.190*	1						
4. Career and Social Integration	.177*	.205*	.388**	1					
5. Job Authority	.324**	.235**	.281**	.412**	1				
6. Involvement in planning and implementing the change	.235**	.379**	.445**	.453**	.432**	1			
7. Job Status	.245**	.276**	.321**	.414**	.552**	.418**	1		
8. Job Responsibility	.375**	.258**	.109	.262**	.383**	.222**	.214*	1	
9. Job Security and Remuneration	.237**	.267**	.194*	.298**	.191*	.145	.114	.241**	1

***Correlation significant at 1% significance level, * Correlation significant at 5% significance level*

Referring to the correlation analysis, it showed that role overload was significantly correlated with all the variables tested, while role ambiguity was correlated with occupational commitment. On the other hand, role conflict was significantly correlated to competency with job authority, job security, level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implement change finally to training and support by superiors at significance level of 0.01. In addition, job responsibility was significantly correlated to job authority, job status, career and level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implementation at significance level of 0.01. Also job authority was significantly correlated to job status, social integration, level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implement change and training and support by superiors. Moreover, job status was significantly correlated to social integration, level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implement change and training and support by superiors. Job security and remuneration was significantly correlated to social integration. Finally social integration was significantly correlated to level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implement change; and training and support by superiors.

4.4 Assessing Statistical Assumptions

The mediating analyses were verified that they are free from any violations towards assumptions of least squares procedures used in multiple regression analyses. The models under investigation were diagnosed for the following assumptions: 1) linearity of the research model; 2) the constant variance of the error terms (heterocedasticity), 3) the independence of the error terms, and 4) the normality of the error term distribution. The linearity of the phenomenon was investigated through Pearson correlation matrix. In addition, multicollinearity (condition index < 30, VIF < 10, tolerance > 0.1) and

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independence of error term (Durbin Watson ranges 1.5 - 2.5) were found to be within the acceptable limit for all the mediating steps (see Appendix). Homoscedasticity was confirmed by plotting the standardized residual values (Y-axis) vs. regression standardized predicted regression (X-axis), with no significant patterns obtained from the plot.

Regression Analysis between resistance to change and the independent variables

Factors	Beta	T-Ratio	Sig. t
Competence	.505	6.1	.000
Job Responsibility	.078	.924	.358
Job Authority	.348	3.327	.001
Job Status	-.054	-.566	.573
Career	.234	2.705	.008
Job Security and Remuneration	.041	.520	.604
Social Integration	-.134	-1.498	.137
Involvement to planning and involvement to implement	-.129	-1.330	.186
Training and support by superiors	-.099	-1.015	.313
R Square = .453, F = 9.212, Sig. F = 0.00, Durbin-Watson = 1.692			

In addition, the use of P-P plots showed that the normality of the error distribution assumption was verified (e.g. illustrated that all the residuals were located approximately along the diagonal line) for all the regression models. Multiple Regression was used to find out whether, competency, perceive cost and benefit of the change and level of involvement in change have any significant effect on the resistance to change. It was found that job responsibility, job status, Job security and remuneration; Social integration, level of the involvement to planning and involvement to implement change; and training and support by superiors do not have any significant effect on resistance to change at 5% significance level. However, the competency of the first line manager was found to have significant effect on the resistance to change at 5% significance level (sig t= .000). therefore hypothesis 1 was accepted. Job authority was found to have significant negative effect on the resistance to change at 5% significance level (sig t = .001). Therefore hypothesis 2b was confirmed. Career was significant at 5% significance level (sig t=.008). Therefore hypothesis 2d was accepted.

5.0 Discussion

Hypotheses 1 examined the relationship between the competence of the first-line manager and their resistance to change and these hypotheses is accepted. Lombard and Crafford (2003) mentioned that to dealing with resistance to change the organization top management should focus on competencies for first-line managers, which will enable them to design and implement a behavioural, technical and structural strategy to support the achievement of successful change. Perhaps, the more of competence in first-line managers that give them the ability to change smoothly and overcome the resistance to change (Gill, 2001). In this study the competency relationship with the resistance to change is significant so the Malaysian organization must look forward to use this tool to make the change easier.

Hypotheses 2 examined the relationship between perceived cost and benefits of change and resistance to change and this hypotheses is partially accepted. If the picture of the new change is not that clear, Mullines (2005) argued about the fear of the unknown. Understanding of the change and making employees know where they will go and what will do after change is very important. In general, these two processes will make the change picture clearer to them. It is also very beneficial to leaders and project managers to understand the change in order for them to manage the change effectively (Peters, 2006). Employees with high authority were less resisted to change since they were somehow felt secured with the authority that they had in the organization. This is in the sense that their job was perceived as "safe" after the change took place.

Hypotheses 3 examined the relationship however, between the level of involvement in change and resistance to change. This hypothesis is rejected. This finding is parallel to the finding of Giangreco and Peccei (2005). They also found that there was no significant relationship between the level of involvement in change and resistance to change. One explanation to that is usually in an organization, all the big decision are made at the upper level of management, and do not even involve the first-line managers. The first-line managers may be not involved in the decision making process. Moreover, they are working in multinational organizations where the decisions are made in the headquarters overseas. Thus, the Malaysian first-line managers do not get involved in the decision making process and the involvement in the change process is almost nil.

Among the demographic factors age, education level and gender were studied. It was found that employees with age more than 50 had significant impact on resistance to change. This means that the more age of the employees, the more resistance to them to accept to change. This probably become at their "senior" career level, these employees do not want to accept anymore change and feel "stable" with their current position. Any change in organization will bring change to their stable "career" position and will try to avoid this situation. The present study also found that education levels affected resistance to change. First-line managers in multinational organization in Malaysia who hold master degree reported higher level of resistance to change than those hold degree certificates. The employees are exactly like the above mentioned regarding age. Employees who hold master degree show higher resistance to change probably they do not want the change to

affect their "status" and position in the organization. They probably "afraid" to accept the change which may bring surprise change to their career in the organization.

6.0 Conclusion

Competence, job authority and career were found to be negatively related to resistance to change. Findings of this study contribute to the better understanding of resistance to change among first-line managers in Malaysia. An understanding of the requirements that enable first-line managers to deal with resistance to change can support organizations in removing the dominant cause of unsuccessful change. The result showed that it was important for the first-line managers to be aware at the change that going or taking place in their organization. This information may assist them in coping with the changes, especially in the matter of their competency, the perceive cost and benefit, their age and educational level. On the other hand, it is important to the organization by find the right way to make smooth change in the culture or structure strategy. This will make the first-line managers willing to accept the change and overcome the resistance to change. At the same time, this will encourage the organization development. When employees especially the first-line managers accept the change may be organizations can invite first-line managers to see involve in the process at decision making to change. The top management should be aware that there are factors that contribute to the first-line managers' resistance to change. The top management therefore should look into the first-line managers' competency, their job authority, their career level, their age and their educational level in order to overcome the resistance to change.

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