

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY GUIDE





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INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing has matured over the last decade to become an integral part of the marketing mix for both large and small businesses. It can have a significant and measurable impact on your bottom line and – when done well – can be a powerful marketing tool. Whether you are trying to reach a local audience or launching a brand nationwide, social media marketing should be considered as part of your marketing activity.

In this guide we will take you through the steps needed to build a social marketing strategy that is appropriate to your audience and achieves your business goals.



WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

The first step in creating a successful and robust social media strategy is to assess your existing social media efforts and that of your competitors.

ASSESSING YOUR SOCIAL PRESENCE

To assess your presence you must look at the size of your existing audience (if you have one) and how engaged that audience is. Start by asking the following questions:

- ✓ Which platforms are you on?
- ✓ How many followers do you have?
- ✓ How engaged are your users?
- How active are you?
- What type of content works well?
- How many leads has this content generated?

WHICH PLATFORMS ARE YOU ON?

Where do you have a company profile? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn

HOW MANY FOLLOWERS DO YOU HAVE ON EACH?

Overall, how many people follow your Twitter account, like your Facebook page?

HOW ENGAGED ARE YOUR FOLLOWERS?

Look at your last few posts on each platform and see how many people liked it, commented, retweeted, etc.



HOW ACTIVE ARE YOU?

How frequently do you post on each platform? Rarely, monthly, weekly, daily?

WHAT TYPE OF CONTENT WORKS WELL?

Do you notice that you get more engagement (likes, comments, retweets, etc) on a certain type of post? Do images get a high engagement, or video content? See if you can determine any trends with top performing content

HOW MANY LEADS HAS THIS ACTIVITY GENERATED?

How many customers you have gained from your social accounts? Has any new business come via social?

ASSESSING YOUR COMPETITORS

Now you must assess how your presence compares to that of your competitors. Have a look at your top three competitors and see how their presence and activity differs to your own. This will help you determine how large a role social media plays in their strategy and will also give you ideas on what platforms you should use and what content seems to resonate with the audience.

- ✓ Which platforms are they on?
- How many followers do they have?
- ✓ How engaged are their users?
- How active are they?
- ✓ What type of content works well?



SECTION 2 SETTING YOUR OBJECTIVES

Like all marketing activity, setting clear objectives is critical to the success of your social media strategy and if you don't already have a social presence, the competitor audit will help to give you a good benchmark of where you need to be.

Before setting objectives you must first consider WHY you are planning a social media campaign. Social media activity should be tactically run to help you solve key challenges facing your business. For example:

DO YOU NEED TO RAISE BRAND AWARENESS?

Objective: Build followers across platforms, reach a large audience and achieve high engagement rates

DO YOU NEED TO DRIVE MORE TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE?

Objective: Prompt clicks through to your site from your social content

DO YOU NEED TO BUILD BRAND LOYALTY?

Objective: Achieve high engagement rates and, in particular, high levels of comments, retweets and shares

DO YOU NEED TO DRIVE MORE SALES?

Objective: Drive traffic through to your shop and achieve strong conversion to sales

The objectives you set and the tactical approach you take will differ depending on the challenges you are hoping to solve.

It's a good idea to really think about how you'll deliver against each objective in some detail.

RAISING BRAND AWARENESS

Social media activity can have a huge impact on Brand Awareness. Through your social accounts you can reach a large volume of your potential customers and you can push out engaging and relevant content. When looking to increase Brand Awareness:

- Post engaging and genuinely interesting, useful content

 for example helpful tips related to your product or
 service or industry studies
- Post video content, images and gifs. Visual content gets significantly more engagement.
- If you can, run competitions and giveaways to prompt interaction

Often, when looking to increase Brand Awareness, an effective strategy is to promote your posts or run ads – this helps you specifically promote your content to people who are interested.

DRIVING TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE

Prompting click-through to your site from your content is one of the key objectives of social media as it's such a valuable stage of engagement and path to sale.

- Monitor the data analytics of your posts, take note of what drives click through and what doesn't and upweight relevant content accordingly.
- Keep it brief. Try and entice the reader into wanting more! If you reveal all the information in the post, there's no need for them to visit your website. Notice how other brands and media publications use concise text to grab the reader's attention and prompt click through.
- Create a clear call to action. Why would the viewer want to click through to your website? E.g. "Find out how..." or "Sign up early and..." are giving people a gentle push to take the next step.



INCREASING BRAND LOYALTY

Turning followers into advocates of your brand is an incredibly valuable way of getting word-of-mouth marketing.

- Create a positive brand experience by being both accessible and a respected authority on your subject matter. Brands that acknowledge and reply quickly to messages with useful information will create a positive experience that your audience are likely to share.
- Reward your followers with special treatment, discounts, early access, contests and promotions. Anything that makes your followers feel part of an exclusive community will provide them with 'social currency' and a desire to share.

USING SOCIAL TO DRIVE SALES

Once you've started to build awareness of your brand you'll want to get a return on your efforts by driving sales. When this objective is set it requires an isolated, focused approach as it's quite a different strategy to building a following.

- Make it easy! Start by ensuring your audience can easily access the ecommerce platform from your social media profiles. The sales page should be clearly linked on all social media.
- Consider Pay-per-Click on Facebook. This allows you to be highly targeted e.g. Age, gender, geography, spending habits, interests etc. and once you've built up an awareness, you're more likely to convert to a purchase if you focus on those most likely to convert to a sale.
- Proactively searching for sales opportunities and engaging in a helpful and authentic manner is also great way to find leads.



SECTION 3 SETTING YOUR OBJECTIVES

Before launching your social media activity or refining your strategy it is important to fully understand who it is you are trying to connect with. Who exactly are you speaking to? This is the cornerstone of any good strategy because once you know the 'who', you can determine 'where' you should speak to them and 'what' you should say. It also helps you know who to actively target with any promotional activity.

When you've clearly defined your target audience with a focused demographic, research their social media usage. Ask people within that category what platforms they use, how they interact with brands, what content they like and don't like. This will be a huge help in defining your approach to social.

Creating audience personas and really getting a clear picture of your audience is an important step towards ensuring you're talking with the right people in the right place.

CREATE AUDIENCE PERSONAS

Audience Personas are fictional, generalised representations of your ideal customers. Personas detail specific information about a fictional customer that represents a key customer group. Creating Personas for your social media activity is incredibly helpful in targeting your activity.

Ideally Persona creation should be based on audience research, however if this is not possible take an informed view on Persona creation based on your knowledge of your own customers and your different audience types. Any hypotheses can be tested as you progress with your social media activity.



We have given an outline of what to aim to include in your persona below but for more details see <u>Digital Marketing</u> <u>Strategy Guide Intermediate Level</u>

Who	Key Characteristics	Social behaviour
 Job Marital status Age Gender Location Income bracket 	 Hobbies Interests Attitude to your industry (actively involved, keen user, necessity) Attitude to your brand (i.e. very engaged, indifferent, transient) 	 Why are they using social media? (Browsing, job hunting, networking, looking for information, looking for inspiration) Are they likely to be prolific users of social? Platform preferences – if known (facebook, twitter, instagram)

This insight into your audience will help you determine which platforms you should focus on and what type of content you should post.

SETTING THE TONE

It's important to spend some time thinking about the type of brand you want to be on social media. Will you go for a professional, practical tone or will you go for a fun and 'human' approach to content and messaging?

It's worth bearing in mind that social media platforms are primarily for people to interact with people and brands that take the human approach are much better received.

Whatever the tone, it's important to make sure it's consistent. Playful one day and corporate the next won't appear genuine to your audience. If you have more than one person managing the social media activity then make sure they fully understand the tone of voice. A good way is to make sure the social voice fully reflects the company culture.



PLATFORM SELECTION 4

Once you've set your objectives and understand your audience it is time to select the right platform or platforms for your communications. To do this you need to understand where each channel excels and how it can help you at the relevant point in your customer journey.

If you're thinking about using more than one social channel, you also need to consider the type of content people consume within different channels. A lengthy and informative blog post might work for LinkedIn, but cross-publishing this onto Twitter may not work so well. But you can always create a cut-down or visual representation of the same content.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is the world's most popular social network with over 1.8 billion users. It is also highly developed for business use, with a huge 'brand' population all hosting their own branded pages and a sophisticated advertising platform.

It might feel like Facebook is old news in the digital world with newer platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat getting so much attention from younger audiences, but it's still huge with nearly 90% of 18-29 year old internet users logging in. It's also a great platform for reaching older audiences with 84% of 30-49 year olds and 72% of 50-64 year olds.

Facebook's longevity has enabled it to become an effective and valuable platform for brands. Whilst newer networks are still working out how to engage their audience with brand communications, Facebook is a solid place to start distributing content and building a following. Brand presence is widely accepted on Facebook with users willingly engaging with brands on the platform. Facebook's News Feed is a very visible place for social posts, it's one of the best places for you to distribute your content in order to increase brand awareness and drive website traffic.

The Facebook audience generally responds best to visually engaging posts that are entertaining, informative, inspirational or rewarding. The best content types to use would be photos, videos, quizzes, competitions, and digestible snippets of visually engaging facts and infographics and links to guides. It's also a good idea when establishing an audience to take advantage of Facebook's targeting capabilities that allow you to tailor your messages to users with certain interests.

Tips

- **Optimise:** Optimise content to encourage sharing and engagement. Set a character limit of 150-200
- Use Images, video, gifs: Accompany all posts with an image or video to boost content reach and engagement
- **Links:** Link back to the website as often as possible to drive traffic
- **Promoted posts:** Promote important posts to reach a targeted, new audience
- **Call to Action:** Give each post a call to action, however small. This keeps the audience engaged
- **Frequency:** Post consistently, up to once a day. Do not post several times in one day and then not again for a week

TWITTER

Twitter has over 315m users worldwide and is the original 'micro-blogging' site with over 500m tweets sent daily. Like Facebook, twitter is also designed for business use, with its own advertising platform and wide uptake among brands.



Twitter provides a double benefit to organisations, it allows brands to engage directly with their audience and also to engage with key influencers within each target market, such as reporters, social influencers, prominent individuals in a given field, etc.

Users are also happy to interact with brands on Twitter, with many using it as a 'go-to' for latest brand updates, information and also as a customer service tool. The Twitter audience responds best to entertaining and informative content. The best content types to use would be links to guides, news updates, images, and re-tweeting Twitter messages of key influencers within a given industry.

In the early stages, Twitter could be a useful tool in raising awareness of your business among its key audiences and in reaching out to influencers and experts within a given industry. It will also be useful as a tool for reaching out to traditional media outlets such as newspapers and journals.

Bear in mind that 34.5% of consumers prefer to connect to customer service agents via social media (Sprout Social Q2 2016) and in time it may become a primary tool for customer service.

Twitter also gives you a useful insight into your prospects personal life, likes, and interests are. It's a great listening tool and can be a useful tool for developing your selling strategy.

Effective use of Twitter would incorporate hashtags as an awareness and visibility-boosting technique. Internet users are using hashtags to search for new products and solutions, so have a think about what drives customers to your product and use hashtags that naturally fit around that niche.

Tips:

• **Twitter Ads:** use Twitter Ads to promote your content to a targeted audience



- **Hashtags:** use relevant hashtags, to categorise your content within a certain theme. E.g. A travel business might hashtag a relevant post #summersun and their content would appear under all #summersun content
- Monitoring: keyword monitoring and hashtag monitoring are important to have an eye on what people are saying about your brand category or similar brands. This will provide an opportunity for you to proactively pitch your business. It will also allow you to find content which you might want to share.
- **Short and sweet:** keep copy on tweets as punchy as possible, and always try to leave enough characters for an image. If you want to post a link and an image, this will take up 46 characters, leaving just 96 for copy.
- **Use images:** images boost engagement with the post
- **Optimise images:** where possible, optimise images to 1024x512 for Twitter.
- **Respond:** respond to all queries, comments, feedback received through Twitter to increase brand favourability
- **Post consistently:** Twitter moves fast. Don't be afraid to post more than once a day but try not to leave long gaps in between tweets
- **Vary content:** build up a content calendar to ensure a variety of content is scheduled for the upcoming month, and supplement that with reactive content
- **Monitor trending topics and be proactive:** Everyday, there are different trending topics and hashtags. It's good practice to monitor these daily and where appropriate, to jump onto a trend and create your own spin on it.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn has over 450 million users worldwide and is the world's largest professional social network. Its main purpose is to facilitate networking between professionals by connecting colleagues with each other and by connecting businesses to existing and potential employees. It is also a place where people within an industry can share ideas and interact via LinkedIn Groups.



The fastest growing demographic on LinkedIn is students and grads so if you're looking to reach a young audience then LinkedIn could be a good option. There are around 20m users in the UK.

LinkedIn is heavily focused on businesses, with a sophisticated advertising platform, detailed insights and the opportunity to create branded pages. Due to the nature of the network users expect to connect and interact with organizations on this platform.

The potential of LinkedIn for brands is to build trust and authority, establish thought-leadership through sharing content-pieces and cultivate an involved network. LinkedIn requires a good amount of dedicated time to work well, with active posting of organizational news, information sharing, career opportunities and participation within Groups.

It's good to think of LinkedIn users as 'information junkies'! Provide your audience with useful, interesting content that will be of value to them socially and professionally, and you'll become a trusted source.

Tips:

- Create a healthy company page Spend some time getting a great looking cover photo and a well thought through introduction. Your brand page needs to look impressive and fully complete.
- Monitor how well your posts do Keep a track of impressions, clicks and shares and adjust your content depending on how well it performs.
- Consider targeting specific audiences when you post – If you have a diverse audience you can select whom to deliver content to, E.g. By Industry, location or demographic.
- **Update regularly** It's good to get into the habit of posting content regularly to ensure you're attracting new and repeat visitors. The key is to provide on-going value.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram is an online photo-sharing, video-sharing social networking service. It has over 600 million users worldwide (with approx.19m in the UK). It is completely image and video centric so users cannot post text-only messages.

Instagram can provide strong results for businesses that use it to inspire and engage their users. However, in order to make this platform work, you must commit to sharing a frequent stream of high quality, inspiring and engaging photos and videos.

Instagram works best for brands that promote or sell an aspirational lifestyle and that tap into current trends using appropriate hashtags to gain followers. In the UK, fashion and automotive brands are the highest ranking, but food and sports brands are also doing well with high quality aspirational content.

Working out the best content to post can take a while, so it's a good idea to spend some time on the 'explore' and 'following' tabs to find our what your followers are engaging with. Relevant hashtags will ensure your content reaches a wider, relevant audience and the more engagement your content gets, the more likely it'll be featured within 'explore' which can expose your posts to a massive audience.

Targeted content is the key to great engagement, and great engagement will eventually grab you a feature on the explore tab, massively multiplying your potential reach.

Tips:

- **High quality visuals** don't flood Instagram with your logo! Think: visually appealing and interesting content
- **Controlled use of hashtags:** Use hashtags, sparingly. The overuse of hashtags can look 'spammy' – stick to 4 or 5 relevant hashtags to expand the reach of your image or video.
- **Engage:** Engage with other accounts relevant to your brand commenting on a high profile account's image or video will give you more visibility to your audience.



• **Monitor:** Monitor hashtags and keywords to gain a view on who is talking about your brand category or competitors

PINTEREST

Unlike Twitter and Facebook, which are primarily communicationbased platforms, Pinterest has a strong commercial element and *55% of Pinterest users visit the platform to find or shop for products. *KPCB Internet Trends report 2016

Pinterest can be a highly effective tool for targeting consumers in the 'planning' mindset and it's a great tool for inspiration and aspiration. Pinterest is a great platform for discovering new brands and also offers some effective targeting tools, allowing you to add keywords and target specific users to increase your brands visibility and drive conversions.

If you have an online shop, then Pinterest could be a really strong tool for driving web traffic and is definitely worthy of consideration.

Tips:

- Post compelling images that people will want to share
- Try text overlays to help people browse and discover your content faster
- Add the Pin it Button to your website for people to easily save ideas and products to Pinterest
- Create detailed descriptions of your content
- Create themed boards. E.g. If you've got a new product design or logo to launch Pinterest allows you to connect written, photo, and video content under one heading. (Pins created for themed boards should also make sense on their own so people can re-pin)
- Besides the Pin It button, you can also add a Follow button in a prominent position on your webpage so your customers can easily find you
- Consider adding lists or how-tos in the text overlay
- It is also a good idea to optimize your website to allow Rich Pins, or Pins that show extra information on the Pin itself.
 Pinterest currently has six types of Rich Pins: app, movie, recipe, article, product, and place.

CONTENT TYPES BY PLATFORM

FACEBOOK

- Exclusive offer codes e.g. "receive 10% when you book online using the code xxx."
- Regular competitions to engage the audience
- Brand related news stories and stories
- Brand category related news and stories
- Photos, gifs, video, infographics
- User generated content (UGC) customer stories, engagements, good feedback etc.
- Being aware of key dates and using events to tap into seasonal/trending content. E.g. summer holidays, bank holidays, Valentine's Day etc.
- Sharing other relevant content from Facebook or other channels

TWITTER

- Sharing blog posts to drive traffic to your website
- Re-tweeting followers and following images/tweets
- Sharing interesting content about your brand / category (shareable content)
- Promoting Instagram images through Twitter
- YouTube videos / Discount codes / Competitions
- Promotions
- Creating content around trending topics (using relevant Hashtags)



INSTAGRAM

- High quality shots and videos
- User generated content (UGC) re-posting content from your existing followers will increase brand favourability
- Hashtags are key to using Instagram successfully and relevant, popular hashtags must be used to accompany the posts

LINKEDIN

- Publish owned articles and articles from credible sources.
- Industry insights, brand category and business insights.
- Share good news (business-focused, awards etc).
- Avoid being 'salesy' and avoid anything overly political or controversial.
- Maintain a professional tone of voice this isn't quite the same as Facebook so it's good to have a more business approach.
- Share other people's articles from Linked In Pulse (a collection of publishers content)

PINTEREST

- Instructographics (or infographics) are useful because of their DIY, how-to nature.
- Rich Pins: There are four different types:
- Product Pins Real-time pricing, availability and info on where to buy your product.
- App pins so people can download your app without leaving Pinterest.
- Recipe pins ingredients, cooking times and serving sizes.
- Article pins a headline, author and story description.
- Board names should be engaging and reflect the personality of your brand.



SECTION 6 CONTENT PLANNING

CONTENT CALENDAR

In order to manage your on-going communications effectively you'll need to plan ahead with a content calendar. This will not only make sure you have your content ready in plenty of time to publish, it'll also let you plan around key industry events and other important dates. The further ahead you plan your content, the more likely you'll be to have a consistent flow, which is key to building up a following.

There will be times when you'll want to react quickly to a current trend or piece of news, timely posts can get a lot of shares. So it's good to allow for flexibility. You might want to aim for 80% proactive and 20% reactive content.

Once you've established the brand tone, content territory, audience personas and the best platforms to use, start to map out a content plan. It's a good idea to segment the content by objective too - i.e. awareness building, drive to site, or drive sales.

When it comes to publishing and promoting your content, the next steps are measurement (detailed below) and adaption. Keeping a close eye on what works well and what doesn't will allow you to optimise the best performing content on your network.



FREQUENCY & CONSISTENCY

Don't expect to go viral after a few posts. It's a busy market out there and your customers are bombarded with a lot of content on a daily basis, so it'll take a while for your message to cut through.

It's important to maintain a consistent presence and tone – without overloading your audience and risk getting unfollowed, so finding the right balance is important.

The frequency will vary by platform (and objectives) but 'quality over quantity' is a good rule of thumb. The more relevant and interesting the content, the more likely it will be shared and liked. If you find the content genuinely interesting, it's likely some other people will too. And that's more impactful than 'wallpaper' posts.

ORIGINAL CONTENT VERSUS REPOSTS

It's also important to get the right balance between original content (images, videos, news about your brand) and reposts (supporting content related to your brand category or brand positioning).

Having a clearly defined strategy that links to your USP will help you widen the scope of content you can reference back to your brand, which is important for building brand awareness in the early stages when you may not have a great deal of content.



MEASUREMENT -KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In order to achieve the objectives for Facebook outlined above, measurement and learning from what works and what doesn't is key. Facebook's Insights platform offers in-depth stats on each Facebook post and provides the most up-to-date and accurate figures on your audience and your posts' interactions.

Key metrics to look at to analyse Facebook performance:

- Volume of likes the number of people who like the page
- Reach how many people have seen your content
- Engagement how many people engage with the content (likes, comments, shares)
- Click-throughs how many people have visited the website from the posts
- Conversions (tracked in Google Analytics) how many people clicked to the website then booked a tour

For promoted posts, you should measure:

- Paid Reach the number of people who saw the post because you promoted it
- Organic Reach the number of people who saw your post naturally
- Actions the number of clicks, likes, comments and shares on the post
- Cost per action Total Cost divided by Total Actions
- Cost per Click Total Cost divided by Total Clicks
- Conversions the number of bookings tracked in Google Analytics from clicks on the post
- Conversion rate the Number of Bookings divided by Total Clicks
- Cost per Conversion Total Cost divided by Total Conversions

TWITTER MEASUREMENT

To determine the success of the content against the key goals and objectives, it's important to keep an eye on:

Key metrics to analyse Twitter performance:

- Followers the number of people following your account
- Reach how many people saw the content
- Engagements how many people clicked, re-tweeted or commented on the content
- Click-through how many people visited the website
- Conversions (tracked in Google Analytics) how many people clicked to the website then purchased

For promoted tweets, you should measure:

- Impressions the number of times your promoted tweet is shown
- Engagements how many people clicked, re-tweeted or commented on the promoted content
- Clicks how many people clicked on the post
- Cost per engagement Total Cost divided by Total Engagements
- Cost per Click Total Cost divided by Total Clicks
- Conversions the number of sales tracked in Google Analytics from clicks on the post
- Conversion rate the Number of sales divided by Total Clicks
- Cost per Conversion Total Cost divided by Total Conversions

INSTAGRAM MEASUREMENT

Currently, Instagram doesn't offer an analytics package, however you can measure the basics: likes, comments and followers. The key to measurement is learning month to month and posting more of what works and less of what doesn't. This will highlight what types of posts the audience resonates with which will inform future content strategy.



Tips:

- Controlled use of hashtags: Use hashtags, sparingly. The overuse of hashtags can look 'spammy' – stick to 4 or 5 relevant hashtags at the most to expand the reach of your image or video.
- **Engage:** Engage with other related accounts. Commenting on a high profile account's image will instantly provide more visibility within the audience you're trying to reach.
- **Monitor:** Monitor hashtags and keywords to gain a view on who is talking about your brand category.

LINKED IN MEASUREMENT

The Analytics tab provides companies with metrics and trends about their company page. Company page administrators can view very rich data about their company page, these include:

UPDATES:

Impressions

The number of times each update was shown to LinkedIn members.

Clicks

The number of clicks on your content

Interactions

The number of times people have liked, commented on or shared each update.

Followers Acquired

How many followers you gained by promoting each update.

FOLLOWERS:

Follower Demographics A breakdown of who's following your company

Follower trends

Showing how your number of followers has changed over time.

How You Compare

Your number of followers compared with other companies.



VISITORS

Unique Visitors to your brand page Visitor Demographics – details on who's visiting your page Onsite Measurement

EVALUATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY REGULARLY

As with any strategy it is important to regularly evaluate the performance of your activity against your objectives and alter your tactics or pivot your strategy as needed.

Once you have set up your accounts and developed a social media management routine, schedule regular temperature checks for all your channels to maintain a steady presence. Carrying out a monthly review of activity is a good idea so you can review the performance of your recent posts and activity. Pull out a simple table against your key metrics (such as total followers, reach per platform, clicks to site etc) to track month on month activity.

It is also valuable to deep dive into your social stats every few months. The on-platform analytics tools provided by each platform are a good place to start and there are also tools like SocialBro and Hootsuite's 'Grade Your Social' which evaluate your Social presence with one click; you can receive reports on your engagement, reach and profile strength. If you find that your customers don't engage as well on one of your social channels, check to make sure you haven't been neglecting that channel. Likewise if you find that a certain type of post performs well, factor more of these into your content calendar.



Over time you may find that the original objectives for your social activity shift – for example where you once were trying to boost sales, you are now aiming for brand loyalty. This is a natural evolution of your marketing activities and means that it is time to alter your approach. Revisit your original activity and head back to the start of this guide to work up your new strategy.

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