

# **Hire the People Your Clients Value**

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**Breuer**

# Points we'll consider:

- Why client values matter
- What kind of people make clients happy?
- Why firms hire people clients may not value
- How to recruit client-valued professionals

# My guess about your firm:

- ✓ Rarely ask clients about your people
- ✓ Hire carefully for competence and cultural fit
- ✓ # of client-valued employees proportional to general population
- ✓ Think they're unusual; you're lucky to have them

# Competence and fit:

Necessary,  
but not sufficient

What you ignore:

***interdependent skillset***  
*that makes architects successful with  
clients*

They're beaten up by  
their own firms!

They don't listen

***I hit a nerve!***

They're arrogant

They have their own  
agenda

**What's (still) the problem?  
Lack of ...**

**1. Hiring for client-valued traits**

**2. Training and Coaching**

**“I select people, period. I don’t care what firms they work for.”**

-- Brian Ferguson,  
Corporate Real Estate Director,  
PriceWaterhouseCoopers

Clients rehire firms  
based on the  
experience of working  
with their people

**Concept #1:**

**Rehire**

**Seek accounts, not  
“repeat clients”.**

**Concept #2:**

**Experience**

**The experience is the marketing.**

# What was it like to work with XYZ, Inc.?

Common answers	The unusual firm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It was fine</li><li>• No hassles</li><li>• Did what we asked</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped anticipate needs</li><li>• They “got” what we were trying to do</li><li>• Made it easy</li><li>• I felt like we were all on the same team</li><li>• It was actually fun</li></ul>

# Does anyone stand out?

- Most clients cite the principals, say “no” or have to think about it
- Few employees singled out
- Same employees get repeat mentions
- Clients remember people better than firms

***What are the  
traits that clients  
value?***

# Interview questions

1. Do you agree with my premise?
2. What do best individuals have in common?
3. Do you value different qualities in designers vs. project managers?
4. What are the traits of ineffective individuals?

# Recurring Themes

(regardless of market)

- Embrace who we are
- Don't make us teach you
- It's all about behavior and attitude
  - Make our organization more important than yours
  - Take responsibility

# 5 Fundamental traits

## 1. Organizational competence

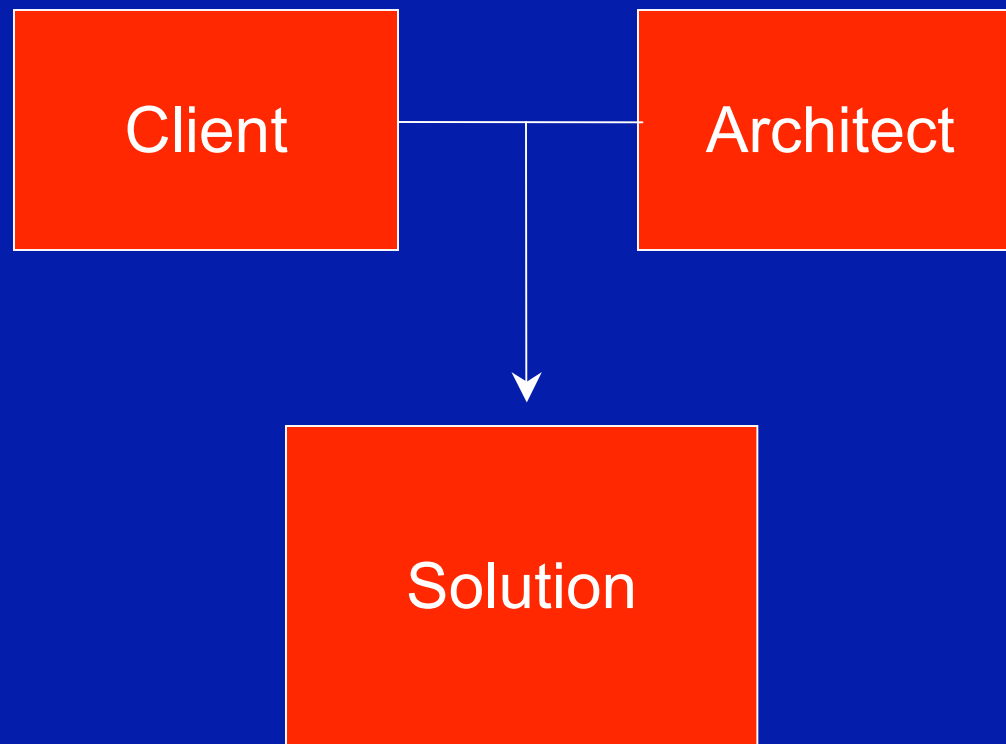
# Organizational competence

<b>Behavioral Protocol</b>	<b>Goals (implied and stated)</b>
<b>Hierarchy</b>	<b>Decision-making process</b>

# 5 Fundamental traits

1. **Organizational competence**
2. **Bias for co-creation**

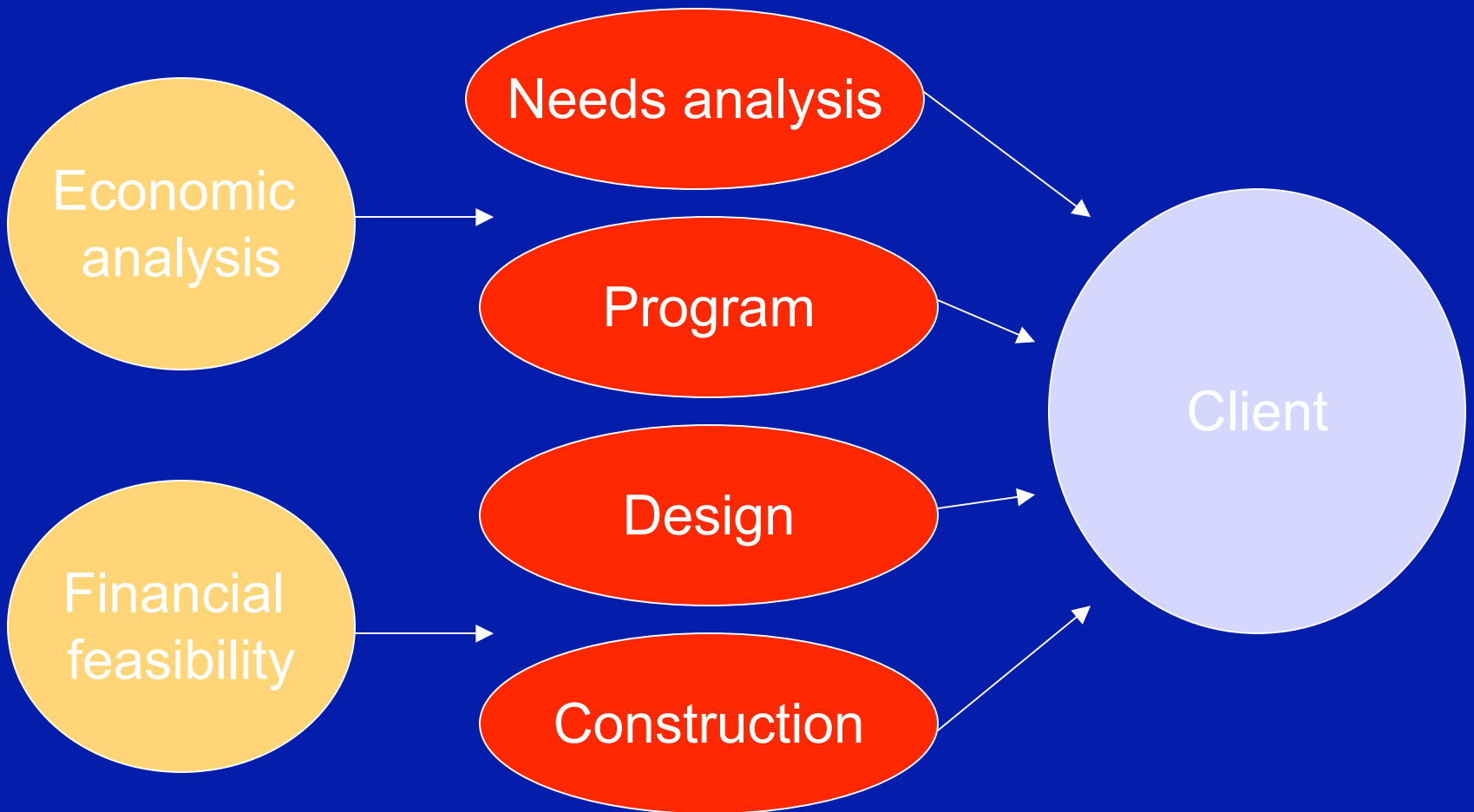
# Bias for co-creation



# 5 Fundamental traits

1. **Organizational competence**
2. **Bias for co-creation**
3. **Situational specialization**

# Situational specialization



# 5 Fundamental traits

1. **Organizational competence**
2. **Bias for co-creation**
3. **Situational specialization**
4. **Relationship-savvy**

**READ THIS ARTICLE:**

**“Relationship Management”  
By Theodore Levitt in  
The Marketing Imagination**

# What relationship-savvy people know

Good things	Bad things
Initiate contact	Make only callbacks
Make recommendations	Make justifications
<b><i>Candor in language</i></b>	<b><i>Accommodative language</i></b>
Make service suggestions	Wait for service requests
Use “we” problem-solving language	Use “owe-us” legal language
<b><i>Get to problems</i></b>	<b><i>Only respond to problems</i></b>
Use jargon/shorthand	Use long-winded communications
<b><i>Personality problems aired</i></b>	<b><i>Personality problems hidden</i></b>
Talk of “our future together”	Talk about making good on the past
Routinize responses	Fire drill/emergency responsiveness
Accept responsibility	Shift blame
Plan the future	Rehash the past

# David Maister's rules for building a great relationship (abridged)

1. Be available to your partner
2. Work really hard at listening and understanding
3. Spend time with each other with no agenda
4. Spend time off the issue
5. Communicate frequently

# 5 Fundamental traits

1. **Organizational competence**
2. **Bias for co-creation**
3. **Situational specialization**
4. **Relationship-savvy**
5. **Client leadership**

# They've hired you: now you're in charge

Personal conviction

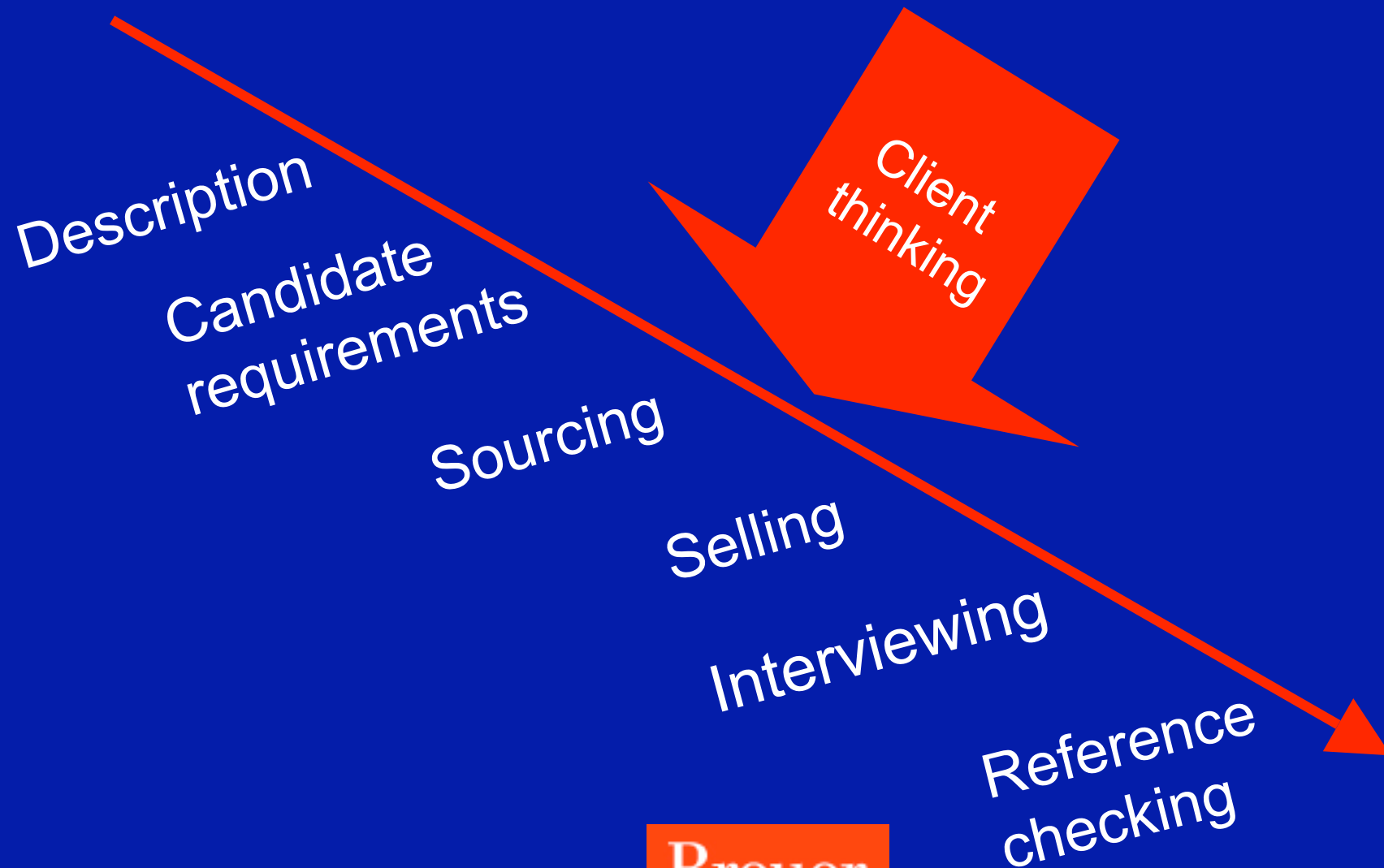
Teamwork

Think for your client



**The big question:  
can you hire for these traits?**

# Typical hiring process





### Position Description

Title: **Planning Group Location Leader - Houston**

Reports to: HOK Planning Group (HPG) Leadership Team -  
Comprised of Group Director, Marketing Director & Operations Director

Supervises: The Houston Planning Group and other  
Planning Group Project Teams

Overall Responsibilities: ***Development and leadership of the Houston Planning Group.*** Independently lead the development of planning projects for a wide variety of clients consistent with the quality standards inherent in the practice of the profession at HOK. Build a viable unit of the global planning practice through business development and mentoring of less experienced planners in project design and execution.

### Client relations

- Establish a reputation for knowledge of potential clients' organizations before a project opportunity presents itself
- Position the group as the leading urban design/planning consultant in the region with civic organizations, local press, and leading planning agencies
- Build a targeted group of strong relationships which will convert to clients over time
- Provide thought leadership to client organizations (e.g. ULI; high-profile civic organizations) through speaking and other forms of active participation
- Reduce the group's dependence on RFP-driven work to under 1/3 within two years.
- Establish at least five on-going client relationships within the first two years
- Partner with Houston AEIP principals to demonstrate how Planning can add value to their client relationships
- Proactively promote the results of projects in the media and at forums that clients value

### Office Leadership & Staff Relations

- Act as mentor; establish and implement programs for training, coaching and motivating design teams and individuals
- Ensure staff satisfaction and development; communicate group-wide position expectations
- Oversee planning training and review for assigned projects



## Position Description

Title:	<b>Senior Architectural Designer - New York and SF</b>
Reports to:	COOs, Principals for specific projects
Supervises:	Project teams
Overall Responsibilities:	Independently lead the design of specific architectural projects for a wide variety of clients consistent with the quality standards inherent in the practice of the profession at Hart Howerton.

## Requirements:

### Technical

- Bachelors degree in Architecture; MArch preferred
- Project experience in and knowledge of the dynamics of the high-end single-family residential, and hospitality industries
- Significant talent in design, design development and project leadership
- Proven ability to prioritize and the work of others in order to meet deadlines and provide high quality service to clients
- Capable of conceptual thinking on-the-fly in client discussions

### Communication

- Experience working with high net worth individuals
- Proven ability to convince prospective clients that they should retain the services of firms with which you have been associated
- Evidence of strong working relationships with clients and client representatives in a variety of social and professional settings
- Proven ability to make presentations and facilitate discussions
- Polished in his/her conversation skills and ability to move comfortably in business circles
- Uncommon life experiences that could include travel, periods of employment outside the U.S., working under a renowned designer, or owning your own firm could be a plus

## Opportunity Profile

*Note: The following profile has been prepared by Breuer Consulting Group to provide candidates who are qualified for positions with Hart Howerton with an objective view of the organization. It is meant to be a candid look at the people, projects and opportunities that would not ordinarily be part of a firm's marketing literature and prepare candidates for a content-rich interview.*

- **An ultra-client-oriented practice:** All professional services firms say they are client oriented. At Hart Howerton, a completed project is only successful if their client considers it a success. In fact, the project itself may not be the most important service Hart Howerton offers: it is by being as helpful, responsive, and anticipatory as possible that makes Hart Howerton's clients so gratified. The management team goes so far as to say that the relationships between Hart Howerton's people and their clients are a series of moral commitments.

- **The People who are successful at Hart Howerton:** HH seeks individuals with well-rounded backgrounds and experiences. Since many of the firm's clients live extraordinary lives, the HH professional must be

comfortable dealing with clients who have high expectations and no problem making decisions. Qualities that work with the clients of HH are assertiveness, diplomacy, leadership, finesse, and social fluency ... all against a backdrop of excellent technical skills and a profound appreciation for the value that the design professions can bring to making a project one of the best in its class.

### Background

Hart Howerton, like many other firms over the past decade enjoyed considerable growth ... not just in revenues, but also in the quality of the firm's portfolio. During this period – and continuing for the next year or two – the firm is undergoing an intentional transformation that transcends growth. How a group of previously successful individuals respond to the opportunities afforded by economic

# Interviewing candidates

1. Organizational competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give an example of how you've been able to help a client navigate through their own organization?</li><li>• What's your feeling about the bureaucracies you encounter?</li></ul>
2. Bias for co-creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe your workstyle after you have developed the program.</li></ul>
3. Situational specialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you do when your client asks you something you can't answer?</li><li>• Give an example of your resourcefulness.</li></ul>

# Interviewing candidates

## 4. Relationship-savvy

- How have you handled personality difficulties with your clients?
- What do you do when you see a problem coming?

## 5. Client leadership

- What do you do in the first meeting with your clients after you are awarded the project?
- How do you view your role when a consultant doesn't deliver on time?
- Describe a situation you've been in where a client got off-track and you were able to redirect.

# Reference checking

1.

## Organizational competence

- Did this person understand how decisions are made in your organization?
- Were there any organizational gaffs when you worked with this individual? How were they resolved?
- Did you feel that you were heard when you talked about some of your challenges?

## 2. Bias for co-creation

- Did you feel part of the process of finding a solution to your problem?
- Did he/she keep you informed along the way?

# Reference checking

## 3. Situational specialization

- When you needed something this person couldn't provide, what happened?
- Did you ever get a sense of "that's not my job"?

## 4. Relationship-savvy

- What did you learn from this person?
- On a scale from bugging you to unavailability, where was this person?
- What changed after you selected the firm? After the project was complete? Was it fun?

## 5. Client leadership

- How did you approach project meetings?
- Can you think of a time where you had an idea that was redirected by this person?
- If you think about the leadership position you expect this person to assume, did they live up to it?

# Overall Recommendations

1. Cultivate “FOFs”.
2. Throughout the hiring process, be unusual.

# Boring ads

Small industrial planning and design firm looking for a registered architect to support and expand industrial client base. Person must have good interpersonal skills, good working knowledge of AutoCAD 2000 and experience with office/industrial facilities. This is a great opportunity for a motivated professional.

**Job Description:**  
Premium engineering firm needs a Senior Level Architect. Excellent pay and benefits and upward mobility. You would be involved in commercial, municipal, and industrial projects.

**Job Experience:**  
Minimum 12 years experience; registered; dedicated; BArch; 5+ years experience

**Good jobs  
are not  
advertised.**

If that's what you think, you also probably believe that people who respond to ads are losers.

**Think outside that box.**

Hart Howerton offers an unusual professional experience. We're a 125-person firm based on a thorough integration of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Planning in the hospitality, community planning and exclusive residential sectors. Those are the headlines: learn more at [www.harthowerton.com](http://www.harthowerton.com).

We look for native intelligence, a keen business sense, polish, and experience in what we do. We're adding professionals to our firm who are well on their way to making their mark professionally and could thrive in an environment like ours.

*Contact our executive search team in the strictest confidence:*

[positions@breuerconsulting.com](mailto:positions@breuerconsulting.com).

*They'll fill you in.*

*You can make a decision that could change the course of your career.*

HART | HOWERTON

**Breuer**

# Overall Recommendations

3. Hunt where the ducks are
4. Put client-facing people on your hiring team
5. Make an example of client-valued people in your firm
6. Teach by example

# What have we learned?

Competence and fit not enough

Clients not happy

Five fundamental traits

Inject client-thinking into hiring  
process

Celebrate the people clients value

# Questions for you:

- Are client-valued people valued by their peers?
- Can client and firm values conflict?
- Should all people be valued by clients?
- Can you enhance client's view of existing employees?

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