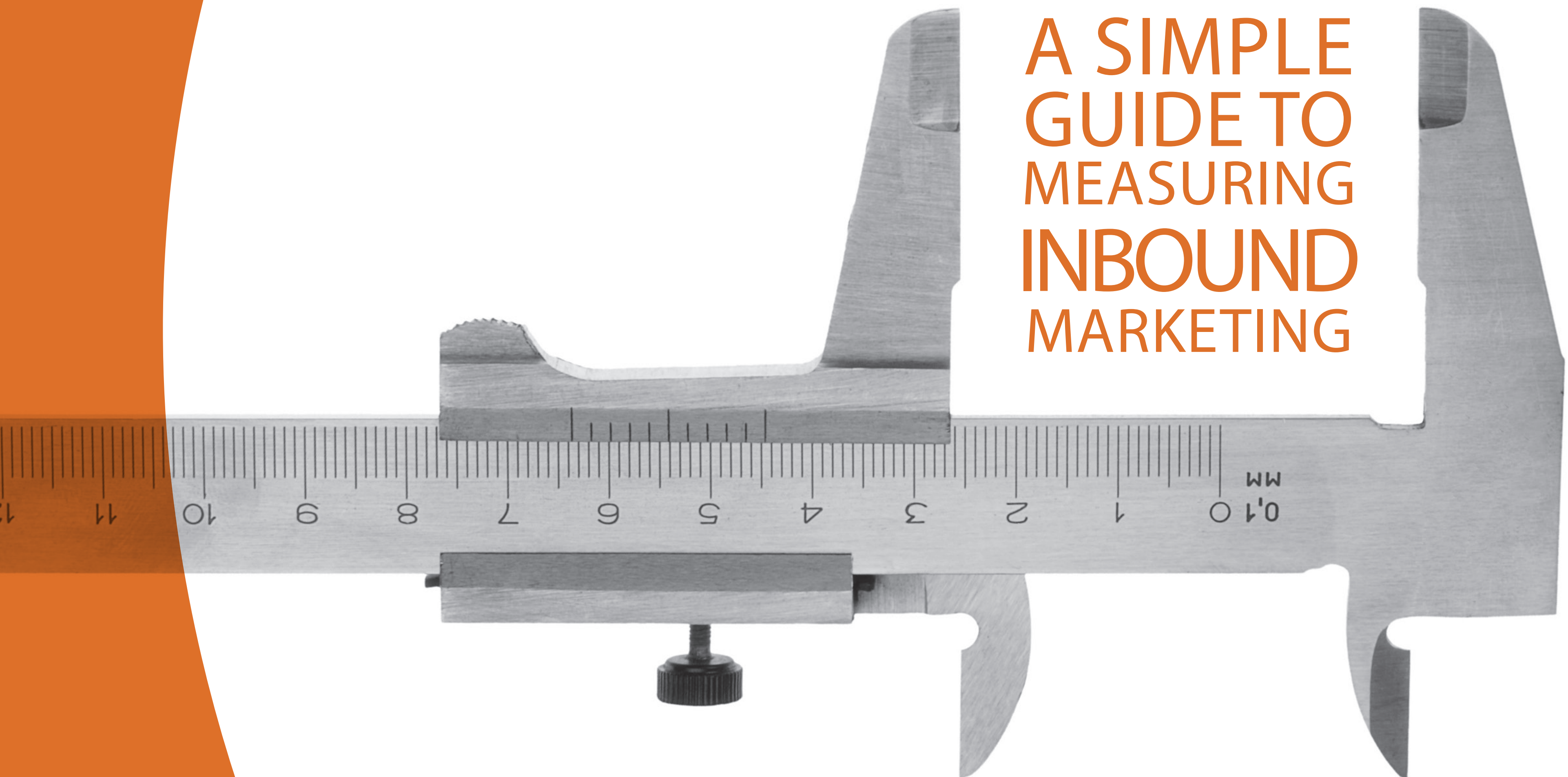
A SIMPLE GUIDE TO MEASURING INBOUND MARKETING



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INTEGRATED
COMMUNICATION

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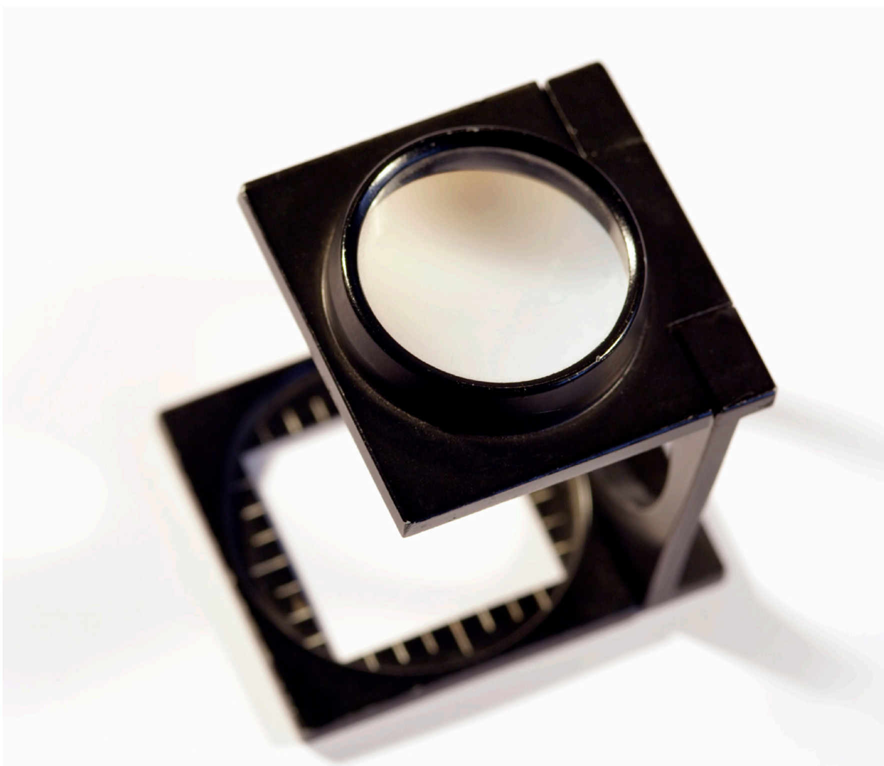
WHY MEASURING WHAT MATTERS MATTERS

Picture this: Sue has a problem. Maybe her kitchen sink is leaking, she's looking for a nice business travel bag, she is planning a vacation, or needs a restaurant recommendation. What does she do? She turns to the internet seeking a solution.



She uses any variety of resources to help her make her decision to purchase. It could have been a recommendation from a friend on Facebook or Twitter, a Google search resulting in a New York Times article or a Yelp review. She clicks, she purchases, spending X number of dollars.

Meanwhile, you just hired a PR agency in the hopes of landing a New York Times piece so you can capture traffic such as Sue's. But your PR agency is sending you reports like this:

Dear Client,

We are thrilled to share coverage of <brand name> in yesterday's New York Times (Circulation: 2,517,307) as a result of our proactive outreach…

The story, titled "blah blah blah" includes <your brand

name> in a roundup of …and quotes <your staff member>

The estimated ad value of this placement is $6,947. The story also ran online on NYTimes.com (UMV: 70,574,252), and you may view it here.

A bit of a missed opportunity, don't you think? How is that article actually driving action? Is it affecting sales? Did it achieve the desired goal?

The beauty of modern marketing is we can now get a far better understanding of our success (and failures) than ever before. Tracking and measuring marketing efforts should be an integral part of your marketing strategy. It quickly allows you to see what is working and what isn't and gives you the ability to make decisions based on evidence, not your gut.

Yes, it can be dry stuff, but it's pretty fun when you start populating your metrics in spreadsheets and watch it grow. It's also nice when you can see all the moving parts together. This ebook will outline our approach to creating a digital marketing plan rooted in measurement.

ESTABLISH THE BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

Obviously, we have to know what the goal is. We start every new client conversation by asking what they hope to achieve and we make sure it is measurable.

What does success look like? A percentage increase in sales? During a certain time of the year? More leads? More free trials? Some clients, particularly in the B2B space simply want to generate awareness about their brand and become better known in their industry. Their average transaction is in the hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars, and they aren't necessarily going to convert a sale from a single piece of content. OK, that's fine, but how do we know when we've reached "increased brand awareness?" Subscriber numbers? Industry mentions? Speaking engagement invitations? The objective will look something like this:

Get from A to B by C

When you get this alignment and consensus from the entire team, it manages expectations appropriately. Just be sure that timeline is realistic!

SEGMENT THE AUDIENCE BASED ON THE SALES FUNNEL

With the collective eye on the prize, it's time to figure out how we're going to get there. We'll determine the tactics and the metrics together so there isn't a separate measurement plan. It's an inbound marketing plan with the measurement baked right in. To do this, we'll look at the entire audience, from those who have never heard of us, to those who are loyal fans in the context of where they are in the purchase path decision, ie. the sales funnel.

The difference between average marketing and great marketing, according to [Avinash Kaushik] is that great marketers pay attention and really think about how they market to each segment of their audience. Average marketers worry only about those who are ready to buy. When you do that, you inadvertently ignore a huge percentage of your audience.

Based on that, here is how we segment the audience, and target efforts towards each:

See/awareness: The people out there who aren't aware you exist but have a need you fulfill.

Think/lead generation: They are thinking about doing business with you: Asking for recommendations, researching, narrowing down the options.

Do/revenue: Ready to buy now.

Care/advocates/influencers: Your loyal audience turn into your brand advocates.

The inbound marketing plan addresses the questions, needs and pain points each has at the four stages and uses the right distribution channel to reach them.

Now, the purchase path for each organization and each individual is varied and unpredictable. Different channels overlap for different stages of the sales funnel. That's natural.

For example, you might use social media for awareness (See), lead generation (Think) and for brand advocacy (Care). But now, instead of having a social media plan, we have a section for social under "See," one under "Think" and one under "Care." Think about audiences instead of distribution channels. This optimizes your opportunity to capture your prospect at the right time with the appropriate content.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT METRICS

Let's revisit the four categories and look at possible tactics and metrics associated with each. Keep in mind, each category will have a conversion metric that moves prospects to the next stage.

1. See | Audience metrics: Increase brand awareness: This can be considered fluff or ego metrics because it is just measuring eyeballs. But we need eyeballs to get sales. These metrics set the baseline. To increase eyeballs, we might be creating content, engaging in media and blogger relations, running Google ads, print ads with unique trackable URLs. We'll measure things like total web traffic and referring traffic (how much traffic is that New York Times article sending to the website? and did the subscribe to our email list?), and size of social network base. Once we get their awareness, we hope to have the opportunity to continue to communicate with them. The conversion metric might be an email subscriber, Facebook like, or Twitter follower.

2. Think | Engagement metrics: Those eyeballs don't mean a thing unless they are interested in what you

have to offer. Are they sharing, commenting, asking questions? You might use social networks and email marketing to engage in the conversation. We measure engagement using a variety of tools like Google's social tracking and analytics from our CRM or monitoring platforms. We also look at click-through rates on email campaigns. (Opening isn't enough. We want to know they were interested enough to take the next desired step.)

3. DO | Conversions metrics: Now we're getting down to business. This is where we want to make sure we are meeting the very product specific needs and questions of our audience like pricing, support, set an appointment, sign up for a free trial. So we'll track conversion rate of emails to sales, submissions of appointment or contact forms, phone calls, free trials.

4. CARE | Amplification metrics: Once your buyer loves you, they want to spread the word. (They'll do the same if they hate you but that's a topic for another ebook) We want to encourage that word of mouth so we might be following up with emails asking for reviews, we might provide ways for them to submit a story or a case study, and we might make it easy for them to share something on social. The metrics we might track are number of positive reviews, or ranking on a particular review site. We might track sentiment in social platforms

It's important to integrate with all offline tactics - sales and marketing staff should be making notes in customer and prospect records throughout the sales process.

We take the measure-able goals from each of these four categories and create a reporting spreadsheet that we send every Friday.

This is pretty cool stuff. It means we have to dig into numbers and spreadsheets but it allows us to make decisions based on evidence rather than gut. While large enterprises have access to big data, this is a change for small to mid-market businesses.

A quick side note: Some things simply can't be measured. Some people won't remember where they heard from you and some efforts are simply invaluable. We always try as best as we can. Nothing is fail-safe.

TRACKING & REPORTING

UNDERSTANDING THE GOOGLE ANALYTICS DASHBOARD

There is no end to the number of marketing tools you can use to track and report but we're going to keep it simple here. Knowing you have access to analytics in whatever social platforms, CRMs, automated marketing tools you have, I want to focus on the backbone of it all: Google Analytics.

GA is free, and should be installed on everyone's website so we can track individual efforts back to actions we designate.

We'll do a brief overview of the GA basics and spend more time on conversion reports. On your main dashboard, you'll see four main categories in the left sidebar, each expanding to include a number of helpful reports that are very straightforward.

1. AUDIENCE This gives total visits, time on site, average pages visited and more.

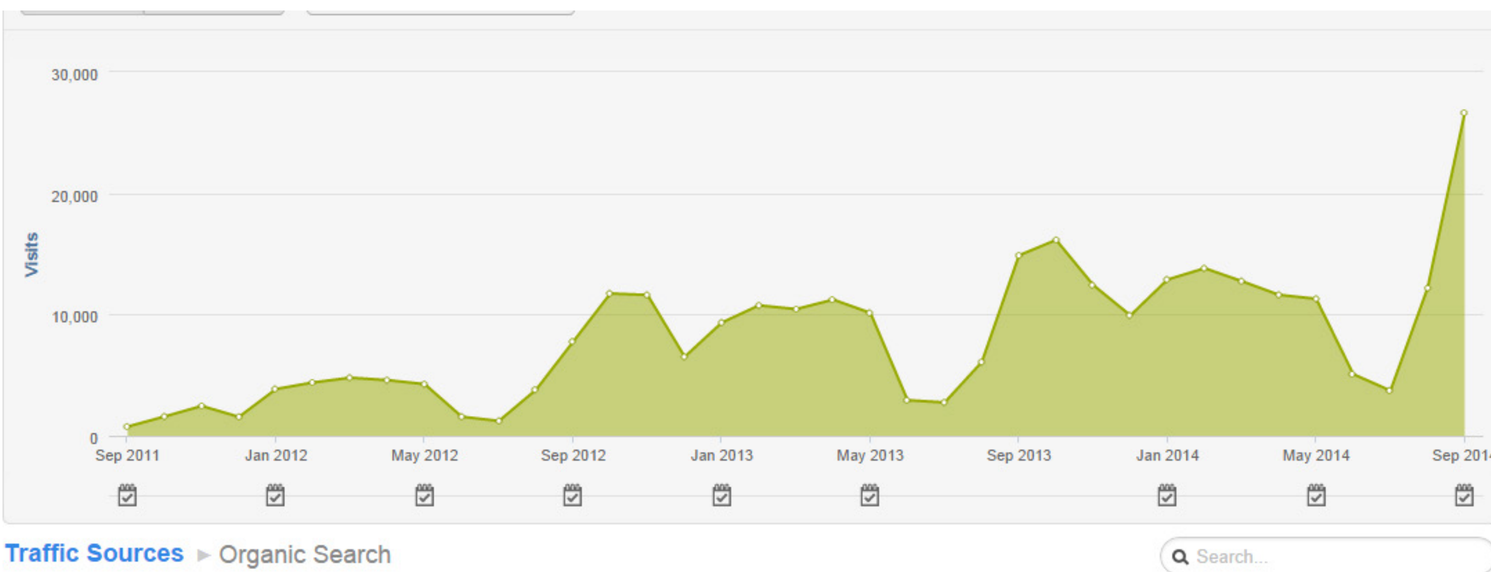
2. ACQUISITION How you acquired the traffic. You'll see which channels sent traffic, and which websites.

3. BEHAVIOR Once they get there, what are they doing? These reports show you how much time they spend on site, your most popular content, and more.

4. CONVERSIONS A conversion is when a visitor goes beyond casual viewing into taking measurable action. This might be a newsletter sign up, a banner click, a sale, or more. In other words, conversions should be one of an internet marketer's primary goals.

Start your foray into tracking conversions by setting goals. As Google defines them, these could be anything from a "Thanks for registering!" screen to a minimum visit duration.

From there, you'll want to dig down even deeper by setting up a sales funnel to give you further insight into just how your visitor got from point A to the point of conversion. This can also give you a better idea of just where visitors are tripping up. Does one sales page have a more appealing layout than another? Is one customer inquiry form too lengthy and involved? Look behind the goals with funnels for savvy insight into what is and is not working along the way.



CAMPAIGNS

If you want to isolate certain media relations or social media efforts from the rest, set up campaigns in GA, and in the acquisition tab, you'll be able to see how a specific email campaign performed and converted to whatever goal you set. To do this, you'll need to use unique URLs with UTM parameters. An easy way, is to use Google's unique URL. It will walk you through a series of questions and create a unique URL you will then use for your next initiative. Want to see how it's sending people to a landing page and converting to free trials? Now you can.

When the marketing plan begins with the business objective, and all campaigns are developed with metrics baked in, it forces us to think strategically and ensure each campaign is aligned with a goal that can be measured. This takes us full circle when we review the data monthly and analyze what needs modifying.

"there is no limit to the number of irrelevant eyeballs you can reach."
- Avinash Kaushik

don't confuse popular with profitable

Measuring what matters is critical to your ability to collect the data that allows you to make evidence-based decisions in your inbound marketing. Facebook followers and website traffic are nice, but you want these numbers to be working for you and generating business. Some final words of advice:

We should track "ego metrics" without giving them too much weight. When we begin work with clients, we look at historic traffic and project, based on their conversion rate and how much traffic we need to hit business goals. If they don't have that data, we take educated guesses. In many cases, you don't need thousands of people visiting your site if you need to convert two good customers per month. Popular doesn't mean a thing if it isn't making you a profit.

Viral doesn't mean profitable. You can create something everyone loves and shares. It will spike your traffic and give everyone on your team a high five moment. It's fun - no one is going to lie about that. But then you start looking at your leads (did you get any calls, subscribers, free trials, form submissions?) and you realize it's not pushing the sales needle.

Popular is good; don't get me wrong – it exposes you to new audiences and more traffic. It also helps build brand awareness, so it depends on your goals, and the goal of that particular piece of content you developed.

ORGANIC LEADS VS. SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION If you're investing time and resources into inbound marketing, you want more than popularity; you want a return. Where does the profitable part come into play? It depends.

When a new blog or content marketing program is born, it gets very little organic traffic and it's very difficult to compete for search engine ranking against other, more established blogs. Immediate results however, come from current spheres of influence and a few degrees out as they share your content perhaps by way of social networks or forwarding to those who they think will find it interesting. (Make sure you have social sharing buttons to remind them to do this!). As well, we will likely recommend a pay per click campaign in search or social.

FINDING VOICE IN THE CONTENT NOISE

You might be concerned no one is searching for your business/product/service online. You may be right. They aren't looking for you. But they are definitely looking for a solution to a problem; one which you solve. That's the type of content you should be creating.

Or, maybe your competition is already well ahead of you in their content creation and you don't see how you could differentiate or rise above. (The digital marketing space is a great example of this.)

In his book Let My People Go Surfing, Yvon Chouinard said he wanted to find a way to do business on his own terms. This is a mantra I will work hard to live by and one in which I'll share moving forward.

No one does your own business or personal brand as well as you do. Whether you manage a large corporate content program or a single author small blog, we each bring our own unique experiences to the table. Each post is written by a person. This is why I hammer in like a broken record if you'll pardon the mixed metaphor, how important it is to BE HUMAN, show your personality.

Bring your own YOU to your content.

Danny Brown argues There Is Zero New Content on The Social Web Today. Curate ideas as my friend and colleague Tom Gable said. Let your ideas have sex so they can give birth to new ideas as James Altucher said. Connect dots, and weave in personal experience.

Stay true to your audience and those who will eventually buy from you.

IT'S A MATTER OF PHYSICS You get out of it what you put into it. Whether you are the CEO of a large enterprise, a marketing and communications professional, or a business owner, it's never enough. "If I put 10 more hours of work in a week, I could .... " and that's where the time management comes into play. If, organizationally, the work doesn't become a labor of love, I say don't do it. Because your content plan will fail you. And you'll blame the wrong things for that failure.

Instead, dedicate the resources to it. Get behind helping, informing and entertaining your audience. I don't care what industry you are in or what product/service you are selling. You solve a problem in the marketplace; a problem your audience needs fixed. You have a story to tell, and a way to make sure that story is doing what it should.

Pledge to give it the time it deserves, and you'll get better and faster. Big Leaps start with baby steps.

MORE RESOURCES

Google Analytics Digital Marketing Fundamentals

Avinash Kaushik's Occam's Razor (and his books)

Or, hire an agency to help you: Contact us and schedule a 25-minute call to discuss your needs.

About Lisa

Lisa Gerber is founder and president of Big Leap Creative, an integrated communications agency focused on solving digital marketing and communication problems and helping businesses take the leap from where they are now, to where they want to be.

Lisa and the team at Big Leap help brands get discovered. Craft the right story and get that story out in a way that connects with audiences to generate, nurture and convert leads. They always seek to tie efforts back to measurable results your CFO will appreciate.

With over 15 years of PR and marketing experience, Lisa, a member of the Executive Committee of the PRSA Counselors Academy. has a background rooted in traditional PR and media relations which has adapted over the years into digital media, online reputation management, content and social communications.

Her clients are scattered across the globe and vary from technology to aerospace, energy, financial services, urban and resort development, and mountain lifestyle sectors.

When she's not in her Sandpoint, Idaho-based office meeting with her team and clients virtually, she might be out in the mountains trail running, skiing, or mountain biking with her husband and Black Lab. That's where she does her best creative problem-solving.

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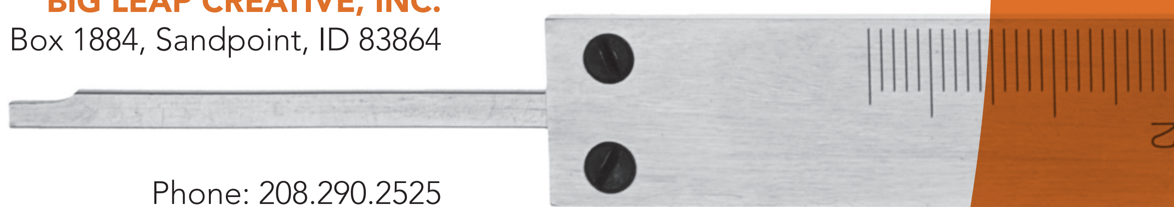

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