

Exploring the Impact of Feedback Within Organizational Communication on Employee's Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the role played by positive and negative feedback in organizational communications toward satisfaction and, more importantly, the effect of gender on feedback. Utilizing survey data collected from 300 employees across various organizations, logistic regression analyses were conducted to test three hypotheses: Hypotheses developed centre around: (1) positive feedback increases employee motivation, (2) negative feedback tends to but does not automatically decrease it, and (3) the moderating role of gender for the feedback-motivation relationship. The results of the present study have revealed that there is not significant relationship between the motivation of the employees. Moreover, the analysis showed that the effect of the feedback type on the motivation and productivity of the employees does not depend on their gender. Such results contradict the widely held assumption that positive feedback increases motivation in organizational settings and underscores the multifaceted nature of feedback processes at the workplace. The paper also highlights the need to come up with feedback approaches that will suit employees and hence the need for managers to look at each employee's peculiarities when giving feedback. Discussion of the results and their implication, and suggestions for further research was made with stressing the importance of a more profound investigation of potential moderation effects and other variables, including personality traits and organizational culture.

Keywords: Organizational Communication, positive feedback, negative feedback, Employee's motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The modern business world has become highly competitive. Therefore, internal communications are important in promoting motivation and productivity in an organization (Tkalac et al., 2023). Undoubtedly, feedback as a process is one of the most critical means of influence for shaping employee behavior and improving organizational performance in organizational communication. Positive feedback can be defined as encouraging feedback, while negative feedback can be defined as discouraging feedback. These two types of feedback affect motivation differently (Giamos et al., 2023).

The form of feedback, which is commonly associated with praise and endorsement, has the effect of encouraging desirable actions and increasing motivation. Positive feedback rewards employees' hard work and makes them feel appreciated in the workplace, which can enhance their productivity given the proper encouragement (Mladenović, 2023). However, the negative feedback which can be expressed in pointing out the principal's weaknesses and errors, can be more elaborate. Therefore, if managed poorly, it can have the opposite effect and disengage the individual. In the other hand, it is positive as it can promote growth and development through received feedback (Fulham et al., 2022).

Although it has long been identified that feedback is one of the most valuable organizational communication tools, there is still significant controversy regarding the most optimal approaches to feedback delivery to enhance employee motivation. Positive feedback always seems reasonable, but it can have better consequences

depending on the instance and the employee. A study has found that, though necessary for performance management, negative feedback, if not well-managed, may result in reduced motivation and employee satisfaction.

Hence, the question that confronts managers as well as leaders is how to balance and approach when giving feedback to their subordinates to encourage the subordinates to work hard to achieve the intended objectives while at the same time encouraging subordinates to improve their negative qualities that need the attention of the manager or leader (Brown et al., 2019).

The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of positive and negative feedback in the communication process of an organization on employee motivation. The central research question guiding this study is: **How do positive and negative feedback of organizational communication influence employee motivation?**

The results of this research will assist organizations in adopting the best feedback practices that will boost their employees' motivation and performance levels. The study can enhance a work environment that can motivate employees by identifying what can be practiced as best practice in delivering feedback. This study aims to contribute to the management literature on practices that enhance job satisfaction and increase productivity and organizational performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evaluation of performance has become one of the most important processes in any workplace since it is the main tool employers have to shape employees' behavior. Reinforcement that involves praising, meaning Positive feedback is commonly understood as the process of complimenting and rewarding desirable behavior. On the other hand, negative feedback that involves criticism and highlighting mistakes may prove to be a double-edged sword, with many tendencies to slow down the workers if administered in the wrong manner.

Theories of Motivation

It is necessary to use theoretical background to analyze the role of feedback in relation to employees' motivational perspectives. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, feedback can help meet esteem needs related to recognition and respect.

The concept proposed by Maslow is a pyramid containing several levels, starting with the lowest level, which is the physiological one, and ending with the highest level of self-actualization. In the workplace, positive feedback improves the employees' perceptive motivity and esteem, directly affecting the level of motivation and job satisfaction levels, Maslow (1943). Even constructive negative feedback can also be beneficial in improving the self and overall development in fulfilling the self's higher-order needs. Knowledge and use of this framework enable the managers to tailor feedback that would motivate employees and provide them with the necessary support.

According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, hygiene factors are things that avoid dissatisfaction, while motivators are things that create job satisfaction. Hygiene factors comprise pay, promotion opportunities, and company policies; their lack generally results in dissatisfaction, but their presence does not result in satisfaction. There are again variables, including recognition, achievement and opportunity for growth, which positively impact the motivation and job satisfaction of the employees. Positive and constructive feedback motivates the employees by giving them recognition for their work achievements and opportunities to grow professionally, all of which is in line with Herzberg's theory (Abdulkhamidova, 2021).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was developed to reflect the fundamental concept of intrinsically motivated behavior that is motivated by the tolerance of an individual's inherent desire for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When such fundamental human needs are met, people will likely experience increased motivation and interest in their work and may even be happier. Positive feedback contributes to perceived competence and relatedness, two important facets of autonomous motivation. At the same time, negative feedback negates

these needs if the messages are passed in negativity, which may demotivate the employees and lessen engagement levels (Deci et al., 2017).

Finally, Expectancy Theory emphasizes the role of feedback in shaping employees' expectations and motivation to achieve desired outcomes (Lee et al., 2016).

Positive Feedback and Employee Motivation

Positive feedback is an important element of organizational communication that stimulates employee motivation. It calls for recognizing employees' contributions, rewarding excellent performance, and promoting the right corporate culture. Positive feedback has been the focus of many theoretical and empirical recommendations involving employee motivation and increases in satisfaction and engagement levels.

Ugoani (2020) researched the relevance of positive feedback on performance and job satisfaction among workers. This paper determined that employees who underwent positive feedback indicated increased engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity. Positive feedback was significantly used, especially in helping management encourage employees to standardize or improve their performance. Positive feedback, hence, is effective in motivating the employees as it affirms and supports their work and participation.

Prayson et al. (2017) emphasizes that effective feedback should always be constructive, purposeful, and founded on sound observation. According to their findings, translating appreciative feedback into explicit, particular comments is important in creating employee motivation to ensure optimum performance. The study also emphasizes the right proportion of feedback and how to give it professionally to enhance the impact of feedback on employees' motivation.

Positive feedback is imperative in the motivation process since it meets the recognized psycho-social needs of the employees regarding recognition, competence, and affiliation. The findings indicate that positive feedback with frequency and quality promotes job satisfaction, work involvement and productivity. As a result, the management can establish an environment within the organization that is fruitful and supportive of individuals, as well as their ability to develop themselves and the workplace further.

Negative Feedback and Employee Motivation

Negative feedback is a conventional practice in organizational communication, used to correct low-performance levels and steer people away from problematic behaviors. Nevertheless, its effects on motivation are closely associated with how it is implemented and quite paradoxical in some ways. By evaluating different studies and theories on this topic, this literature review aims to understand the nuanced impact of negative feedback on employee motivation.

Positive and negative feedback ways have been identified variously by Choi et al. (2018). The study on this social psychological experiment shows how positive feedback can improve workers' performance. However, negative feedback brings adverse reactions which, in most cases, demotivate the workers if not appropriately followed. Drake et al. (2007) explored the effect of feedback and incentives on nonmanagement employees, the results demonstrated that performance feedback considerably influences psychological empowerment and motivation while negative feedback can harm the organizational experience of employees, their competence, and self-determination, the careful use of negative feedback, ideally combined with positive feedback, according to the 'feedback sandwich' approach has been proposed.

Swift et al. (2018) Research demonstrates that positive feedback generally benefits motivation levels more than negative feedback. However, the feedback dramatically depends on other factors, which involve the context in which the feedback was given, the technique used to provide the feedback, and the individual traits of the person who has been given the feedback.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework

This study aims to evaluate how positive and negative feedback impacts employee motivation; after reviewing various hypotheses and previous studies grounded in established motivational theories, this article examines this phenomenon. Based on that assumption, the following appears to be the case:

Hypothesis 1: positive feedback has a significant positive effect on employee' motivation.

Positive Feedback based on admiration and commendation empowers employees and keeps them motivated, knowing that someone values their work. This validation seeks to improve job satisfaction and employees' motivation, attendance and productivity in congruity with Herzberg's motivation factors; it meets the esteem level in Maslow's pyramid. One hypothesis is that positive Feedback will improve engagement through increased productivity (Deci et al, 2017). As for the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Feedback influences intrinsic motivation by fostering a sense of competence and autonomy.

Hypothesis 2: negative feedback has a mixed effect on employee motivation, potentially decreasing.

Research by Choi et al. (2018) suggests that negative feedback can lead to demotivation and decreased job satisfaction if delivered poorly. However, when delivered constructively, it can promote personal and professional growth by helping employees identify areas for improvement and set developmental goals. According to Herzberg's motivation factors, negative feedback may function as a hygiene factor, addressing deficiencies but not directly increasing motivation.

Hypothesis 3: employee gender affects the impact of feedback on motivation.

A study by Zhou et al. (2021) investigates gender differences in feedback and motivation. It finds that males tend to receive more criticism and less praise than females. Moreover, females generally report higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in response to positive feedback, such as praise and scaffolding feedback, while males' motivation is less influenced by these types of feedback.

These hypotheses are derived primarily from the theories of needs, motivational tools, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). These theories form a background from which one can begin interpreting the interaction between feedback types, motivation, and gender. The framework analyses how feedback can influence employee motivation.

The conceptual model below illustrates the proposed relationships between the variables:

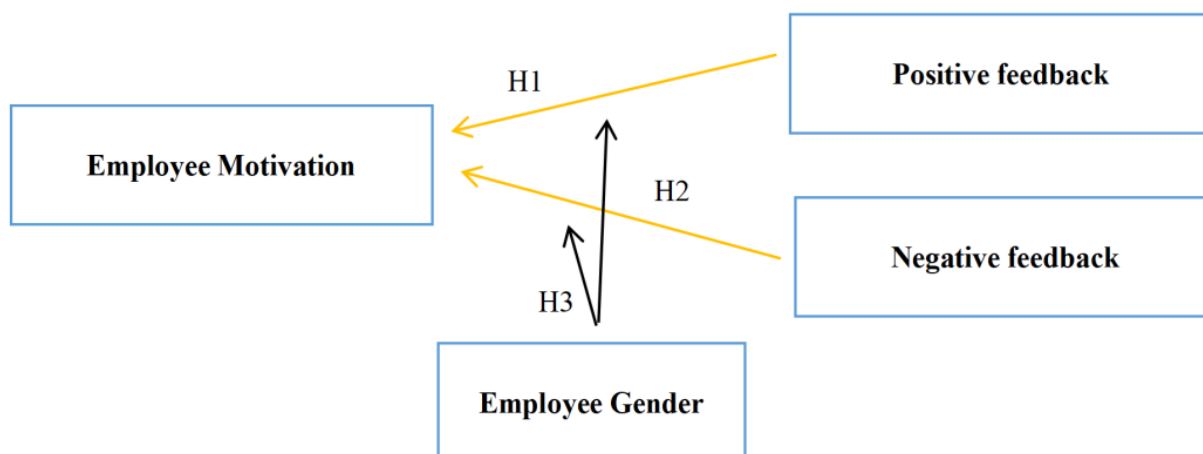


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Model

Two regression models were proposed for this analysis to test the hypotheses following the specifications:

Hypothesis 1 and 2: the effect of feedback type on employee motivation

$$\text{Employee Motivation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Feedback} + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Hypothesis 3: Employee gender affects the impact of feedback on motivation.

$$\text{Employee Motivation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Feedback} + \beta_2 \text{Gender} + \beta_3 (\text{Feedback} \times \text{Gender}) + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

The variables:

- **Employee Motivation (Motivated/Unmotivated):** the dependent variable, is the extent to which the employees are willing to exert efforts to perform their duties in an organization. This is the outcome the study aims at providing an explanation for, the effects of various types of feedback and gender on motivation of the employees.
- **Positive Feedback:** an independent variable, focuses on accomplishments, potential or encouragement, therefore, assumed to positively influence employee motivation (H1). Positive feedback sates psychological needs; esteem and control needs makes the employees to feel valued hence motivated.
- **Negative Feedback:** an independent variable, it contains criticism, concerns, or addressing shortcomings. Conceived to have a complex effect on motivation (H2). Whereas, negative feedback that is constructive helps employee know what to do contrary to what is expected, over-proportionate negative feedback lowers motivation and morale among employees.
- **Gender (male/female):** a moderating variable, the demographic variable identifies participants according to gender, it influences the strength or direction of the relationship between feedback (positive or negative) and employee motivation (H3).
- **β_1 , β_2 are the coefficients for the respective variables.**
- **ϵ is the error term.**

Research design

Recalling the essence of our research question, this study aims to determine the impact of negative and positive feedback on employee motivation, focusing on gender differences using a quantitative research design. The primary data was collected through a structured survey due to its effectiveness in quantitatively capturing diverse perspectives distributed using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that the sample is representative of the broader employee population.

This approach helps capture diverse perspectives and experiences related to feedback and motivation. 300 employees from various departments and job roles within organizations participated. The survey was made on Google Forms and was shared online utilizing WeChat, Instagram and LinkedIn, which are easily accessible to employees. We ensured high reliability and validity of the data collected by implementing the following measures:

- The app was set to anonymous respondents.
- Respondents' answers were kept strictly confidential.
- Submitted responses could not be resubmitted.
- All questions were mandatory.

The data collection process spanned two weeks. The analysis was conducted using various statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics and logistic regression, using Microsoft Excel and STATA 17.

FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

These descriptive statistics allowed for an understanding of the demographic characteristics of the sample, the frequency with which employees reported receiving feedback, and their motivational levels. It can be stated that this data is used for setting the context for testing the hypotheses made.

Table 1 Key Variables (Summary Statistics)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VARIABLES	N	mean	sd	min	max
gender	300	0.497	0.501	0	1
motivation	300	0.490	0.501	0	1
Feedback (0 negative, 1 positive)	300	0.530	0.500	0	1

The table presents descriptive statistics for three key variables: gender, motivation, and feedback. Each variable has 300 observations. The mean values for gender (0.497), motivation (0.490), and feedback (0.530) indicate an almost equal distribution among the categories. The standard deviations (around 0.5) and the binary nature (min 0, max 1) of each variable confirm the balanced spread of the data.

The table below presents the percentages of participants' responses to the questionnaire, allowing us to dive more deeply into the demographic characteristics of the sample and better understand the sample we are dealing with to conduct the analysis of our topic.

Table 2 Descriptive summary table

Category	Sub-category	Percentage	Category	Sub-category	Percentage
Age	18-25	18.70%	Frequency of Receiving Feedback	Daily	17.00%
	26-35	19.30%		Weekly	24.70%
	36-45	19.30%		Monthly	19.70%
	46-55	21.70%		Annually	21.00%
	56 and above	21.00%		Never/Rarely	17.70%
Gender	Male	50.30%	Type of Feedback Most Frequently Received	Positive	53.00%
	Female	49.70%		Negative	47.00%
Position in the Organization	Entry-level	25.30%	Preference for Positive Feedback	1 (strongly disagree)	17.00%
	Mid-level	27.70%		2	22.00%
	Senior-level	27.00%		3	21.70%
	Executive	20.00%		4	21.70%
Length of Time with the Organization	Less than 1 year	18.70%	Perception of Constructive Negative Feedback	5 (strongly agree)	17.70%
	1-3 years	17.30%		1 (strongly disagree)	22.30%
	4-6 years	22.00%		2	19.70%
	7-10 years	22.00%		3	20.70%
	More than 10 years	20.00%		4	16.30%
Motivation	Motivated	49.00%		5 (strongly agree)	21.00%
	Unmotivated	51.00%			

The table comprehensively overviews the respondents' demographics, feedback reception, and perceptions. The age distribution shows the most prominent groups are 46-55 and 56 and above, each at 21.7%, with a nearly equal gender split (50.3% male, 49.7% female). Position-wise, respondents are fairly evenly distributed, with the senior level being the largest group at 27.7%.

The length of time with the organization is also evenly spread, with the largest groups being 4-6 and 7-10 years (22% each). Motivation levels are nearly even, with 51% feeling unmotivated and 49% motivated. Feedback frequency varies, with weekly feedback being the most common (24.7%). Positive feedback is more frequently received (53%) than negative (47%). While most respondents prefer positive feedback, with significant ratings of 3 or 4, perceptions of constructive negative feedback are divided, with the highest proportion rating as least helpful (22.3%) and a significant number rating it as most helpful (21%).

Hypothesis testing

To test the effect of feedback type on employee motivation (H1 and H2), a logistic regression was performed with motivation as the dependent variable and feedback type as the independent variable.

Table 3 Logistic regression 1

motivation	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
feedback	-.371	.232	-1.60	.11	-.826	.084	
Constant	.156	.169	0.93	.355	-.175	.487	
Mean dependent var	0.490		SD dependent var		0.501		
Pseudo r-squared	0.006		Number of obs		300		
Chi-square	2.560		Prob > chi2		0.110		
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$							

In this model, the study focused only on the extent to which the type of feedback influenced the motivation of the employees. The results show that regarding feedback, the coefficient value is -0.371, indicating that the probability constant is inversely related to the probability of promoting employee motivation. Although the interaction of work engagement with the two burnout dimensions is negative, thus implying a preventive effect, this finding was not statistically significant ($F(1, 110) = 3.08$, $p\text{-value} = 0.11$).

The model summarizes a scant level of variation in motivation (Pseudo R-squared = 0.006). The overall model does not differ significantly from chance (chi-square = 2.560, $p = 0.110$). The coefficient error (-0.371) is somewhat unexpected, as it can be interpreted, for example, that positive feedback reduces motivation. However, the generalization of such an effect cannot be established due to the absence of a statistically significant result. It shows that feedback type accounts for a tiny portion of the variation in employee motivation since the Pseudo R-square is extremely low. It implies that other variables outside this study may be more influential to the motivation levels among employees.

Table 4 Logistic regression 2

motivation	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
feedback	-.611	.33	-1.85	.064	-1.257	.035	*
gender	-.189	.338	-0.56	.577	-.852	.474	
Feedback_Gender_In~n	.478	.466	1.03	.305	-.435	1.391	
Constant	.248	.236	1.05	.293	-.214	.71	
Mean dependent var	0.490		SD dependent var		0.501		
Pseudo r-squared	0.009		Number of obs		300		
Chi-square	3.689		Prob > chi2		0.297		
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$							

This model sought to test the proposition that gender acts as a moderator of the feedback type-employee motivation relationship. The results indicate that it also implies negative feedback. We have a coefficient of -0.611, which is marginally significant ($* = 0.064$). Gender independence is -0.189 but insignificant at 5%, 10% or 1% significance level with a p-value of 0.577. The coefficients for the interaction term (Feedback * Gender) are as follows: coefficient = 0.478, p-value = 0.305. Using pseudo R-squared, the model accounted for a minimal variance in motivation (Pseudo R-squared = 0.009). The overall model is less significant (chi-square = 3.689, $p < 0.297$).

The results also show that when the effect of gender is accounted for, feedback has a marginally significant negative coefficient (-0.611), which infers that positive feedback has a small indirect negative effect on motivation. This effect is more significant than in Model 1 but remains at or above the statistical significance threshold traditionally used in organizational research. The fact that gender has a non-significant coefficient means that gender also does not affect motivation level. Also, the non-significant interaction term means that feedback did not significantly impact motivation between male and female employees.

The Pseudo R-squared value increases slightly from 0.006 in Model 1 to 0.009 for the current model, indicating that gender and the interaction of gender with feedback herald a slightly better explanation of motivation variability. However, the global analysis model is non-significant, meaning that the under-mentioned additional variables also do not improve the predictability of motivation levels.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of positive versus negative feedback within organizational communication on employee motivation, with a particular focus on whether this effect is moderated by employee gender. The hypotheses were tested using logistic regression analyses on survey data collected from employees in various organizations.

Hypothesis 1: Positive feedback has a significant positive effect on employee motivation

The logistic regression analysis results indicated that positive feedback does not have a statistically significant positive effect on employee motivation, which is contrary to our initial hypothesis. The coefficient for feedback was negative (-0.371), suggesting that positive feedback might decrease motivation, although this effect was not statistically significant ($p = 0.11$).

This finding contradicts the common belief that positive feedback universally enhances motivation. One possible explanation is that employees might perceive positive feedback as insincere or insufficiently challenging, leading to complacency rather than increased motivation. Future research could explore the conditions under which positive feedback is most effective, such as the specific content of the feedback or the context in which it is delivered. This study matches with Mouratidis et al. (2008), which found that positive feedback does not significantly affect performance but improves well-being and participation intentions. A study by Gnepp et al. (2020) explores why performance feedback fails and how it can be made more effective.

Hypothesis 2: Negative feedback has a mixed effect on employee motivation, potentially decreasing it

The analysis also revealed that negative feedback does not have a statistically significant impact on employee motivation. Although the coefficient was negative, indicating a potential decrease in motivation, the effect was not strong enough to reach statistical significance. Suggesting that negative feedback, while often perceived as demotivating, may not uniformly affect all employees in the same way.

Some employees may find negative feedback a valuable source of constructive criticism that helps them improve, while others may feel discouraged. Understanding the individual differences in how feedback is received can be crucial for managers aiming to use feedback effectively. Similarly, A study by Borysenko (2019) examines that most people have yet to develop the ability to receive constructive criticism without feeling anxious. Moreover, Berinato (2018) emphasized that negative feedback rarely leads to improvement.

Hypothesis 3: Employee gender affects the impact of feedback on motivation

According to the obtained coefficients of the logistic regression, the hypothesis that employee gender mediates the relationship between feedback and motivation is not supported. The results also showed that the interaction effect of feedback type by gender of the employee was not significant, which means that the type of feedback does not have a different impact on male and female employees.

This result, therefore, negates the hypothesis that feedback matters differently to males and females in the workplace regarding motivation. In several prior studies, systematic variations are reported for different experiences and manners of communication at the workplace as related to gender; however, this research did not prove that gender differences exist regarding the effect of feedback on motivation.

Several implications arise from this result: Gender specifics in providing feedback could not be identified, making it possible to use universal feedback strategies. Other individual characteristics, including personality and culture, may tell the difference between how motivation is impacted by feedback and gender. This finding endorses fairness in feedback and performance management practices at the workplace, showing that both male and female populations have similar reactions toward communication from their organizations.

The outcome matches the findings of Abel et. Al. (2019) research that concludes that in this particular context, employee gender did not moderate how workers responded to feedback in terms of motivation, effort, or attitudes. Sometimes, organizations may wish to develop strategies for improving employee feedback since feedback may be generalized and not targeted explicitly toward gender.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of feedback dynamics in the workplace by challenging the assumption that positive feedback is always beneficial for motivation and highlighting the complex nature of feedback effects. While positive and negative feedback does not appear to significantly influence motivation uniformly, the findings underscore the importance of personalized and context-sensitive feedback strategies. By adopting a nuanced approach to feedback, managers can better support and motivate their employees, ultimately enhancing organizational performance.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for managers and organizations. First, managers should be cautious in assuming positive feedback will always boost motivation. It is important to tailor feedback to individual employees, considering their unique responses to different types of feedback. Additionally, managers should provide specific, constructive, and balanced feedback, combining positive and negative elements to support continuous improvement.

This study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. While adequate, the sample size may not fully capture the diversity of workplace environments and employee experiences. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal studies could provide more insight into how feedback affects motivation over time. Finally, future research could explore other variables that interact with feedback, such as employee personality traits or organizational culture.

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