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## **A STUDY ON A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AT INDUSTRIES**

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### **Abstract**

*Language has the power to pacify or create disputes and barriers among humans. This is because one's language is impregnated with his expressions, opinions and intentions. The literal meaning of words used by the speaker may vary from the intended meaning which may lead to conflicts. An industry is an organization where people from various fields work together for one cause. When these individuals with varied opinions work together, they would definitely confront with differences in opinions which may lead to conflicts at industries. They need good coordination and cooperation to achieve their common goal of attaining profits to their industry. Though experts have proposed number of theories to resolve conflicts at industries, effective communication is the only key to diffuse them non-violently. A Rhetorical Approach to the communication would enhance its effectiveness in the process of conflict resolution at industries. Aristotle's Rhetoric consists of three appeals, i.e. Logos, Ethos & Pathos. Aristotle proclaimed that with a right combination of these three appeals of Rhetoric a speech can be made more effective during conflict resolution at industries. This paper aims to identify some of the effective applications of the three appeals of Rhetoric to resolve conflicts at industries.*

### **Keywords**

## **1. Introduction**

The modern industrial culture had its origin from the Industrial Revolution and ever since the number of industries started proliferating by leaps and bounds throughout the globe. Every industry needs to be organized well for effective and efficient performance. It needs clear understanding and implementation of the objectives and strategies of the industry. Mr. Sunil Katiyal, the former CEO of Uttam Galva Metallics PVT Ltd, Bhugao, Wardha, Maharashtra, India had once said during a conversation with the author that poor communication is an evergreen pretext for so many things that go wrong in present days industries. He also added that good communication skills are the prerogative of the managers, who are working in industries.

The former Chairman of Tata Group, Mr. Ratan Tata once said – When the seniors are unable to create environment in the organization, which promotes open and clear communication, it can have negative repercussions on the work culture and employee productivity. This will eventually lead to conflicts at industries. People are conductors of emotions and their communication behaviour plays vital role in successful functioning of all industries across the globe. Effective communication could be a key to so many problems that arise in the industries. The Language used at work stimulates one individual to another so as to provoke both positive as well as negative reactions in the individuals. A Conflict can be seen as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. It is only the language that has significant characteristic of resolving the conflicts both in private and professional lives of individuals and leading them to accomplish their goals.

## **2. Aim & Objective**

The main objective of this paper is to facilitate employees who try to diffuse the conflicts at industries, to build argumentation & to generate the right emotional environment with application of the three appeals of Aristotle's Rhetoric i.e. Logos, Ethos and Pathos. The author strongly believes that it is only the language that creates and diffuses the conflicts at industries and the language skills of the managers should be enhanced with the help of three appeals of Rhetoric, Logos (Appeal to intellectual reasoning), Ethos (Credibility that a speaker establishes with his audience) & pathos (Audience sense of emotions, interests & Psychology).

In this paper an attempt has be made to find out how a judicious application of the three appeals of Rhetoric can effectuate the process of conflict resolution at industries.

Most of the time the work at industries is hindered by mishandling of communication which would lead to opinion variations among the employees. This would raise conflict issues at industries. It can be universally accepted that where there is human factor there conflicts would

occur. Even the most effectual communication climate won't guarantee complete harmony at work. Regarding of what one may wish for, it is difficult to visualise a Conflict free organization in this world. Even the best communicators do face Conflicts at work place. This is because conflict is inevitable when there is human factor and we cannot find two people with same opinion on one issue.

The successful accomplishment of targets at industries is not a single man show. It needs team work. When there is an involvement of more men on one single task, variations in opinions, views and thoughts would ooze out. If one's ideas get contradicted by others opinions, a dispute sprouts among them leading to conflict which may affect the performance as well as the output. If there is difference in schemes and thoughts of people, there occur Disputes and Conflicts at industries. In addition, it is not possible to imagine organizational climate without Conflicts. They are normal in any organization. It is not good for any organization to have multiple Disputes, as well as not to have any Disputes at all.

### **3. Importance of Language in Conflict Management**

Effective language plays an important role in resolving the conflicts at industries. Language in action can be witnessed in terms of verbal and nonverbal expressions. Effective communicable language is essentially prerequisite to resolve sprouting of the Conflicts at industries. Language has power to hurt and heal the hearts of the individuals. Effective language makes process of communication at work effective. By having good communication, conflict can be avoided, right information can be obtained and relationship among organization members can be built with strong bonding.

Adriana Lerman – Launay, in her article, Non Verbal Communication published in LinkedIn has claimed that Communication is the combination of 7% spoken words, 38% tone of voice, 55% body language. This is because when speaker speaks along with his words his values and emotions also get transmitted. Hence the intended meaning of the speech may be a little different than the mere words spoken. That's why the speaker should watch his expressions of both verbal and non-verbal, because the nonverbal expressions always create great impact over the minds of the audience. If the speaker loses this balance it would offend the feelings of the other individuals around and can generate a kind of hostile environment which further may lead to conflicts at work places. When ideology and values are not properly shared and understood conflicts arise.

The fact that human language consists of simple set of signals with radical set of meanings which can create a tsunami in the hearts and minds of the listeners.( Naomi Brower, Jana Darrington: Effective Communication Skills: Resolving Conflicts,) [8] So it can be acknowledged that language has the muscle to influence the minds of the people.

Industries are those areas where people from various fields work together with one motto that is to achieve profits to the organization they work. Though they belong to different areas of specialization their final target is the same. Though their final targets are same but their paths and kind of jobs will be different. That's why they always confront opinion disputes which lead to Conflicts.

#### 4. How can the Word Conflict be defined?

The word "Conflict" is derived from a Latin word *Conflictus*, which means collision or clash. Nevertheless, considerable disagreement exists over how to define Conflict. Many attempts to define Conflict have been made, but the best suitable definitions have been picked up here.

Joyce Frost & William Wilmot defined Conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two independent parties or individuals who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other parties in achieving their goals. Conflicts at industries are opposing forces, pulling in different directions.

Industrial Conflicts are defined by Komhauser and Rose (1954) as "the total range of behaviour and attitude that express opposition and divergent orientations among industrial owners & managers on the one hand and the working people & their organization on the other hand." (Arije, 2000)

The famous author of Arthashastra, Arya Chanakya said in *Chanakya niti sukti-*

*Na kaschit kasya chinmitram Na kaschit kasya chidripuh*

*Vyavaharena jayante mitrani ripavastata*

Meaning:

No one is a friend per se & no one is an enemy per se, friends & enemies are created out of personal dealings & behaviour.

Human behaviour is an integral part of both verbal & non-verbal communication. Non-verbal gestures add effective touch to the verbal communication. Hence good communication mannerisms mirror the behaviour and the personality of the individual. So it can be noticed that one's behaviour is one of the most important factors that ignites conflicts at work and in personal life as well. Hence it is the language of the individual that wins friends or foes.

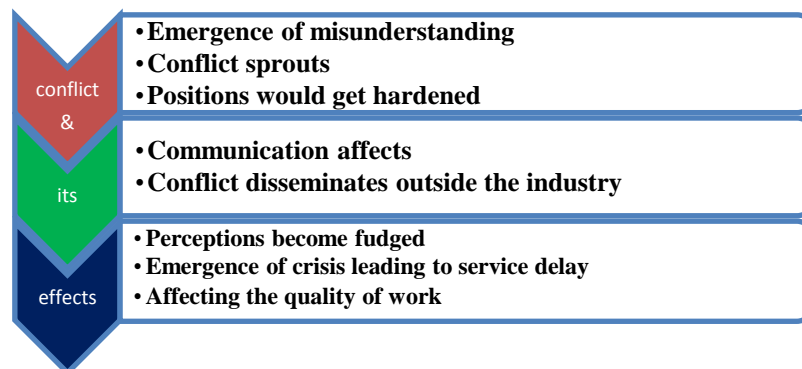
#### 5. Reasons to Conflicts at Industries

It can be hypothesised that conflict at any place includes five elements, values, perceptions, interdependence, feelings & emotions and differences. These issues of conflict at industries can be resolved only by means of good communication. Good communication is possible by employing Aristotle's Rhetorical approach to the language.

When discussing Conflict management it is very important for us to understand the elements that cause Conflicts to arise at work place. They arise due to the absence of agreement about any subject or due to the complex behavioural dynamics of the employees at work. Competent communication differs from situation to situation and the style of application of Rhetoric to effectuate the process of communication differs from person to person.

## 6. How Conflicts Evolve at Work Place?

Conflicts can lead to more than just verbal arguments and physical disputes between two or more individuals. In a criminal justice organization, where the majority of personnel are armed with weapons. An improperly managed Conflict situation can lead to bigger issues that could potentially result in workplace violence leading to loss of life. If conflicts at industries are not managed properly in time, the misunderstandings emerge, positions get hardened, communication gets hampered, the conflict disseminates outside the industry, perceptions become fudged, and eventually a sense of crisis emerges leading to delayed services which would affect the quality of work.



**Figure 1:** *Evolution of Conflict and Its After Effects*

The communication behaviour of individual employee attributes to increase in the conflicts at industries. Language stimulates one individual to another so as to provoke both positive as well as negative reactions in the individuals.

It is the skills of language that can make or unmake a conflict at industries. By communicating effectively the conflicts at industries can be resolved. Effective communication is possible only with the application of Rhetoric to the language.

The managers play an important role in diffusing industrial conflicts. The conflicts are predestined in any industry, if handled intelligently; a resolved conflict would open new gates for the growth of employees at industries. It is only the language that has significant characteristic of resolving the conflicts both in private and professional lives of individuals and leading them to accomplish their goals.

One of the greatest skills which aid to resolve conflict at work is effective communication and the process of communication at industries can be made efficacious with the application of Aristotle's Rhetoric. The managers at industries should be able to inject the vital sap of Rhetoric into the language to make communication at industries effective during the process of conflict resolution.

A variety of human factors like self-esteem, values, emotions, self-egos, complex nature of the individual employees etc. get affected, would generate ill feelings among the employees and lead to conflicts at industries. As human being is the embodiment of various emotions when he speaks along with his words his intended emotions also get transmitted whose meaning may vary from the literary meaning of the words.

Many executives in the industries have admitted that most of them are hostages to their own inhibitions and other negative emotions and fail to pursue the opportunities in resolving them. Once negative attitude might become a reason for industrial conflicts. Whatever may be the reason for conflict, it can be resolved by pellucid communication. It is said that the more effectively we communicate our differences and our areas of agreement, the better we will understand each other's concerns which would improve our chances of reaching mutually accepted agreement. But it needs effective language skills.

The classical theory of Aristotle's Rhetoric tells how the language works for men at work. Though Rhetoric is an ancient literary device, it can also be used to effectuate the process of modern communication at industries.

The author strongly believes that the application of Rhetoric to the language would be a scientific approach to effective communication in resolving the conflicts at industries. This device is like an old gem and can be incorporated in any jewellery to ameliorate its beauty and effectiveness.

## **7. What is Rhetoric?**

Rhetoric is a communication theory originally developed by Aristotle in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. According to him Rhetoric is a scientific approach of adding multiple dimensions to the language used, to make one's thoughts and opinions clear and understandable by the listener, the way it is felt by the speaker. Rhetoric starts with the thought. The application of Rhetoric to the language during conflict resolution would provide productive results.

Rhetoric means right thought with word at right time with right expression. But how can the righteousness of the expression can be decided?... The answer is the three appeals of Aristotle's Rhetoric. We can call them elements or components or dimensions as well. They are;

*Logos* the logical appeal,

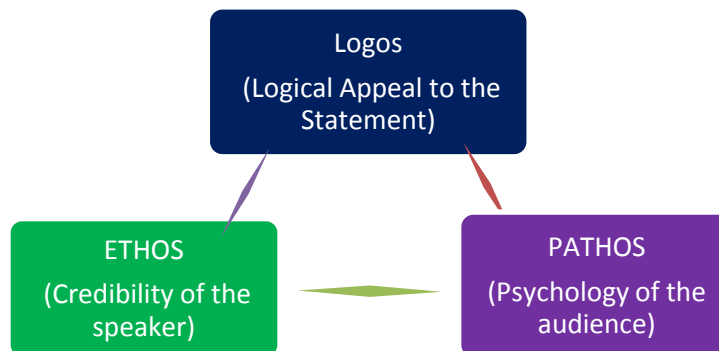
*Ethos* the speaker's credibility over the minds of his listeners,

*Pathos* the emotional and psychological factors of the listeners

With the perfect blend of these three appeals of Rhetoric the speakers can make their audience understand, discover and develop arguments for particular situations. If it is a conflict at industries, can be productively resolved with a righteous combination of these Rhetorical appeals, Logos, Ethos & Pathos. But the combination varies according to the situation.

It is believed widely that the process of communication at industries is dynamic. It is not a single or linear process. This is because communicating some information at industries is not just sending a static message but it includes facts, figures, different emotions and hard hitting data of information about some complex and complicated dealings and functions related to the business. It needs to be communicated properly and accurately if not would lead to misunderstandings and ultimately leading to conflicts which may affect quality of work at industries.

According to modern Rhetoricians like James Boyd and Kenneth Burk, Rhetoric involves through the use of reason (Logos), the speaker's authenticity (Ethos) and the emotional quotient or psychological element of the listener (Pathos). These are known as three appeals of Rhetoric. Aristotle's Three Appeals of Rhetoric can be presented in the form of a triangle. It is also known as a Rhetorical Triangle.



**Figure 2:** *Rhetorical Triangle*

Let us study in detail about the three appeals of Rhetoric.

### 7.1 Logos

Logos means logical appeal. Logos is a literary device that can be defined as a statement, sentence or argument used to convince the audience by employing reason or logic. It refers to intellectual reason based on logical conclusions. In the Gospel of John it is identified as the principle of divine reason and creative order and judgement. It is based on sensible use of

rationality, statistical data and solid facts which directly appeal to human intellectual reasoning. Logos needs support of orderly framed statistical figures and factual evidences. Such statements can never be doubted and accepted indisputably. The work at any industries depends mostly on such facts and data

## **7.2 Ethos**

Ethos means speaker's credibility over his authenticity in the minds of the listeners. It is the audience perception of the speaker's credibility & authority over the subject he is speaking. Just imagine when anybody speaks, why should he be listened??? Elements like knowledge, expertise, work experience, personality & character, honesty, sincerity, candour, brilliance, kindness, designation, virtue, prudence, nobility, courage, power & authority etc, enhance the authenticity of a speaker that make the audience listen to him. All those elements which augment the trustworthiness of a speaker add to the Ethos, the second appeal of Rhetoric. It is a very significant element among the three appeals of Rhetoric. This is because to groom these many traits in one's personality, it needs a life time. Ethos is considered to be a fundamental component of Rhetoric because it is the Ethos of the speaker that inspires the audience to listen to what the speaker is telling. Unless the audience feel that the speaker is trustworthy, they won't pay any attention to his words. This is because it is the credible character and genuine knowledge that get communicated through the words of the speaker. According to David Cunningham, the author of *Faithful Persuasion*, the audience try to evaluate the authenticity of the statements of the speaker by correlating with his character and knowledge. Aristotle believed that words of a trustworthy individual were more influential than the words of an individual whose trust was in question. Hence, Ethos of the speaker plays a vital role in the process of communication at industries during the process of conflict resolution.

## **7.3 Pathos**

Pathos means psychology and emotions of the listeners. It is concerned with the right state of emotion (joy, pain, fear, love etc,) of the audience to receive the message. Pathos is all about how the speaker gets himself connected psychologically with the audience so that his words would leave a long lasting impact over the hearts and minds of them. This third appeal, Pathos has great potential. If used in an intelligent and genuine way, it would bring positive results. As emotions of individuals can influence their stream of thinking, a misuse of these would create chaos or sometimes open rejection to the messages of the speaker. Pathos may not change the facts but can definitely make the audience to understand the situation before taking any decision.

Rhetoric approach to communication at industries, involves what matters to the audience, what would be the common ground, how to build argumentation & how to generate the right emotional environment!!! to resolve conflicts among the employees. Nevertheless, this depends on



the ability of the speaker to empathize with the needs of audience. The people who are working at industries are all qualified personnel with good knowledge and experience about the work. While dealing with such set of people the manager should be very careful in using his language during conflict resolution and it can be effectively done by applying the three appeals of Rhetoric to the language used by the managers at work.

During the resolution of Conflicts at industries the managers cannot use only one Rhetorical appeal in designing his side of statements or arguments. This is because the combination of all the three appeals of Rhetoric is very important. The combination varies according to the situation, context and the individuals involved in the conflicts. To find the right blend of all the above mentioned three appeals of Rhetoric the manager needs the art of imagination and he should have powerful Ethos to formulate logical statements so that he can get connected with his employees psychologically. To bring effectiveness into the process of communication while resolving the conflicts at industries, the managers need to inject the epitome of Rhetoric into his language.

The three appeals of Rhetoric, Logos, Ethos & Pathos, if applied to the communication process at industries would refine the skills of expressions and language like, verbal & non-verbal communication.

## **8. Barriers that Lead to Conflicts at Industries**

When a group of experts from various fields work together thought variation occurs leading to communication roadblocks. This would affect the work and output as well. There are four types of veins which lead to conflicts at industries. They are called the four horse men of the apocalypse [Michael Lute (2015): *The Relationship between Gottman's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Mindfulness & Relationship Satisfaction*, Indiana University of Pennsylvania].

### **8.1 Criticism**

Dictionary meaning of the word criticism is the expression of disapproval of someone or something on the basis of perceived faults or mistakes. Many a time unknowingly individual employees attack the character or personality of each other when they confront any opinion variation. But this attitude would hinder appropriate communication. It is the responsibility of the manager to train his employees so that they can act in a more matured and cool way during discussions and disputes. The employees should be taught to improvise their logos, ethos & pathos so that they can face criticism with an open mind. These employees if apply rhetorical appeals to their language while communicating with their fellow employees they would definitely use sensible expressions while criticising or complaining about others work. For example, a constructive criticism would be, "How about getting some training in communication management during stressful situations?" A shrewd criticism in the same situation would be, "You are badly in need of

good skills of communication to manage stressful situation.” This would hurt the feelings of the criticized. Hence it can be believed that a shrewd criticism would certainly lead to conflict. Rhetorical appeals would definitely refine expressions in the language of criticism making, it constructive.

### **8.2 Contempt**

It means lack of respect for others and their skills. It is a kind of judgemental attitude towards the capabilities of others but in a negative way. This attitude would ruin the relation among the employees and the managers. The feeling of contempt can transmitted more through non-verbal gestures like sneering, taking the names disrespectfully, cutting sarcastic remarks, pouting, frowning etc would lead to conflicts at industries. It creates a negative impression over the speaker. The listener would become adamant and act against the orders if he faces such kind of expressions from his manager which would pave way to conflicts. Hence the manager should develop his Ethos in an appropriate way and present his side of statement with great positive pathos. Otherwise He will never get the conflicts resolved. Simply by possessing various skills of communication cannot guarantee effectiveness in resolving conflicts at industries. He has to be an expert with Rhetoric application to his language for better results during conflict resolution.

### **8.3 Defensiveness**

If people are being criticised and contemned continuously they become defensive and stop listening to all. This escalates ill feelings among all and ignites conflicts at work place. The manager should deal with this type of situation logically with the application of Logos a Rhetorical appeal to resolve the conflicts at industries.

### **8.4 Ice Walling**

It is nothing but stop talking. Disconnecting one’s self from communicating with the others. Conflict resolution becomes impossible without communication. It is the responsibility of the manager to try to communicate with employees with such attitude. He has to apply all the three appeals of Rhetoric according to the situation to make the individuals break the self-made ice wall and talk to resolve the conflict.

These barriers never promote positive resolution but ascents the conflicts at industries. The managers should train their employees with help of three appeals of Rhetoric to face and solve the conflicts in a positive and productive way. Language and words are integral parts of the communication. A good communication among the employees should be groomed among all the employees at work which would always help them to deal with conflicts better way in time.

## **9. Application of Three Appeals of Rhetoric to Effective Conflict Resolution at Industries**

According to Harriet B. Braiker, [Who's pulling your strings? How to break the cycle of manipulation and regain control of your life, Published by Mc Graw Hill Education, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Oct 2004] a conflict is a symptom of serious problems and poor communication.

- Moulton (1974) defines language as a rich & wonderful vehicle of communication. It has to be enriched by the application of the three appeals of Rhetoric Logos, Ethos and Pathos. There are various methods to resolve conflicts at industries. They are mediation, dialogue, negotiation, arbitration etc. But without appropriate language above mentioned methods become ineffective. As the managers act like negotiators or mediators it is necessary for them to have effective communication proficiency. This can be achieved by the application of the three appeals of Rhetoric, Logos, Ethos & Pathos.
- The managers should need to understand the perspectives of all his employees. He needs to consider the views and opinions of all the employees involved in the conflict. He cannot be biased. He has to be a good listener. This approach of the managers would induce respect in the hearts of the employees. This leads to a rapport that builds a bridge between the minds and hearts. The people who are involved in the conflict would listen to the suggestions of the manager and react positively. This needs a good practice of the third appeal of Rhetoric i.e. Pathos.
- To apply Pathos the manager should have a logical approach which needs Logos, the first appeal of Rhetoric.
- Logical appeal needs ability of cognitive complexity which means ability to visualize an issue in variety of frameworks. Any conflict can have various solutions. The manager should develop cognitive ability to assess and evaluate the best possible way to resolve conflicts at industries. This needs powerful Ethos. This is because a person with ample experience and expertise would be visionary enough to find various methods to resolve any conflict at industry. He needs to be using his Ethos, logically to get connected psychologically with both the parties involved in the conflict.
- The employees should be given an open platform to express their views and opinions. This approach enhances the Ethos of the individual employees. While the employees are presenting their side of thoughts they should not be interrupted. The manager should listen to them carefully. He should also insist others to listen to each other carefully without any interruptions. This act of the manager transmits a kind of positivity towards the speaker creating an emotional link between them. When the manager tries to resolve the conflicts at work the employees won't get offended. Hence careful listening is an appeal of Ethos that escalates the third appeal of Pathos among the listeners.

- The manager's Ethos which means his intellectual personality has to be very strong so that he can influence his employees not to enter into any type of conflicts at work. He should also be an expert in the application of Pathos so that he can understand the emotions and psychology of his employees and can act accordingly. The manager should inculcate respect among all his employees at work and make them to develop their personality & knowledge (Ethos) so that they can understand the psychology (Pathos) of other employees with whom they are working with. Accordingly they need to express or present their side of viewpoints logically (Logos). Such approach would definitely help to nullify any conflicts at industries at a very early stage.
- The manager should groom his employees in such way that they need to cultivate empathy towards each other. This attitude connects them emotionally making their Pathos powerful. They can work with more coordination which would reduce the occurrence of conflicts at industries.
- Psychologists always suggest self-monitoring. It is the responsibility of the manager to nurture his employees making them to self-monitor their behavioural aspects every now and then. This leads to self-assessment and self-development. This spruces the power of Ethos of all the employees. Powerful Ethos makes them to communicate without ambiguity. And it will become easy for them to present their ideas and understand others. If a work place is employed with such personnel the frequency of the occurrence of conflicts becomes sporadic.
- Whenever there occurs any conflict among the employees, the manager should give them a break before talking to them. He has to talk to them separately but before that they should be given some time to think in themselves. This is a logical approach (Logos) to the psychology of the employees who are involved in the conflicts. As the persons involved in the conflict are in an agitated mode, they should not be counselled immediately. They should be given some time to get settle down psychologically, so that they can be made to do some introspection during counselling. Through this the manager needs to apply his Logos to mould the Pathos (Psychological emotions) of the employees who are involved in the conflict at industries.

## **10. Recommendations**

One can never handle conflicts without language strategies and no strategy is sacrosanct, but at least one can frame holistic strategies to resolve conflicts up to some extent with the help of Rhetorical approach, at industries. A judicious blending of the three appeals of Rhetoric Logos, Ethos & Pathos according to the context and situation would solve most of the conflicts at industries. This is because language is the combination of ideas, opinions combined with emotions. Hence one cannot ignore the importance of language during the process of conflict resolution and it can be unanimously accepted that with the application of the three appeals of

rhetoric the language would definitely become effective during the process of conflict resolution at industries.

Whichever method one may follow to resolve the conflicts at work but without the application of the three appeals of Rhetoric to their style of communication, it would yield no productive fruits.

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