



# Program

# Time for change: the case for positive impact marketing

**An insights report by Program**

Monthly White Paper: December 2023

# about



**Building  
Brands**  
Marketing Community

# ABOUT BUILDING BRANDS

## The community for marketers in the South West

With more than 900 members across the South West, Building Brands is the community for marketing professionals in the region. Free to join, we organise the dedicated marketing events across Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Bristol, and in 2024, will be running accredited training programmes delivered by some of the top marketing leaders in the country.

### Keeping members connected

Members get newsletters every couple of weeks. These are our opportunity to keep you up to date with our events and others in the area, our training courses, important news, and marketing jobs in the region.

### Our environmental commitments

We wanted to play our part in helping address the climate crisis and the shocking situation when it comes to plastic in our oceans. That's why we will now be supporting The Ocean Cleanup, and donating money to them, for every attendee who comes to our paid events. It's really important that we all play our part and do what we can to help.

### Talk with us

Website: [www.building-brands.co.uk](http://www.building-brands.co.uk)

By phone: 07496 379714

Email: [info@building-brands.co.uk](mailto:info@building-brands.co.uk)



about

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# ABOUT PROGRAM

## Putting the human story at the heart of your brand

We are a team of connectors, communicators and creatives delivering strategic, insight-led marketing. We elevate the brands delivering solutions that have a true positive impact on people and planet.

### People

Leadership matters. We position you as true thought leaders in your market, to strengthen existing connections and harness new opportunities.

Developing people to become brand leaders is based on each person's style, knowledge and interests.

### Company

A strong brand is more than just a slick looking visual identity. It has the power to connect people and define experiences. It determines audience perceptions and inspires customers and prospects to choose your products or services. We unleash the true power of your potential through creating a compelling brand strategy.

### Community

Empowering customers, supporters, partners and prospects is an incredible way to extend your influence, enhance your brand and build your business. We help you grow a brand community that sets you apart from every challenger and competitor in the market.

### Talk with us

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**introduction**

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# It's time to choose

Is it enough to be in business simply for the business? Shipping your product, selling to customers, getting the money in.

In a word: no.

And it's not because of what matters to you. It's what matters to your customers.

Consumers demand more from their brands of choice. And so they should.

Of course profit matters. Without it, there is no business. But as this report explains, profit and positive impact are two sides of the same coin. Taking a stand on doing good is good for business, because that's what your customers are demanding.

In a world of finite resources and supply chains spanning the planet, what we produce and sell has become part of the biggest problem facing humanity. The world is burning and things have to change — fast.

Marketeers are in an incredible position. We have the opportunity to be part of the solution. It's our job to help grow companies through building brand awareness, engagement and sales. How we choose to do that matters.

There is trepidation. No one is perfect and no organisation can solve things on its own. But collectively, that's when concerted efforts start to add up.

Program exists to support the brands and organisations striving for a better tomorrow — those trying to make a meaningful difference whilst working to minimise negative impact.

It's hard to define, but you know it when you see it — brands seeking to create positive impact as an integral part of what they do. It might be the first steps on the journey. It might be well underway. But the determination is there.

For this report, we've spoken with a number of standout brands focused on positive impact marketing. I hope you are inspired by what they have to say.

Customers are people. And people are incredible. To really understand your people takes compassion and empathy. Good brands understand that and dedicate themselves to solving their customers' problems over and over.

Now is the time for brands to step up and make a difference. Those that do will reap the benefits.

We hope you find this report useful, as you consider what type of brand you need to be, to stay relevant and at the forefront of customers' minds in a fast-changing world.

At Program, we're on a journey ourselves, within the business and through the client partnerships we forge, to build true positive impact together. Putting that story at the heart of your brand can be compelling, uplifting and transformational.

If what we're saying resonates, do reach out to me. I'd love to talk it through.

Caroline

Caroline Orr  
Brand & Marketing Director



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# What is authentic positive impact marketing?

Let's start with trust and sincerity - the two pillars for building a true purpose for your positive impact brand.

Consumers connect with brands that align with their values and demonstrate a purpose beyond profit. But it has to be real. It has to be built on trust and sincerity. Brands need to be seen taking meaningful actions. That might push you out of your comfort zone. But that's business, right? Particularly if you want to stay at the forefront of customers' minds.

Successful positive impact marketing campaigns are rooted in authentic brand purpose. But beyond that, there can be a huge variety of causes and brand activism. Advocating for women's rights, social equality, the wellbeing of customers and employees, helping to build the circular economy, ethical practices, community engagement and, of course, tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.

Whatever your purpose, to deliver an authentic positive impact campaign, the issue has to matter to you and your customers.

Flipping from one issue to the next is not good. It confuses customers, who wonder why you are doing it. It makes it harder to build trust. It's why brands who work out their 'why' stay on track with their campaigns, because they are rooted in a clear purpose.

Let's look at two examples; one global, one local.



## Adidas Run For The Oceans

The 'Run For The Oceans' campaign was created by Adidas to highlight and help address the issue of ocean plastic pollution while promoting an active and healthy lifestyle.

Adidas organised running events and encouraged people worldwide to participate by logging their running kilometres. For each kilometre run, Adidas donated a specific amount to the Parley Ocean School programme, which aims to educate and empower young people in coastal areas affected by plastic pollution.

The 'Run For The Oceans' campaign not only encouraged physical activity but also raised awareness about the critical issue of ocean pollution. It demonstrated how a well-known brand like Adidas could leverage its reach and resources to make a positive impact on environmental and social issues. And it did it through a campaign that directly linked a vital cause with the brand.

Of course, for global brands, efforts like this can be viewed with a level of cynicism. But marketers need to remember that campaigns are not about pleasing everyone. They are about doing good in a way that connects with your core customer base. Whatever your view on the likes of Adidas and Nike, this was a campaign that combined a brand's commercial activities with a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

Now let's hear from a brilliant brand rising from the South West, Two Drifters Distillery, the first carbon negative rum brand on the planet.

## Case Study: Two Drifters Distillery



“Being a truly sustainable rum brand was never a choice for us, it amazed us that you can still create a business with no care for the planet and you're allowed to do it. We want to own a rum distillery, why should the planet suffer for our choices/ambitions. So we made sure we could sleep at night by doing everything we can to limit our impact on the people, planet and community. If we can make award-winning rum with a carbon negative footprint, why would we do it any other way?”

“We've been too selfish for too long and now the planet has had enough, I don't blame it. If CO2 had a colour, I'm sure people would think twice before throwing it into the atmosphere. But until there are serious repercussions for creating CO2 we're showing how it can be done through choice. If we're the most successful rum brand, surely others will want to follow, that's why we can't fail.”

“Our carbon negative footprint is everything to us, we live and breathe the impact our business has on the planet. No one wins with fake sustainability claims, it's sad that this is the case, but it's also dangerous. We're all feeling the impact of climate change, so why are we still hurting the planet?” - **Russ Wakeham, CEO, Two Drifters Distillery.**



Russ Wakeham, CEO, Two Drifters Distillery

# The importance of positive impact marketing



In a bid to engage customers throughout and beyond the COP26 Conference held in Glasgow, the Co-op26 campaign aimed to get people asking questions about how they can impact climate change at a community level



Photo credit: Bird Eyewear

Exeter-based Bird Eyewear makes their products with sustainable materials such as bio-plastics, recycled aluminium and certified woods, and aids a programme that benefits families and the environment in Zambia and Malawi

## National Level

Clarity on what your customers and clients care about is vital. Positive impact needs to be rooted in your values. And we know that 77% of UK consumers are more likely to buy from brands whose values align with their own. (Advertising Week).

So, if you don't really know what they care about, how can you establish brand values that work for the business and your customers? According to Deloitte, consumers regard the five most important sustainable or ethical practices as:

1. Producing sustainable packaging and products.
2. Reducing waste in manufacturing processes.
3. Committing to ethical working practises.
4. Reducing carbon footprint.
5. Respect for human rights.

And it doesn't stop there. A rise in eco-anxiety, disillusionment in mainstream politics, cost of living pressures and mistrust in institutions means more consumers than ever are thinking critically about brands that don't respond to external factors.

In fact, 87% of UK consumers believe more brands should do their part in helping the world, especially during difficult times. (Advertising Week).

So, beyond what you do — your core product or service offering — people care about not only what you stand for, but what you are going to do about it. From becoming a B-Corp to giving a percentage of your profits to relevant causes, it's the tangibles that matter.

And now the evidence is emerging of just how this shift is already affecting the bottom line.

A recent study by Harvard Business School found that companies with a defined purpose, setting out how the organisation helps people and/or the planet, actually grow faster. It found that 58% of purpose-driven organisations grew 10% or more in three years, compared to 42% that are not purpose-driven.

## Regional Level

To take a closer look on a regional scale, we surveyed business leaders in the South West on everything from their greatest priorities to their biggest challenges.

What's striking is that most businesses still lack a clear position on external factors that matter to their customers.

Instead, when it comes to positive impact, most focus on their own people. Supporting employees through career opportunities and learning and development was the number one positive impact priority as a business. But is that enough?

It's certainly an area we have more control over. And of course it's vital for a successful business that's going to be good at attracting, retaining and supporting the best talent. But ignoring or limiting external issues, like the environment, sustainability and social causes, risks a growing disconnect with customers, and misses a golden opportunity to do good and set yourself apart from competitors through embracing external positive impact work.



Encouragingly, most respondents agree that businesses share a collective responsibility in acting now to tackle climate change. Indeed, 80% felt that businesses who do nothing to reduce their carbon footprint should face penalties to encourage them to change. The survey also revealed how improving social mobility was a key positive impact driver for many businesses.

**Snapshot**

UK	South West	Observation
73% of Millennials are willing to spend more for a product if the brand is environmentally sustainable.	52% of business leaders felt having a positive impact on the planet was most important to customers aged 18-28.	Gen Z and Millennials are seen as most strongly valuing sustainability. If this trend continues, increasing numbers of your customers will share this view.
Nearly two thirds of Gen Z have stopped buying from brands not aligned with their values.	Having delighted customers was the top objective amongst business leaders we surveyed.	Business leaders need to realise, people are already making buying decisions based on your brand values and positive impact stance.
Nearly half of UK employees (45%) would consider resigning from their job if the values of the company did not align with their own.	50% of business leaders agree that younger employees (18-28) class it as important that their business has a positive impact on the planet - i.e. beyond minimising any negative impact.	If you want the best of the emerging talent, align with what they are looking for in an employer. That includes taking action on climate change.

## Case study: SWBC

"South West Business Council has been at the forefront of supporting businesses for 20 years. Through "Convening, Informing, and Connecting", we are a driving force in helping organisations make a positive impact economically and environmentally, and in terms of social mobility, equality, and diversity.

"We work alongside our members to help them achieve their ambitions, from environmental impact in Floating Offshore Wind, Energy Transition and Net Zero, to those changing society for the better through upskilling, apprenticeship opportunities and entrepreneurial programmes for the BAME community.

"Our strong reach into Government and local authorities, positions us to help shape policies and initiatives that positively impact our region. And we collaborate through strategic partnerships to deliver positive change.

"It's only through collaboration and innovation that real, impactful change can occur. And only by responding to the shifting landscape around us can businesses deliver real, tangible value to our lives and the lives of those around us." — **Paul Coles, CEO, South West Business Council.**



Paul Coles, CEO, SWBC

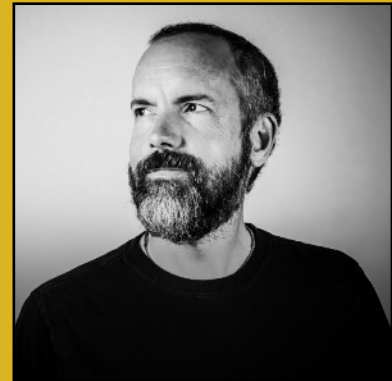
# Ask the Experts



**Caroline Orr**  
Brand & Marketing Director



**Dan Pritchard**  
CEO



**Chris Noble,**  
Creative Director

It can be hard to navigate the positive impact space with true meaning and authenticity. But there are methods and means.

**Q: How can brands in the positive impact space activate their brand story?**

**A. Caroline Orr, Brand and Marketing Director:** "Here are some ideas to get you started.."

- **Tell Your Story:** Create a cool, authentic narrative about why you're all in on your chosen cause.
- **Walk the Talk:** Make sure your business practises backup your mission. Don't just talk the talk.
- **Be Totally Transparent:** Keep it real. Share your journey and impact with the world.
- **Keep Score:** Set your goals then measure your impact.
- **Get the Green Light:** Get those official badges that say you're the real deal! You deserve it.
- **Roll with the Punches:** Be flexible and open to change. Never stop learning.
- **Talk to Your People:** Chat with your team, customers, investors, and partners. It's all about teamwork."

**Q: How can my brand's purpose be anything other than making a profit?**

**A. Chris Noble, Creative Director:** “Would you buy Nike products if their tagline was ‘Just Pay Us’? Your purpose needs to align with your end-user’s desires just as much as your tagline. More and more, those desires are becoming unselfish, and consumers are leaning toward brands that overtly benefit the planet and its inhabitants while running its business.

“Customers aren’t shopping for your profit, and good employees work better if they know that they’re helping causes that transcend the bottom line. Your stated and true purpose should be fulfilling end-user desires. The need for profit is a given; not a purpose.”

**Q: How can I control the value customers place on my brand?**

**A. Dan Pritchard, CEO:** “It’s simple — deliver the value you would expect if you were a customer. I see so many ‘look-alike’ brands out there, it depresses me. There are amazing companies focusing on the product but failing to translate that passion into an uplifting and inspiring brand that captures the true value and worth of a brand, and expresses it at every level to customers.

“And of course that’s the opportunity — we’ve seen the companies who have embraced that journey (and it’s not always easy). But when they truly connect with their customers through lived and clearly expressed values, that’s when brands thrive.”

## Case study: Devon Environment Foundation

“The businesses who support DEF genuinely care about our local environment, and want to be involved by supporting the grassroots projects protecting and restoring nature in the places we all love.

“The added benefits from a business perspective are that it sends out messages about the type of brand they are. It helps attract and keep the best talent because employees are more motivated to work for businesses making a positive impact. In addition, they gain loyalty from eco-conscious customers, while having uplifting stories to share via their PR and social media.” - **Amanda Keetley, Executive Director, Devon Environment Foundation.**



Amanda Keetley, Executive Director  
Devon Environment Foundation

# Building a positive impact brand

Developing a positive impact brand is a strategic move that can win you a loyal and socially conscious customer base.

Here are eight points to consider on your journey:

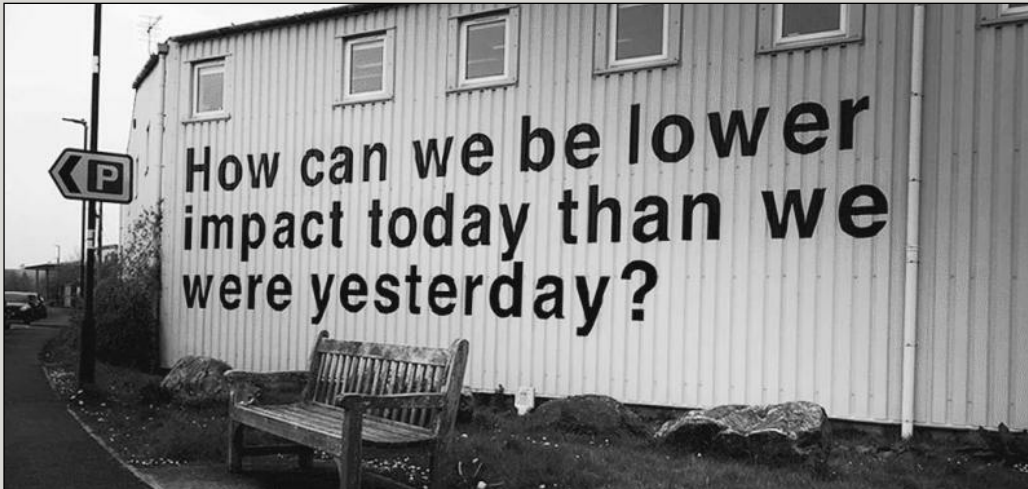
1. **Start with purpose:** What is your why? What do you actually care about enough to want to make a difference? This needs to encompass your employees and your customers.
2. **Make sure it is authentic:** Your 'why' needs to be something you truly care about as a brand. You can't do any of this just for the sake of it as it will eventually come loose and fall apart. Don't copy competitors, dig deep and build your own true purpose. From that, positive impact action flows. Authenticity also means honesty. It's okay to be starting the journey. It's certainly not about perfection.
3. **Research Your Impact Area:** You'll have a more significant impact if you focus your efforts on a cause that aligns with your industry, values, and strengths. Research the issues that matter most to your stakeholders and the causes that resonate with your customers.
4. **Align Your Operations:** To make a difference, your operations should be in harmony with your purpose. For instance, if your mission is environmental sustainability, source eco-friendly materials, minimise waste, and reduce your carbon footprint. Aligning your business practices with your values is a fundamental step.
5. **Tell Compelling Stories:** Storytelling is a potent tool in building a positive impact brand. Share your journey, the challenges you face, the progress you make, and the lives you touch. Create content that engages and inspires your audience. Real stories of impact not only convey your dedication but also attract like-minded customers who want to be part of your story.



To reduce food wastage — a major factor in environmental damage — Toast Brewing use surplus bread as well as UK-grown hops to make their beers, and send 100% of their profits to environmental charities.

6. **Measure and Communicate Your Impact:** Numbers speak volumes. Define KPIs to track your progress. Report these metrics transparently through your website, social media, and impact reports. When consumers see the results of their support, they're more likely to choose your brand.
7. **Collaborate and Partner:** No brand can change the world alone. Seek partnerships with nonprofits, NGOs, or other brands that share your mission. Collaboration can amplify your efforts and bring new ideas to the table.
8. **Engage Your Community:** Involve your employees and customers in your positive impact journey. Offer volunteer opportunities, organise charity events, or engage in open dialogue about your mission. Encourage your community to be active participants in your brand's purpose.

## Case study: Hiut Denim



“Cardigan is a town of just 4,000 people in West Wales. And for some unexplained reason, it had Britain’s biggest jeans factory. In 2002, the factory gates closed. Clunk. And 400 world-class makers had nothing to make. The Hiut Denim Co. started in 2012 with the aim to get the town making jeans again. And keep a maker town, making.

“Its focus was only to make jeans — Do one thing well. Its purpose is to make the best jeans in the world and for the world. Making the lowest-impact jeans is our daily pursuit.

“Hiut got worldwide recognition from being in the Shopify documentary, the Apple TV commercial and from Meghan Markle wearing them. This led to moving to a bigger factory and taking on more makers.

“The key learnings have been we have had to be as good at telling our story as we are at making the jeans. Reassuringly, in an age of quantity, people are still willing to wait for quality.” — **David Hieatt, Co-Founder, Hiut Denim Co.**



# HIUT DENIM CO.

David Hieatt, Co-Founder, Hiut Denim Co



# It's never too late



Chris Noble, Creative Director at Program, has worked with the likes of Nike, Adidas and Converse, along with smaller ethical brands. For over a decade he worked at the cutting-edge of positive impact brand development in Portland, Oregon, before returning to the UK.

“You know what's nice about building a positive impact brand? It feels great — to you and your audience. It doesn't matter if you're a big, dusty corporation or a fresh-faced startup, as long as you're genuine about it you can climb aboard the do-good train.

“Making that beautiful choice means scrutinising your usual way of doing things — from sourcing to core values. It can be disruptive and a fair bit of work, but the payoff — in terms of loyal customers, future-thinking sustainable business and warm and fuzzy feelings — is 100% worth it.

“If you're just starting out, that's an amazing thing. You're a blank canvas. You can kick off with purposeful values front and centre. Your focus on positive change becomes the foundation of your story, setting you apart in the marketplace and drawing in all those socially and environmentally conscious folks — a massively growing breed.

“Turning your brand into a force for good is a fantastic way to form a deep connection with passionate customers who will stand by you and stick with you. You can be a shining light, a catalyst for some much-needed change in the world. Just don't drag your feet. The world's waiting for your brand to step up and make a difference.”

## Case study: Finisterre



“Finisterre was born from a belief that we could be a better business. The surf industry was dominated by bikinis and boardshorts — you couldn’t be further from the realities of a Cornish surfer — and the products were created at the expense of the very environment we played in.

“Since day one, our vision has been to create a brand that celebrates and protects our ocean, enabling us to all have a deeper connection to it. After all, we believe you will fight to protect what you love.

“Fortunately, our message resonates with our customers. Our commitment to sustainability continues to be the number 1 reason they buy from us.

“From our Sea Tuesdays initiative, where every Tuesday morning starts with an hour free to connect with the ocean, to volunteering days with Surfers Against Sewage, The Wave Project and Project Sea Grass, our culture revolves around deepening our connection to the sea. It also inspired the creation of The Finisterre Foundation.

“We hope that one day our ocean is truly wild again. Until then, we will continue to work across all areas of our business to make it so.” — **Bronwen Foster-Butler, Chief Marketing Officer, Finisterre.**



**Bronwen Foster-Butler,**  
Chief Marketing Officer, Finisterre



# What does positive impact look like?

Taking just two areas - social and environmental impact - here are some ideas to get you started.

## **Social positive impact**

1. Community outreach events and programmes
2. Educational programmes, including skills development
3. Investment in infrastructure and community spaces
4. Awareness and behaviour change campaigns
5. Apprenticeship programmes targeting areas with limited social mobility
6. Knowledge sharing and early careers support
7. Employee volunteering
8. Sponsorships and partnership with relevant organisations
9. Encouraging, supporting and empowering diversity and inclusion activity across your organisation

## **Environmental positive impact**

1. Sustainable product development
2. Carbon neutral commitment — B Corp etc.
3. Sustainable product packaging
4. Ethical supply chains
5. Carbon offsetting programmes
6. Customer reward programmes for environmentally conscious behaviour
7. Green partnerships
8. Promotion of renewable energy
9. Sustainability reports
10. Partnerships with environmental organisations that can involve your employees and customers

## Case study: Blue Goose Coffee



“Blue Goose Coffee has led the way in offering ethically sourced, specialty coffees in aluminium and plastic free pods and pouches.

“As a brand we could choose to tickle the surface of sustainability. But putting purpose at our heart is recognised as far more authentic among our customers, helping achieve real stand-out versus greenwash-prone competitors.

“Our Compostable Coffee Pod Advent Calendar took 19 months from concept to launch. Seeking out world-first ethical and environmentally-friendly coffees and packaging was neither easy, nor cheap.

“However, the results have included listings and repeat purchases from the likes of Selfridges, a Soil Association ‘Best New Organic Product’ Award, World Coffee Innovation Award and an #SBS Award from Theo Paphitis.

“From a marketing perspective it’s a dream, packed full of authentic stories. For a micro business like ours it justifies why we always put purpose, ethics and sustainability at the heart of our decisions.” — Lex, Co Founder, Blue Goose Coffee.



Lex Thornley, Co-Founder, Blue Goose Coffee

# Summing up

Positive impact marketing matters. And what's more, it means better results for people and planet — and for your business.

From global reports and insight, to Program's own discussions with brand leaders and our positive impact survey, the evidence is compelling; brands with a purpose rooted in positive impact perform better.

Customers want you to stand up and be counted. They are looking to connect with and buy from brands and work with people they like and admire. And that means finding, adopting and living up to shared values which are increasingly attuned to fundamental issues beyond just business — environment, well-being, community.

Yes, the product and service has to stand out. But in a world where everyone shouts about how they 'really' care, extolling the quality of their customer service, trusted client relationships and willingness to go the extra mile, getting on with achieving positive impact might be a better demonstration of your brand values and intent, and far more likely to prove (by doing, not saying) that you really do care.

True positive activity baked into your everyday business (i.e. working hard with your people to define your purpose and then delivering on the plan) means more motivated employees, the best talent seeking you out rather than the other way round, and a new positive edge to your engagement with customers.

In short, establishing and staying true to a purpose and mission built on positive impact provides the clearest demonstration possible of just who you are, what you stand for, and why doing business with you is more than just a straightforward transaction with yet another copycat company.

**Positive Impact Marketing Matters!**

**Caroline and the team at Program**



# Program

Your brand can do more than just exist – it can thrive while making a meaningful impact. We're excited to discuss how we can tailor our expertise to align with your unique vision for a better world. So, drop us a line and let's get started. Your positive impact journey begins here.

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