



STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN WATER DEPARTMENT IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA; KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Service Delivery is a very important phenomenon in every organization. Rewarding any organization will solely depend on the results after service delivery. Linking up Strategic Management Practices and Service Delivery yields to how best the organization can provide the services to the clients. Effective strategy implementation, review and leadership in County Governments would ultimately affect effective service delivery; hence, this study focused on Strategic drivers on Service Delivery. The main purpose of this research study was; to examine the effect of Strategic Planning Practices on Service Delivery in Water Department in the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of employees of County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. The entire target population was studied since it was manageable. Descriptive and inferential statistics findings of the data were analyzed by use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 24 (SPSS). Collection of data was done by use of questionnaire as the instrument. Pilot study was conducted on employees who were not among the main sample of the study. Structural regression equation model was developed to test the relationships between the variables. ANOVA was performed to analyze the effects of various relationships at the variables level as well at item level. The overall finding of the study was that Strategic Planning Practices had an influence on service delivery in the water department of the county government of Kakamega; Kenya. The study recommended for encouragement of the use of strategic planning practices since it improves the service delivery. The study recommended for further studies on similar variable, different organizations and methods.

Key words: *Strategic Planning, Strategic Management Practices, Service Delivery*

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INTRODUCTION

Service Delivery is getting services as effectively and as quickly as possible to the intended recipient. Akpan (2016) says that in most instances Service Delivery implies a degree of excellence on the part of the organization. Managers therefore need to understand which activities they need to undertake that are important in creating value and which ones are not. Organizations achieve competitive advantage by delivering value to customers. Strategic capability often lies in the day-to-day activities that people undertake in organizations and develop the ability of people to recognize the relevance of what they do in terms of the strategic capability of the organization. Organizations create transformational leadership teams who have the knowledge, insight and experience to help organizations create a flexible, scalable and cost effective platform for delivering functional and business enabling processes. Abesiga, Wetswera and Zziwa (2015) indicates that improvement in Service Delivery is also informed by the need to grow and expand services, take advantage of opportunities or merely to implement new knowledge which can come up with action plans.

In many developing countries, the issue of Service Delivery is a challenge that needs to be addressed given the low quality of service provision and the pressing needs of the poor (Agrawal, 2016). Yang, Hueng and Hong (2015) supports this view when he states that local councils in Malaysia continue to face pressure to improve their Service Delivery, hence, increased level of education of the population has led to a more vocal and more discerning citizenry that expects better services and accountability from its local government. Moreover, rapid industrialization and urbanization of countries have created a challenging environment for the local government. Maroa and Muturi (2015) affirm that in Nepal, public service delivery has remained lower than what was targeted when Nepal announced delivery of public services to its people through a planned development effort.

USA is well known for its significant improvements in ensuring strategic management practices in its devolved units which has seen an explosion in development of infrastructure for economic sustainability. The rural communities in the USA have grown to enviable levels and most of the devolved units are deemed semi or partially autonomous (Afrah, 2019). Ever since the introduction of counties in Latin America development planners and academic scholars have underlined the role co-operatives should and do play in stepping-up development. Regionally, the problem of Service Delivery due to poor strategic management practices or culture is a problem that is faced by many towns in the world, especially in Africa and other developing countries. Kiplagat (2016) alluded to the fact that, delivery of services has a direct and immediate effect on the quality of the lives of the people in a given community, hence, Poor services can make it difficult to attract business or industry to an area and it will also limit job opportunities for residents. Aguoru, Orsaah and Umogbai (2018) indicate, improving public service delivery is one of the biggest challenges worldwide.

Waseya (2017) argues that municipalities in South Africa face serious challenges in implementing Service Delivery options that will enhance existing structures in the sphere of local government points towards the need for strategies to improve Service Delivery. To date, there are limited studies that have formally investigated the causes of poor Service Delivery and the strategies that can be implemented to improve the Service Delivery in local authorities. The Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) in 2010 reported on the factors affecting Service Delivery in local governments.

Municipal Research and Services Centre (2013) defines service delivery as the actual producing of a service such as collecting refuse and disposing it or lighting the streets. Akaegbu and Usoro (2017) concur with this argument and observe that depending on the kind of service being offered, each service has a primary intervention of

transforming the customer and that the client himself or herself is the principle beneficiary. Whether it is learning new ideas or new skills (education), acquiring healthier habits (health), or changing one's outlook on family or society (social services), only the individual served can accomplish the change. He or she is a vital co-producer of any personal transformation that occurs (Akpan, 2016); hence, service provider or agent can only use his or her skills and conduct activities to facilitate the process. Whitaker further insists that in delivering services, the agent helps the person being served to make the desired sorts of changes by supplying encouragements, suggesting options, illustrating techniques, and providing guidance and advice but the agent alone cannot bring about the change. Both the citizen and the agent together produce the desired transformation.

Proper service delivery requires strategic management practices involving the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives (Strickland, 2013). According to Agrawal (2016), it is the formal process, or set of processes, used to determine the strategies (actions) for the organization. For service delivery to be of quality, strategic management has to focus on many areas, including; the integration of management, marketing, finance/accounting, production/operations, research and development and computer information systems, hence; Strategy as practice for service delivery perspective looks at strategy as something people do. Strategic practice is based on the common sense idea that we have to relate tactics to strategy and strategic goals. This involves asking what kind of choices organizations must make in order to be effective in the short term and at the same time take on this challenge.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, Service Delivery in public sector is affected by internal and external factors; hence the need of Strategic management to be applied and regarded as very important in organizations, most organization have competitively managed to carry

out activities and functions just because of application of strategic management practices. However, Akpan (2015) asserts that the conceptual links between strategic planning practices and service delivery have little or no empirical verification. Similarly, most theoretical and empirical researches that have been done focused the studies only on the relationships between strategic management and corporate financial performance with less expression on service delivery (Afrah, 2019). Reviews of past researches investigated in Kenya on performance of public sector show that the studies assessed other contextual issues that impacted service delivery but not directly linked strategic management practices. Abdalla (2015) carried out a study that examined the effect of competitive strategies on the relationship between strategic Human Resource Management and firm performance of Kenya's corporate organizations. Waseya (2017) examined the moderating role of employee cultural orientations on the relationship between strategic Human Resource Management practices and firm performance of manufacturing multinational companies in Kenya. Most scholars among them; Uzel, Namusonge and Obwogi (2013) investigated the effect of strategic management drivers on performance of the hotel industry at the Kenya's Coast but linking up strategic planning with service delivery was not examined, any study done by scholars on strategic management practices that determine service delivery in public sector especially on County Governments has been generalized without zeroing on directly associated strategies that could make the public sector deliver services in proper quality and quantity on consideration that County Governments are non profit making organizations in that employees may not care whether they offer better service delivery or not. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to fill the research gap.

Objective of the Study

The study examined the effect of Strategic Planning Practices on Service Delivery in Water department,

County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant effect of Strategic Planning Practices on Service Delivery in Water department, County Government of Kakamega; Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The dynamic capabilities have been defined as the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly-changing environments (Stanley, 2015). According Tesot (2012), dynamic capabilities have also been defined as the capacity to renew competencies so as to achieve congruence with the changing environment by; adapting, integrating, and reconfiguring internal and external organizational skills, resources, and functional competencies. The qualifying characteristic of the dynamic capability is that the capability not only needs to change the resource base, but it also needs to be embedded in the firm, and ultimately be repeatable. The need for the dynamic capabilities is informed by the permanent risk of erosion of superior firm-specific resources and competences in the contemporary business environment of hyper competition.

According to Reneta (2012), dynamic capabilities are built over time as they are organizational processes in which may have become embedded in the firm over time, and are employed to reconfigure the firm's resource base by deleting decaying resources or recombining old resources in new ways This implies that dynamic capabilities are viewed to be essentially path dependent shaped by the decisions the firm has made throughout its history, and the stock of assets that it holds. Dynamic capabilities are argued to comprise of four main processes: reconfiguration, leveraging, learning and integration; hence, implies that dynamic capabilities are viewed to be essentially path dependent shaped by the decisions the firm

has made throughout its history, and the stock of assets that it holds. Dynamic capabilities are argued to comprise of four main processes: reconfiguration, leveraging, learning and integration.

Nyariki (2013) asserts reconfiguration referring to the transformation and recombination of assets and resources, such as the consolidation of manufacturing resources often occurring as a result of an acquisition. Leveraging refers to the replication of a process or system that is operating in one area of a firm into another area, or extending a resource by deploying it into a new domain, for instance applying an existing brand to a new set of products; hence as a dynamic capability, learning allows tasks to be performed more effectively and efficiently, often as an outcome of experimentation, and permits reflection on failure and success. Finally, integration refers to the ability of the firm to integrate and coordinate its assets and resources, resulting in the emergence of a new resource base. The dynamic capabilities reflect on the firm's ability to achieve new and innovative forms of competitive advantage given path dependencies and market positions. The dynamic capabilities enable the firm to continuously renew its operational capabilities and hence sustaining its performance in the long term (Tesot, 2012). The dynamic capabilities theory is important to this study because any kind of organization must be in a position to identify the opportunities and threats in their environment, seize these opportunities and maintain competitiveness in light of the changing business environment; hence, the variables of the study; Strategic Planning Practice, Strategic Innovations Practice, Strategic Leadership Practice and Strategic Evaluation Practice is covered under dynamic capabilities theory.

Resource Dependency Theory

The resource dependence theory was postulated by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978. Organizational success in resource dependency theory is defined as organizations maximizing their power (Pfeffer 1981). Research on the bases of power within

organizations began as early as Weber (1947) and included much of the early work conducted by social exchange theorists and political scientists. Generalization of power-based arguments from intra-organizational relations to relations between organizations began as early as Selznick (1949). Resource Dependency Theory characterizes the links among organizations as a set of power relations based on exchange resources.

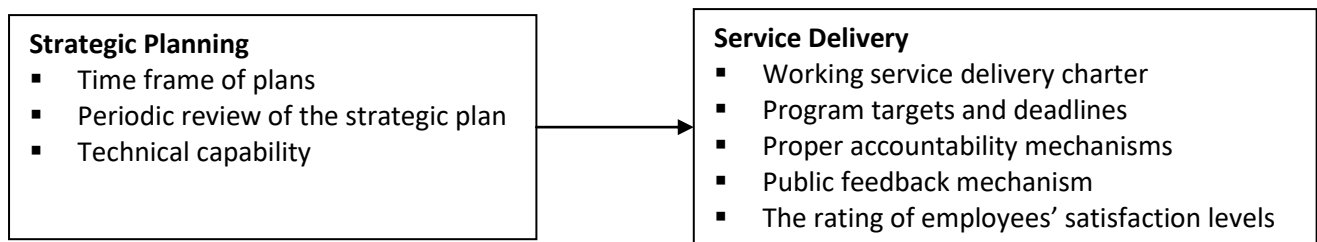
Resource Dependency Theory proposes that actors lacking in essential resources will seek to establish relationships with others in order to obtain needed resources. Also, organizations attempt to alter their dependence relationships by minimizing their own dependence or by increasing the dependence of other organizations on them. Within this perspective, organizations are viewed as coalitions altering their structure and patterns of behavior to acquire and maintain needed external resources. Acquiring the external resources needed by an organization comes by decreasing the organization's dependence on others and/or by increasing other's dependency on it, that is, modifying an organization's power with other organizations. Although Resource Dependency Theory was originally formulated to discuss relationships between organizations, the theory is applicable to relationships among units within organizations. Resource Dependency Theory is consistent with ecological and institutional theories of organizations where organizations are seen as persistent structures of order under constant reinterpretation and negotiation, interacting with an indeterminate environment of turbulence and a multitude of competing interests.

Resource dependence theory has implications regarding the optimal divisional structure of organizations, recruitment of board members and employees, production strategies, contract structure, external organizational links, and many

other aspects of organizational strategy. The theory argues that organizations depend on resources, these resources ultimately originate from an organization's environment, the environment, to a considerable extent, contains other organizations, the resources one organization needs are thus often in the hand of other organizations, resources are a basis of power, legally independent organizations can therefore depend on each other and power and resource dependence are directly linked. Organizations depend on multidimensional resources: labor, capital and raw material. Organizations may not be able to come out with countervailing initiatives for all these multiple resources. Hence organization should move through the principle of criticality and principle of scarcity. Critical resources are those the organization must have to function. An organization may adopt various countervailing strategies like associating with more suppliers, or integrate vertically or horizontally. Resource dependence concerns more than the external organizations that provide, distribute, finance, and compete with a firm.

Although executive decisions have more individual weight than non-executive decisions, in aggregate the latter have greater organizational impact. Managers throughout the organization understand their success is tied to customer demand. Managers' careers thrive when customer demand expands. Thus customers are the ultimate resource on which companies depend. Although this seems obvious in terms of revenue, it is actually organizational incentives that make management see customers as a resource. Organizations have to find ways on how to improve the services of the organizations towards the customers since customers are the resources relied on by the organization especially supply of water to clients. Organizations have to work on strategies; planning, innovations, leadership and evaluations in order to satisfy the clients.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Review of study variable

Strategic Planning Practice and Service Delivery

Strategic planning is an organization management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources to strengthen operations. Strategic planning involves identification of most important options towards the realization of a practical vision (Bryson, 2015). A strategy is seen as the approach to be used step by step by an organization to most effectively accomplish its mission towards a practical vision. It is a set of procedures and tools designed to help leaders, managers and planners think and act strategically. In this study, strategic planning shall be measured by Timely planning, Organizational control systems, Organizational competitive advantage and Organizational resource utilization.

Strategic planning is a process not done as a once off activity but as a continuous process. It helps stakeholders in an organization or a project determine what they intend to accomplish in a specified period of time (Barry, 2015). This ensures that employees and other stakeholders are working towards common goals that have established agreement around intended outcomes or results, assess and adjust the organizations direction in response to actions that shape and guide what an organization serves, what it does and why it does it, while focusing on the future (BSSI,2014). Strategic planning thus enhances target attainment and thus service delivery, for example, UN Agencies (UNA) drives focus through its engagement acceptance

Dependent Variable

process which is also a central component of the organization risk management system. The process ensures that the organization only accepts projects that emphasize their strategic plan. Specifically, this assessment checks that new projects offer effective contributions to national capacity development and incorporate the three dimensions of sustainability, which are; sustainable project management, sustainable infrastructure and sustainable procurement. A case in point is where they ensure that all projects are screened and approved using minimum sustainability standards with higher sustainability targets negotiated wherever possible.

It should be noted that strategic planning is not given the weight it deserves as an important aspect for ensuring transforming the lives of the people (Paul, 2015). In the study of sustainability in India, it rated the strategic planning in local government as moderately low primarily due to uncertainty; regarding factors such as failure to get continuous support. It is important to note that the details of the strategy must be based on the whole spectrum of environmental, social and political conditions. It was noted that performance strategy created during the design phase with its complement of completion indicators are more than the norm in development projects around the world (IFAD, 2012). According to Schilder (2013), successful efforts, involve stakeholders support. Strategic plan development requires consideration and articulation of values and priorities; the plan should

reflect views expressed by all those involved in the process.

According to Mulwa (2010), strategic planning concerns itself with vision, mission, goals and values of the organization, which the organization will serve, organization role in the community further concerned with resources needed – people, money expertise, relationships and facilities. Bryson (2015) observed that strategic planning is a technical approach that is, the planning team should be hybrid so that there is some assurance that both political and technical concerns are addressed. It fuses planning and decision making. County governments in Kenya face various challenges especially related to strategic planning. For instance, there is evidence that there are no satisfactory resources availed to complete the necessary internal and external oversight and audits that are in county governments legislation (GoK, 2015). Second there is no guarantee that ordinary counties will be fully knowledgeable and able to act effectively in developing plans for effective service delivery. Thirdly the county government programs are subject to cumbersome processes of coordination with other government agencies opening a loop hole for fraud and corruption. This is especially significant against broader efforts to decentralization.

Further it will be necessary to develop procedures for effective cost planning in support of project implementation as it is necessary to address the politicized nature of the County funds, in order to ensure project completion regardless of electoral results. In the prevailing scenarios County funds are dispersed to various projects without due reference to neither Strategic plans nor the time frame of the project. Nyandemo (2010) argues that the repairs maintenance, rehabilitations are given equal chances like a planned and approved project depending on the political environment and availability of funds therefore. There is need to consider the influence of a Strategic plan to further funding. This is not given attention it deserves before discernment of the funds, therefore

significantly affects the completion of the project. The researcher suggests that strategic planning as an approach should be leveraged upon to enhance sustainability in project management since much of its benefits can be attested for.

A significant number of recent investigations suggest that an efficient and effective strategic planning system can enhance service delivery. On the average, organizations that plan outperform those that do not. In one of such studies by Rhyme (2013) on influence of strategic planning systems on financial performance, it can be concluded; organizations with strategic planning systems more closely resembling strategic management theory were found to “exhibit superior long-term financial performance both relative to their industry and absolute terms”.

The major studies of strategic management carried out in Nigeria by Oyedijo and Akinlabi (2004 & 2008) found support for the strategic planning and corporate performance hypothesis. For instance, their studies revealed that SMEs corporate financial performance tends to increase with a unit increase in the level of practice of strategic planning. The higher the overall level of strategic management practice by SMEs, the higher the financial performance of the SMEs expressed in terms of earnings per share, profit before tax, return on capital employed, net asset, current or working capital ratio, increase in relative market share, continuing addition of new products and products lines, and total deposits. For all the financial performance indicators used, performance tended to increase significantly as the level (or degree of sophistication) of strategic management increased.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research survey design was therefore used to determine an association between the conceptualized independent and dependent variables as shown in the study’s conceptual model. Target population encompassed all departments with focusing to staff that were directly linked to departmental decision making. The study target

was 51 respondents from 4 departments under study. These departments included Human Resource, IT, Finance and Inspectorate. The sampling frame of this study comprised of all 51 staff members. Samples refer to subsets or small parts of the total number that could be studied (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). Sampling frame provided a list containing items from which a sample is drawn (Kothar, 2004); hence, current study used purposive sample technique and made a survey on the whole population of 51 employees in the department of County Government of Kakamega; Kenya since it was manageable. Primary data was collected by means of self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires had structured questions. These questionnaires were structured and designed in multiple choice formats.

Data collected from the field was coded, cleaned, tabulated and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of specialized Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). version 24 software. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages as well as measures of central tendency (means) and dispersion (standard deviation) was used. Data was also organized into graphs and tables for easy reference. Further, inferential statistics such as regression and correlation analyses was used to determine both the nature and the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis is usually used together with regression analysis to measure how well the regression line explains the variation of the dependent variable. The linear and multiple regression plus correlation analyses were based on the association between two (or more) variables. SPSS version 24 is the analysis computer software that was used to compute statistical data.

Study conceptualized Regression Model;

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

y = Service Delivery

β_0 = Constant

X_1 = Strategic Planning Practices

$\{\beta_1\}$ = Beta coefficients

ϵ = the error term

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study involved 51 questionnaires being dispatched for data collection, 48 questionnaires were returned completely filled, representing a response rate of 94% which was good for generalizability of the research findings to a wider population.

Descriptive statistics: Strategic Planning Practices on Service Delivery

Strategic Planning variable was used as the first objective which sought to examine the influence of Strategic Planning Practice on Service Delivery in the water department of the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. The agreement ranged from 1 strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree and 5 strongly agree. SDV is the standard deviation.

13.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that formulated strategic plan is recognized by the management which spells out the importance of the strategic plan practices and additional 27.5% of the respondents agreed for similar sentiments. A mean of 3.16 suggested that Strategic Planning Practices is essential on Service Delivery. From the results 15.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that their Strategic plan is often reviewed; hence, implying that the practice has value, while additional 19.6% were undecided having a mean of 3.13. Significant standard deviation implied that some groups were not of the ideas mentioned in the questionnaire.

In regard to division of labour and specialization as concerns the strategic planning, 11.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and 27.4 % agreed and 17.6% undecided. Furthermore, 13.7% strongly and 29.4% agreed that groups have the knowledge and supported that all activities are handled with the strategic plan. Lastly, 19.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that there exist capacity building in the organization. 15.7% of the respondents agreed

with similar sentiments with a mean of 3.32 with significant standard deviation of 1.046. A mean of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 1.169 indicated that not all groups have the idea knowledge of capacity building

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

There is significant linear relation between independent and dependent variables as well as among independent variables themselves. The results indicated that the relationship between Strategic Planning Practices and Service Delivery was positive and significant ($R=0.511$, $P=.0000$). This implied that the Strategic Planning Practices influences Service Delivery.

From the results, the model summary showed that $R^2 = 0.607$; implying that 60.7% variations in the service delivery in the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya is explained by strategic planning while other factors not in the study model accounted for 39.3% of variation in service delivery in the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. Further, coefficient analysis showed that Strategic Planning has positive significant influence on Service Delivery of the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya ($\beta = 0.218$ (0.073); at $p < .01$). This implied that a single improvement in effective strategic planning will lead to 0.28 unit increase in the Service Delivery in the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. Therefore, the linear regression equation was;

$$(i) y = 0.506 + 0.218X_1$$

Where; Y = Service Delivery, X_1 = Strategic Planning

Study hypothesis (H_{01}) stated that Strategic Management does not significantly influence Service Delivery in the County Government of Kakamega ; Kenya. However, regression results indicated that strategic planning significantly influence Service Delivery in the County Government of Kakamega ($\beta = 0.919$ (0.218) at $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis one was therefore rejected. The results indicated that that a single

improvement in effective strategic planning would lead to 0.218 unit increase in the Service Delivery in the County Government of Kakamega ; Kenya.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the Strategic Planning on Service Delivery in Water Department of the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya. The study sought to test the null hypothesis which was; there is no significant relationship between Strategic Planning and Service Delivery. It was implied that some of the respondents were undecided on various statements related to Strategic Planning. The statements had different conclusions. Multiple linear regression results using un-standardized beta coefficients showed that there exists a positive and significant influence of Strategic Planning on Service Delivery. This implied that when other variables in the model are controlled, a unit change in Strategic Planning would result to significant change in Service Delivery in the same direction. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected as Strategic Planning has significant influence on Service Delivery.

The findings of this study indicated that Strategic Planning has significant influence on Service Delivery. Therefore, from the study, it can be concluded that Strategic Planning influences Service Delivery in the water Department of the County Government of Kakamega. Improvement in Strategic Planning would result to increase Service Delivery.

Since most of respondents were in favour of strategic Planning Practice, the study recommended that there is need for increased training and knowhow of what strategic planning is on the service delivery in the Water Department of the County Government of Kakamega; Kenya, since the practice is positively significant to the service delivery.

Areas for further research

This study sought to establish influence of Strategic planning Practices on the Service Delivery in the Water Department of the County Government of

Kakamega; Kenya. However, there is need for further studies to consider other constituencies in Kenya so as to have great contribution to the economy in terms of Service Delivery as concerns water which is essential to the communities.

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