



The LEGAL MARKETING MIX

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The LEGAL MARKETING MIX: AN INTRODUCTION



We identified three main marketing activity categories:

ONE

Content
Development

TWO

Relationship
Building

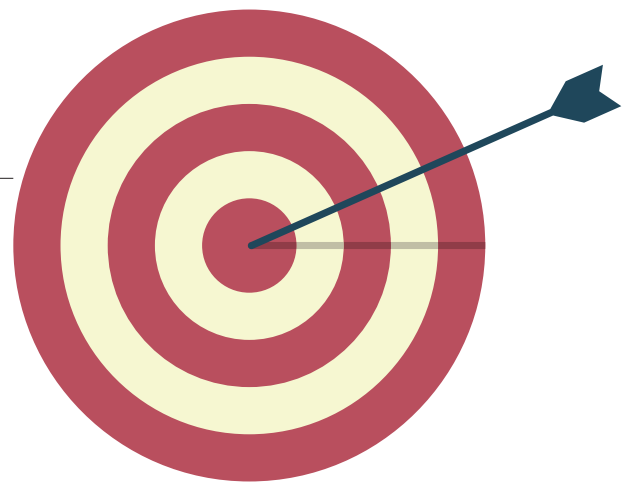
THREE

Contact
Management

We now turn our attention to the purpose of these activities and the necessary steps to build an effective marketing mix.

WHAT IS A MARKETING MIX?

Google defines a marketing mix as “a combination of factors that can be controlled by a company to influence consumers to purchase its products”. Adapting the definition to legal marketing, it would read as follows:



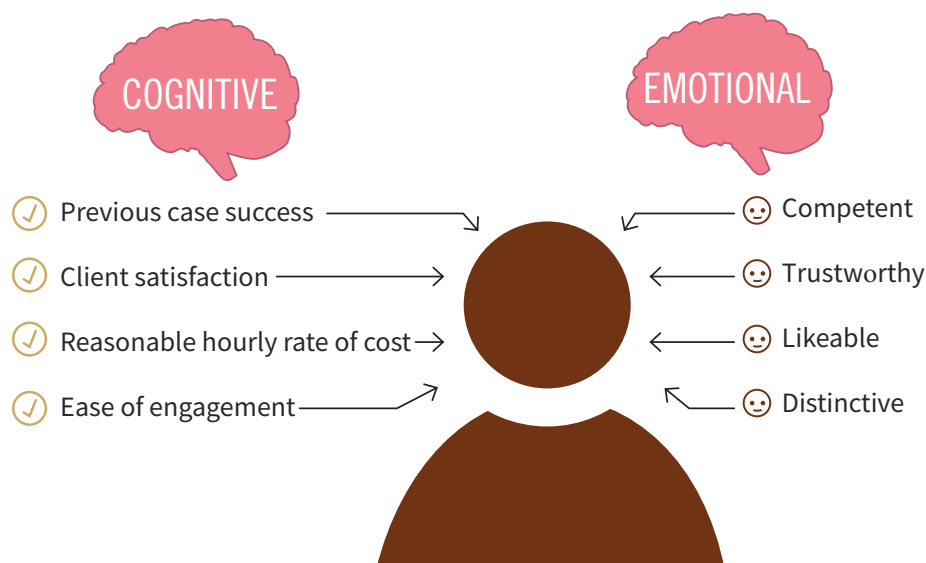
a combination of factors that can be
controlled by a firm or lawyer to influence
clients to purchase its services.

● Purpose

The purpose of the marketing mix is to build and preserve a valuable differentiating brand image. The brand image is an intangible asset that attaches to the firm or an attorney and has a significant impact on their reputation, at least within the targeted market segment and preferably the entire market. The activities that make up the marketing mix are aimed at raising awareness, increasing interest, and building trust. It is important to understand that a brand is built over the long term and requires a consistent financial investment.

Understanding
how clients buy
legal services

How Clients Buy Legal Services



After identifying the need for legal assistance, prospective clients will make their decision using the same twofold stimulus and evaluation process that any consumer engages in when making a decision. A stimulus is considered any activity or attribute that affects a potential client's buying-decision process. In the case of attorneys, the stimulus could be a notable track record, a recently won case, a blog piece, a presentation at an industry event etc.

Next, the evaluation of possibilities occurs and includes a cognitive and an emotional (affective) component. Examples of cognitive elements include rational evaluations like success with previous cases, proof of client satisfaction, hourly rate or cost, ease of engagement, and other factors. Emotional elements revolve around the brand image. To a certain degree, these emotional evaluations are processed subconsciously and have a significant impact on the outcome of the decision-making process.

Many potential clients do not have the level of legal knowledge to make a hiring decision solely based on rational evaluations. Therefore, the brand that a law firm or attorney builds with their individual marketing mix can have a significant impact on origination success.

Achieving a true ROI (Return on Investment)

The development and implementation of the marketing mix require a considerable time investment. Successes are typically not measurable right away. To fully understand the value of this practice, we recommend considering the marketing mix as a platform that evokes continuous emotional engagement with the attorney's or law firm's brand.

A well-designed planning process will include exercises to help an attorney or a firm

identify the right mix of activities to build their brand. As brand value builds and the marketing platform is perfected, a true return on investment is realized. In other words, with growing brand equity, the marketing output, which we will define as new clients and revenue, will exponentially increase compared to the continuous marketing inputs (dollars and time).

It is therefore important for lawyers to understand that clients define the value of an attorney's legal services rationally via cognitive reasoning and irrationally via emotional engagement. A marketing mix aims at shaping the clients' subjective preferences in favor of the affected attorney or law firm. Eventually, an effective process for building brand equity will deliver a significant return on investment.

The Marketing Mix: LAW FIRM WEBSITES

As we delve into the various parts of a law firm's marketing mix, a law firm's website is an important component. Here, we discuss the purpose of a law firm website, along with the essential elements of creating a website.



Most attorneys have the opinion that if they do good work, clients will come. We often hear attorneys say, “no one ever sent me a case based on a website.” Progressive firms understand that a website is a gateway to a law firm, the heart of a firm's online presence. These firms have witnessed the powerful results that come with having a strong website.

● Purpose

Sure; a lot of business is generated from doing good work and getting referrals. However, these client prospects will undoubtedly review a firm's website and attorney profiles for further verification of credentials. A strong website highlights the firm's capabilities, builds credibility in the firm's areas of practice, and reaches the targeted audience with the right content.

The quality of a website is driven by content and design. A nice-looking website with weak content is fun to look at once, but not worth revisiting. Equally ineffective is a website with great content that is difficult to access. Through our experience, we have found law firms are able to create a visually appealing website that is also worth revisiting by following the tips below.

● How to do it

Before jumping into the creation of the website, preparation is crucial. We have discussed the preparation steps in detail in our post "Streamlined Website Building Saves Time, Money and Frustration". Most importantly, a law firm should seriously consider the following elements in the website development process:

ONE

Content
Development

TWO

Designer
Selection

THREE

Ongoing
support and
maintenance

ONE

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Most lawyers consider content development as being difficult and design as being easy. This is because content relies on non-billable investments of time from individual lawyers and firm management processes. The website development process is more successful when firms prioritize and plan the content BEFORE hiring a web designer or discussing graphics and design.

Content is the foundation of the website from which other marketing initiatives grow. It is why visitors stay on a website and revisit the site again and again. In developing content for the website, law firms must consider the targeted visitor. What does a potential client want and need to read to confirm their decision to hire your law firm? Does the firm show that it understands the legal issues that clients are facing?

The firm's content development needs to extend beyond bios, service descriptions, and other relatively static information that has minimal value once it is read. Dynamic content includes articles, eBooks, infographics, case updates, videos and other forms of content that is continually added to the website. Strong content can not only increase your firm's web traffic, but it can educate your audience and position the firm as an authority in its various practice areas.

Completing the Website Plan Document like the one shown in the example below can help law firms save much time and frustration in developing their website.

WEBSITE PLAN DOCUMENT

CONTENT	DESIGN	LOOK
<p>This part of the document should include an extensive content overview. Content is gathered based on knowledge of the firm in relation to the typical law firm web site build.</p> <p>Home Page Navigation bar, logo, mission statement(s)</p> <p>Firm Overview Mission, values, history, culture, philosophy</p> <p>Practice Area Descriptions Approach, successes service levels, experience</p> <p>Attorney Profiles Picture, bio, practice areas, organizational memberships, career successes</p> <p>Office Information Location, address, map, contact information</p>	<p>This part of the document covers the design. At this point, the focus is on on layout and functionality. It is important to discuss the inclusion or exclusion of the following items on the web pages:</p> <p>Testimonials, Representative Clients List client names? Which ones?</p> <p>Blog Firm blog? Practice area blogs?</p> <p>Media Page What media or news files can you upload? How often and who will update this?</p> <p>Recruiting</p> <p>CTAs & online forms</p> <p>Live chat & pop-ups</p> <p>Sitemap</p>	<p>Additionally, the firm should provide insights on their ideas concerning the look of the website, including the following details:</p> <p>Logo</p> <p>Firm colors, fonts</p> <p>Graphics Photos and artwork</p>

The design is often oversimplified and evaluated based on the visual appeal of the site. Much more than the way a site looks, design includes functionality, topic clustering, load times, ease of use, mobile display, consistency, coordinated landing pages that inform but not distract, analytics, and adequate opportunities for direct engagement

TWO

WEB DESIGNER SELECTION

The design of the website is typically an outsourced function. Much more than the way a site looks, design includes a website's functionality, load times, ease of use, mobile display, consistency, coordinated landing pages that inform but not distract, and adequate opportunities for direct engagement.

Web designers come in many forms. Some are marketing firms who have a web design person and some are firms that only do web design. Law firms often assume that their web design firm has all the requisite capabilities to effectively communicate a firm's brand through a website.

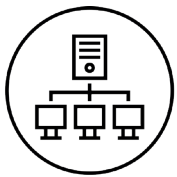
However, experience has shown us that that most web design firms are only good at a few of the elements but must offer a comprehensive approach to compete. Prior to hiring a web designer, we strongly recommend learning how to buy these services. Understanding the disciplines and capabilities necessary for a successful project and then hiring a web-designer based on these needs is strongly recommended.

Equally important is for your web designer to understand legal marketing and its challenges. They should recognize a firm's state ethics rules which can affect how a firm markets their practice.

THREE

ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

Once a law firm has invested in the development of a new website, it should have the tools in place to keep it relevant.



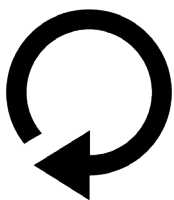
Hosting

A law firm cannot afford to have a website hosting solutions that is slow, unreliable or vulnerable to security breaches. Ask for recommendations from you web designer and from other law firms. Select the web hosting provider that has the customer support level, security, reputation and price point to fit your law firm's needs.



Search engine optimization

After putting the time and effort into creating a website, you want to make sure it targets the audience you want. Make sure that the hired designer handles both design and search engine optimization.



Updates and Editing

Updating a website has come a long way in the past decade. At one time, a web developer was needed to make even minor punctuation changes. With content management systems now like WordPress, minimal technical experience is needed to update a website. Make sure that your web developer creates a website that allows easy maintenance and edits. Also, ensure that they provide the necessary training on all editing functions.



Sharing knowledge and advice are two tactics for demonstrating competence (cognitive factors) and creating interest (emotional factors) in a lawyer or a firm. Some blog pieces may seek to inform about issues important to a buying decision while others can include insights into a firm or lawyer's approach to solving problems. Blogs are aimed at creating awareness, raising interest levels, and differentiating a lawyer or firm from competitors.

● What to consider

At the outset, a law firm must decide the strategic purpose of a blog. Is the goal to promote a relationship with an individual (lawyer) or a firm (all or a group of lawyers in a firm)? Both approaches are valid, but the content for these blogs is written differently.

Additionally, it is important to consider a blog's targeted audience and concentrate on developing content for that group. In our case, PerformLaw's target audience is anyone interested in law firm performance improvement. Therefore, we develop useful content to attract members of this group. A more targeted blog might be written towards lawyers and law firm management professionals interested in only in marketing performance.

Deciding where a blog is hosted is also important. Some believe that hosting a blog on a private platform drives traffic from a firm's website, while others contend that a separate blogging platform is more credible in the world of search engines.

● How to do it

While PerformLaw has hosted blogs using both approaches, we believe it comes down to content quality and website design.

Similar to website development, blog content development requires an attorney's focus and time, which is an Achilles heel for many. Some firms and lawyers resort to paying for content development. In our view, this is a weaker approach since it misses the chance to communicate what it is like to work with a lawyer or firm.

In certain lower level service areas, paid content might work because the sophistication level of the content is not high or is not necessary. When possible, we recommend original content development. To manage the development of content, an editorial calendar can be a helpful tool. Since allocating non-billable time to content marketing is usually the most difficult part of blogging, a posting schedule can promote more effective time management and help determine post frequency. A weekly posting schedule is optimal, although, difficult for any one person to maintain.

While content creation is essential to running a quality blog, a support system that includes graphics expertise, editing, SEO coding, and social sharing is required. A firm can choose to develop in-house competence or outsource these functions.

Once a content development and management system are established and blog posts are created, it is important to consider author credit for SEO and branding purposes. When considering attribution credit, we recommend consideration of the strategic objectives of each post. In many law firms, this is a struggle. Firm management is rightly concerned with building a firm brand, but an individual needs a strong personal brand to attract work. *We believe that there is ample room to promote the firm and the individual lawyers.*

A well-written blog is kept current, uses search engine friendly words and language that potential clients can easily understand. The focus should be common client questions, interesting sharable casework, information or comments on recent legal developments, and important considerations for those faced with similar issues.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the last decade, social media has emerged as a powerful way to share information and virtually connect with other individuals and organizations. Businesses have realized that connecting with their customers through social media channels presents an effective marketing opportunity by sharing information, news and exchanging thoughts and opinions. Given the confidential nature of the legal relationship, it is sometimes a challenge to engage on social media, but when appropriate, social media are an effective tool.

● Purpose

Social media raises awareness, increases credibility and trust, and builds an online promoter network. Additionally, the platforms are relatively inexpensive to share content and communicate with a large audience.

There are numerous ways for potential clients to learn about a law firm, and the internet has been a great help to firms. Whether prospects use a search engine to find attorneys or law firms, see a law firm ad, meet an attorney at an event, or come from a referral source, it is more than likely, that they will review online profiles to inform themselves.

● What to consider

Social media profiles, especially LinkedIn, provide additional information in a more personal manner, which can increase the initial level of trust and positively impact a prospect's attitude towards the attorney. Furthermore, an attorney can connect with prospects, clients and referral sources to increase the likelihood of continuous contact. If an attorney decides to consistently post or share articles from their blog, connections see that activity on their newsfeed and stay aware of the lawyer's profile.

Social media profiles that are transparent and consistent with the website and other online profiles build a certain level of trust and can significantly enrich an attorney's online appearance. For example, a potential client meets an attorney at a conference and later becomes curious or wants to establish a connection. The obvious next step is to search for a profile online.

It is much more effective when prospective contacts can also find a LinkedIn profile in addition to a website bio; LinkedIn is a more personal profile that can provide additional information, and allows for an instant connection.

Besides creating a complete and informative profile on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter, remaining relevant requires connecting with others and sharing content, to stay relevant. For that purpose, we recommend keeping to a posting schedule, keeping your profile up to date, and spending the time to connect with new contacts.

● How to do it

Choosing a platform or platforms is step one. For lawyers and firms who mainly serve business clients, LinkedIn is highly recommended. The use of Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and others should be guided by the relevance to the practice area and the client type.

Corporate clients and other organizations in most cases have LinkedIn profiles, and so do their employees, which makes this platform most suitable for them. For consumer-oriented practice areas, the use of Facebook, Twitter and other sites (Pinterest, online garage site) can compliment your LinkedIn presence since clients put more emphasis on online research and are more active on these networks.

For differentiation purposes (most social media sites provide instructions for profile enhancement), complete and robust profiles work the best. Once a profile is created, it is important to continuously connect with contacts, especially in the case of LinkedIn. As a network of contacts and followers is built, posting consistently is necessary to stay present on the audience's newsfeed and maintain awareness among your connections.

Typical posts include original blog articles, relevant articles by other authors, and news updates from the law firm, the attorney's practice area or the target clients' industry. Commenting enhances credibility among a target audience. By setting a posting schedule, for example, once per week, you can make sure you stay active in your social media channel(s)

MORE CHANNELS TO CONSIDER FOR A LAW FIRM'S MARKETING MIX



Having discussed what a marketing mix is and why it is important for each law firm to develop their own mix, we continue to discuss the various elements involved in building a firm's brand equity. Next, we discuss the purpose of and details involved in considering the following marketing channels into a firm's mix:

Advertising

Speaking engagements

Article publishing

Newsletters



Advertising

Advertising is a more direct approach to reach prospects and create interest among the target audience.



Speaking engagements

Speaking engagements are for sharing knowledge and to build credibility and expert perception.



Article publishing

Articles are targeted at a more specific audience and offer more subject matter depth and lasting value.



Newsletters

With newsletters, law firms can push information directly to target audiences, grow contacts and maintain visibility.

ADVERTISING

● Purpose

Advertising is used to raise awareness and interest among a broad audience. Advertising is either used to establish a brand image or as a direct call-to-action for the target segment.

● What to consider

Advertising is done with traditional media including TV, radio, print, billboards, and online sites. Online legal advertisement focuses mainly on social media advertising and search engine pay-per-click. Advertising is a more direct approach to reach prospects and create interest among the target audience than other content marketing tools like blogs, newsletters and presentations.

As is also a costlier approach, it is important to determine at the outset if advertising is a viable tool to market a specific practice area. For example, consumer-oriented areas like personal injury, estate planning or family law can use advertising strategies more effectively than corporate law or insurance defense firms.

● How to do it

The development of creative content for advertisements like TV or radio spots, billboards and brochures almost always requires a collaboration with a marketing or advertising agency. Since there are considerable investments connected with traditional media advertising, law firms should rely on advertising professionals when it comes to the creative work.

Law firm online advertising is mostly done via pay-per-click campaigns. Search engine advertising tools like Google's AdWords can be implemented without professional help, but it can take time and outsourcing my work better. It is important to realize that the goal of these campaigns is to lead prospects to a website, which necessitates quality landing pages and CTAs (calls to action). If in-house capabilities are weak, implementing this strategy will require support from an outside web designer or marketing consultant.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

● Purpose

Speaking engagements are scheduled to share knowledge and give advice. For marketing purposes, they serve as a tool to build credibility and expert perception.

● What to consider

The point of preparing and delivering a presentation at a seminar or CLE is to educate people. Whether the audience consists of industry peers or the client target market, the goal is to demonstrate expertise in a specific field and to subject your knowledge to public accountability. Unlike a blog, however, a speaking engagement is presented in person and therefore provides the opportunity to network after and make new contacts directly. The presentation can be considered an incentive or subtle call to action for referral sources and contacts.

● How to do it

Presentations can be scheduled as part of an organizational, community, bar or client industry event or specifically for a targeted organization or group of prospects. The most important step is to find a relevant topic and prepare valuable content. Additionally, take care to pay attention to logistical details including location, presentation support tools, and availability of promotional materials and gifts. Lastly, communicate the upcoming presentation to the target audience through relevant websites (firm and sponsoring organization), social media, and emails to contacts.

ARTICLE PUBLISHING

● Purpose

Similar to speaking engagements, published articles increase visibility, establish expertise and add to a lawyer or firm's reputation. Unlike blogs, they are targeted at a more specific audience and offer more subject matter depth and lasting value.

● What to consider

Preparation for and writing an article requires a significant time investment. We recommend attorneys to strategically consider the potential value of an in-depth article on a topic. Will this published article effectively reach a targeted audience? Along with the time needed to author an article, the support needs of preparing the content should be considered. Will the help of another paralegal or another attorney be needed? Finally, firms should consider the various ways an article's content can be repurposed as part of a newsletter, white papers, and blog pieces.

● How to do it

Often, professional and trade journals will ask for submissions and provide guidelines as to topic and length. Many trade magazines are content starved and an offer of a quality article is typically well received. Bar Journals may pose a tougher challenge.

Sometimes, a pitch is required. In these instances, a public relations professional can prove very helpful. While the submission guidelines will rule, the ideal range of an article is usually between 1000 and 1500 words.

HOW RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTIVITIES FIT INTO A LAW FIRM'S Marketing Mix



In this final selection about the various elements that make up a law firm's marketing mix, we discuss the following marketing channels:

Organizational Membership

Entertainment

Event Attendance

Contact Management System

ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

● Purpose

Becoming a member of an organization is a great way for a lawyer to build a network, strengthen relationships, raise awareness and build a reputation. A good organization will promote comradery and referral source development.

● What to consider

For business purposes, choosing an organization requires a strategic evaluation of the various ways a lawyer can spend their precious little available non-billable time. Joining organizations and not participating is mostly useless, so carefully considering time commitments that accompany membership is important.

Bar association memberships, for example, can help with referrals from other lawyers but require time and energy to develop relationships. Client industry organizations and other groups that include a significant share of the attorney's target audience can present a large opportunity to connect with prospective clients. Strategically considering the reach of an organization helps maximize time invested.

At times, a competitor or group of competitors may already dominate an organization. Depending on age and career level, another organization may provide better opportunities.

● How to do it

When researching organizations to join, an attorney should consider interest level and potential impact on business generation. It is beneficial if an attorney has a strong professional interest in an organization and it can potentially lead to key new business relationships. Sometimes, the right organization is not fun or professionally interesting. When this occurs, it may not be worth it since it will be a challenge to participate.

While requiring a significant time investment, attorneys receive the most benefits when they can ascent to a leadership position. It has been our experience that two or three organizational commitments are about all a typical lawyer can effectively handle. It is better to reduce the number of memberships in favor of a concentrated effort on the most valuable organizations.

EVENT ATTENDANCE

● Purpose

Trade shows, client industry conferences, and meetings or legal conventions can expand referral networks, afford potential client contact opportunities, and support reputation development through in-person contact.

● What to consider

When researching event attendance, attorneys should evaluate several key factors including:

- Which industries and professions are the ideal clients according to the attorney's client definition (READ: *5 Steps for Marketing Planning* blog post)?
- What geographic areas can the attorney serve?
- Who are the decision-makers and do they attend the events under consideration?
- Is it probable that valuable connections will occur at the event?
- Are there speaking opportunities available?
- Are there organized networking events planned?
- Feedback from previous attendees (information from other attorneys on the quality of the event and ability to make connections)?

● How to do it

Once events are selected, the next step is to prepare a budget expressed regarding money and time. The budget will necessitate a process that considers all planned activities associated with the event and a contingent budget for spontaneous activities. Events can offer good opportunities to see many contacts at once, so group dinners and other events may work, but remember to get invitations out early.

If the firm decides to do an exhibit in addition to attending the event, external event planning support is needed to supply the necessary materials and logistics. Firms who send groups of lawyers to the same events can improve effectiveness by coordinating attendee activities.

During and after the event, attorneys should follow up with their contacts with a brief email or handwritten note soon after the event. Equally important is for attorneys to feed the information of those contacts in a contact management system (described below). This will increase the likelihood of getting new business since a systematic follow-up procedure has been established.

When attorneys begin with a strategy, planned tactics and goals, the benefits they derive from event attendance will multiply.

ENTERTAINMENT

Purpose

Entertaining contacts is primarily used to build and maintain relationships on a more advanced level than networking, organizational or industry events. Entertainment is typically focused on prospects, clients, referral sources and influencers.

What to consider

Entertainment should focus on relationship building, not on making a sale. While attorneys should be able to competently describe their important services, along with the value they can bring, this type of sales conversation should only happen when the situation feels right.

Since entertainment also requires a time and cost commitment, attorneys should carefully consider the real or potential value of connection. With a strategic schedule and invitation process, entertainment becomes more effective and efficient.

Entertainment is often evaluated based on the dollar cost of an activity. The dollar cost is important, but the allocation of time is more important. Time is either invested or spent. Time invested has a future return. Time spent on ineffective activities has no value.

How to do it

A well-managed contact management system will help identify the most valuable contacts (referral sources and prospects) for business development and their contact history. A contact management system, which is discussed in more detail later, can provide detail of the sphere of influence a contact may have.

Based on this information, attorneys can determine who to entertain and how frequently. Establishing a system saves time and money, and makes it easier to maintain and grow important business relationships.

What Marketing Mix is Right for Your Law Firm?

*Learn more about
PerformLaw's Marketing
Plans and Pricing*

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