



TWEET IT: #GCSOCIAL

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\*A full version of this report is available by request. Contact us at [info@greentarget.net](mailto:info@greentarget.net) to request a full copy.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2010's landmark In-House Counsel New Media Engagement Survey, the first research project of its type in the legal field, affirmed that client-side lawyers were beginning to dip their toes into the social media pool by using new media technologies for both personal and professional reasons. There was a clear generational divide between younger and older counsel in their use of social media tools, but even a year ago both were taking significant advantage of new media resources, especially law firm blogs.

This year's follow-up to that research posed some of the same questions and asked new ones in order to measure how perceptions and behaviors have changed over time.

When distilled, the refreshed survey data fuels some interesting headlines:

- Blogs, Executed Well, Influence Hiring of Outside Counsel:** *Seventy-six percent of respondents say they attribute some level of importance to a lawyer's blog when deciding which firms to retain. Additionally, the percentage of respondents who say a law firm's blog can influence hiring decisions went up slightly, from 50 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2012.*
- Client-Side Counsel Prefer Firm-Branded Blogs:** *Survey respondents indicated they read blogs written by firms slightly more often than they read blogs penned by journalists. In-house counsel also perceive blogs as credible (84%). This perceived credibility, however, is not fueling an increase in daily blog readers, which we explore further in this report.*
- LinkedIn: The 'Serious' Social Network for Lawyers:** *LinkedIn leads all other social networks in professional usage and perceived credibility (88%) but, as of now, domestic law firms aren't taking full advantage of its technological capabilities. In addition, significantly more in-house counsel are using LinkedIn for personal reasons than were doing so in 2010.*
- New Media Usage (Steadily) Going Mainstream:** *The generational divide that fueled the 2010 findings is leveling off. This effect is driven by older counsel consuming more content rather than a significant drop in consumption among younger counsel. While the 2010 survey revealed that blogs were read more consistently across age groups than the "big three" social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter), the 2011 research shows a continuation of this trend plus older counsel reading blogs with even greater frequency.*
- In-House Counsel Largely 'Invisible Users' of Social Media:** *This audience rarely contributes content on social channels, preferring instead to listen and consume. This approach makes their true level of engagement difficult to measure.*

- **Wikipedia Important, But Not to Research Law Firms:** *Very few in-house counsel (7%) are using Wikipedia to research outside firms, but they are using the online encyclopedia for issues-based research (51%).*
- **Firm-to-Client Communications Going Social:** *Whether initiated by inside counsel or by firms themselves, the legal industry is warming up to social media as a client services mechanism at an eight percent year-over-year increase.*

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# ANALYSIS



In 2010, the In-House Counsel New Media Engagement Survey revealed new media, particularly blogs, had been adopted by in-house counsel of all ages, but use of social media tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter skewed to younger in-house attorneys. The results in 2012, by contrast, indicate much wider adoption by in-house lawyers in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, while use by younger attorneys has leveled off. However, you wouldn't notice this change unless you surveyed the community, because they're largely consuming information without commenting or providing content themselves.

## In-House Usage Becoming Mainstream

In-house lawyers are using new forms of media more today than they were 18 months ago when the first survey was conducted. However, the earlier generational gap is tightening; younger counsel are consuming new media at about the same rate overall, while their older peers are engaging more often than before—a shift from the differences in penetration by age group that characterized our earlier study.

We believe in-house counsel had been comparatively slow to adopt social media because the buzz surrounding new forms of media outweighed their real-world utility. In other words, they appeared to think new media was a waste of time.

At a certain point, however, legal users began noting that web-based resources were changing for the better; the tools became more interconnected, and there was more content relevant to the in-house lawyer being produced and filtered. So, as new media technologies have become increasingly useful for business and professional reasons, in-house counsel slowly but steadily have changed their perceptions and continued to increase their use.

The primary utility of social media—at least for this survey's audience—is as an intelligent filter of useful information. Not surprisingly, few in-house lawyers are using new media to generate content; in their roles, they seek to receive content that helps them do their jobs, but many perceive that generating content for people outside their companies will not benefit them and, moreover, may be restricted by company policies that they or others have created. As a result, they generally don't *blog* (or Tweet or Facebook); they *read* blogs (or relevant Tweets or newsworthy Facebook updates). They are relatively invisible users who increasingly consume content via these channels, but give little public indication that they are doing so.

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New media is becoming more like mainstream, traditional media: not so new anymore. Aside from consistent demographic movement towards the middle—LinkedIn use for professional reasons among counsel aged 40 to 60 years, for instance, grew substantially, while usage among their peers aged 30 to 39 stabilized—respondents indicated they read law firm attorney-authored/branded blogs as often, if not slightly more, than they read blogs penned by actual reporters.

## **Survey Background**

The 2012 research, conducted in November and December of 2011, repeats some questions from the 2010 survey and introduces new questions as well. Thus, this report shows how behaviors have changed and uncovers new perceptions that inside counsel hold towards new media.

A total of 334 in-house counsel responded to the survey, more than double the 164 respondents in 2010.

## **Defining the New Media Ecosystem**

This research primarily studies the two primary components of new media: social networks and owned media. It is important for marketers to recognize the difference between the two.

Social networks are now ubiquitous. 53 percent of the United States's population uses Facebook, according to data from [ComScore](#). It states, "Facebook is still the undisputed leader in the U.S. social networking market with 166 million unique visitors in November [2011]. The average user spent 6.6 hours engaged on the site during the month, an increase of 37 percent in the past year." LinkedIn is popular among professionals in North America and among lawyers in particular, with 83 percent of social media-using attorneys maintaining a presence on the platform in 2010, according to the American Bar Association. Twitter has a large volume of content but is not associated with a specific niche.



Owned media is an emerging term that describes content over which companies can exercise a high degree of control. Distinct from advertising, which is paid media, and public relations, which is earned media, owned media describes tools that organizations use to push content to their target audiences, including websites, blogs, email lists, and other content streams. New media technologies allow organizations to create and control content and distribute it to an extensive, yet targeted audience, more efficiently.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The most noteworthy findings, summarized, include:

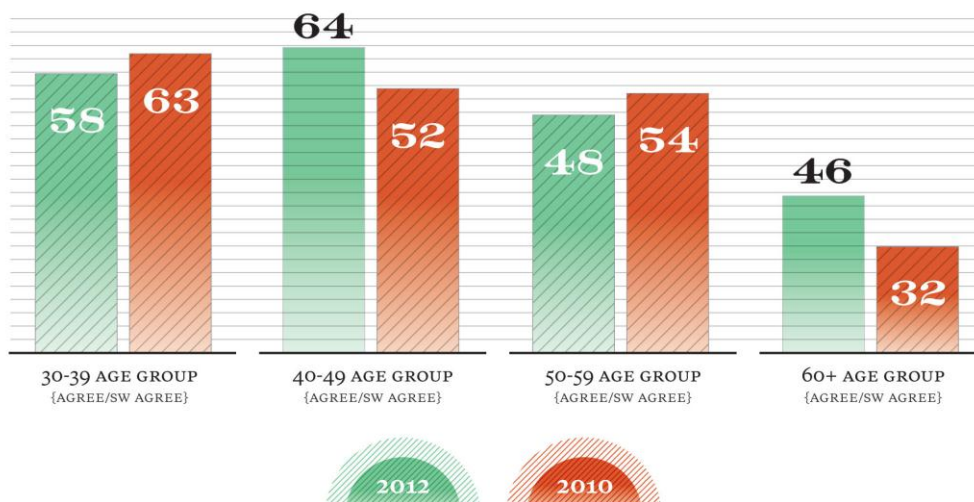
### Prominent blogs influence hiring of outside counsel

Seventy-six percent of respondents say they attribute at least some level of importance to a lawyer's blog when deciding which firms to retain.

Additionally, the percentage of respondents who say they expect a law firm's blog will exert influence on buyers in the future went up slightly, from 50 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2011. The increase was driven by those in their 40's and 60's, with two-thirds of those in their 40's now agreeing with the statement.

#### Future Influence of Law Firm Attorney-Authored Blogs

I ENVISION A FUTURE IN WHICH A LAW FIRM'S PROMINENCE THROUGH A HIGH-PROFILE BLOG WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN INFLUENCING CLIENTS TO HIRE THAT LAW FIRM.



## **Blogs decline in daily readers, increase in weekly and monthly readers**

The percentage of respondents who indicated they were daily readers of blogs for professional reasons dropped from 27 percent in 2010 to 17 percent this year.

However, weekly and monthly readers increased from 20 percent to 26 percent and from 13 percent to 17 percent year over year, respectively. Daily exposure declined, but overall frequency made up for it. The daily decline may well be driven by a reality that legal-industry insiders know very well: lawyers are profoundly busy professionals. As the new becomes the familiar and they have more sources of content from which to choose—both inside and outside the legal market—in-house counsel are becoming much more discerning about the information they consume.

This data influences the ideal content strategy for a law firm's blog: deferring to quality instead of quantity. Since daily readership is less frequent, posts can be more intermittent and still have the same effect, as long as they are highly relevant to in-house lawyers.

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## **Law firm blogs preferred by in-house counsel**

Building on the 2010 survey, respondents indicated that they read firm-branded or attorney-authored blogs slightly more than they read blogs written by professional journalists.

In-house respondents also overwhelmingly view blog content as credible, at a rate of 84 percent, which, given their high usage of blogs, apparently extends to law firm blog content.

In addition, in-house counsel use email alerts to access traditional business, legal, and industry-related (banking, real estate, etc.) media at a high rate. This suggests that a firm can maintain a blog with compelling content and offer email alerts of that content, and in-house counsel will subscribe to those alerts if they are relevant to their business. Firms have the opportunity to become, in the eyes of a majority of in-house attorneys, as relevant as a traditional media operation.

## LinkedIn perceived as the “serious” social network

LinkedIn continues to be the most commonly used social media platform for professional reasons. It perhaps is the most dynamic example of older counsel—those between 40 and 65 years of age—increasing their usage of social media, with the majority of counsel of all ages using LinkedIn at least weekly.



In addition, 88 percent of respondents perceive the content they obtain via their LinkedIn connections as credible, which further supports the efficacy of the platform for professional reasons.

However, according to a recent LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell-commissioned survey, [Global Social Media Check-Up](#), not one of the largest North American law firms is using social integration—the linking of two or more social media platforms—on LinkedIn. Blog posts, for instance, automatically can be syndicated on a LinkedIn page and a Facebook news feed to capture those divergent audiences.

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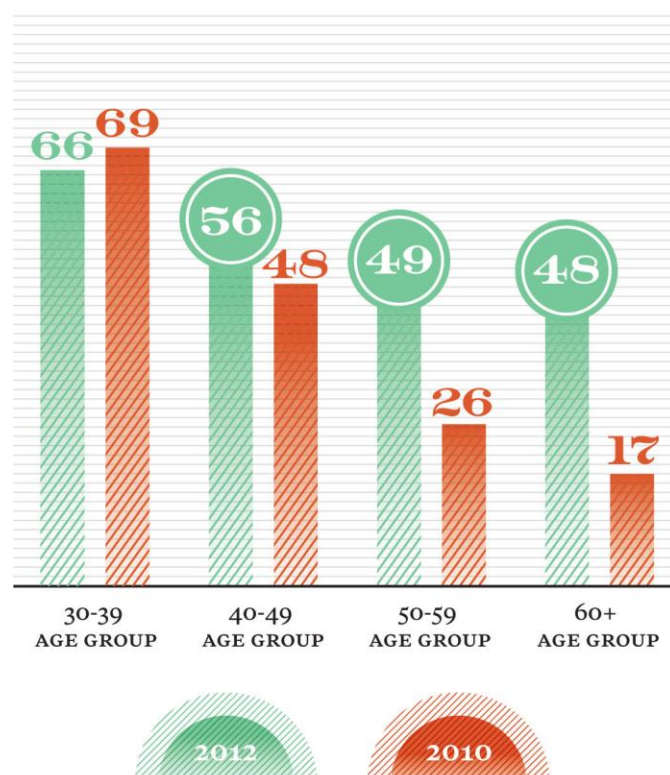
This integration, termed the “semantic web” by those with an affinity for buzzwords, places quality content ahead of all other web priorities, such as collecting connections on social media. Virtually every data point from the survey supports the notion that in-house counsel prefer to use new media to find and consume quality content, and the wide lack of content integration on LinkedIn presents an opportunity to reach in-house lawyers via a medium that they rapidly are embracing.

## **Behavior change: Use of LinkedIn for personal reasons**

There is a notable shift in how respondents are using LinkedIn. Respondents over 40 have increased their usage dramatically, with those over 50 doubling their usage.

This well may reflect a behavioral change because LinkedIn is reaching such critical mass that it is becoming useful for career mobility and generally for staying in touch with important contacts.

### **LinkedIn Usage During Past 24 Hours + Past Week (Personal Reasons)**



## **Lawyers tiptoeing into the social media pool**

Communication between law firms and their clients that takes place on social media platforms is increasing slowly but steadily. In 2010, 26 percent of respondents said they use new media tools to “a small extent” to access content from their outside counsel. This year that measure leaped to 34 percent, while the rate of respondents who are not doing so dropped from 43 percent to 34 percent.

Clearly, more communication between the two is taking place on social media platforms.

## **Wikipedia effectively can credential attorneys, not brand firms**

The percentage of respondents who say they have visited the Wikipedia page of their outside counsel is very small (7%). However, the percentage of respondents who say they regularly use Wikipedia to research issues is much larger (87%).

For law firms, this suggests that investing significant time to exert a high degree of control over a firm's Wikipedia profile is not a good use of time, because in-house counsel are not reading that information.

However, the data supports that Wikipedia may provide law firms an increasingly effective tool by which to credential their lawyers as subject matter experts. By having articles, decisions, opinion columns, background on precedent-setting cases, and similar material featuring firm attorneys cited as references in a Wikipedia entry, firms can showcase the expertise of their attorneys in front of in-house counsel. It is important to note that Wikipedia has very specific rules on how entries are to be edited, and a very active community of editors who do not tolerate the use of Wikipedia as a promotional tool. This further supports the notion that law firms should use Wikipedia to enhance existing articles by adding to the fingerprint of reference material contained within those articles, rather than promoting themselves via firm-focused entries.



## Client-side engagement difficult to measure

Of the strong majority (86%) who say they use new media at all, 68 percent use it to listen exclusively, while just 32 percent say they both listen and engage with others. These ‘invisible users’ largely prefer to consume content without interacting on new media channels.

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This approach is likely because in-house counsel have no particular incentive to generate content, not to mention that many corporate social media policies only allow for centrally-generated content and the broadcast of corporate talking points instead of online engagement.

This datapoint begs questions about measurement. Traditional methodologies for measuring the impact of new media rest largely on evaluating interactive engagement—so-called “social listening” programs that many digital marketing firms hype. Lacking significant interactive engagement in the use of new media tools by in-house lawyers, those programs are unreliable for determining impact. It may be more useful to measure in-house counsel consumption of new media vs. their involvement in two-way conversations.

## Think about the hardware

A high percentage of respondents indicate they use mobile devices—smartphones and tablets—to consume industry news content. Of note, 42 percent of respondents say they use a cell phone for general business media, and 49 percent say they use it for social media. Consumption on tablets for the two groups was 25 percent and 21 percent, respectively. This no doubt will grow as tablet use becomes more ubiquitous.

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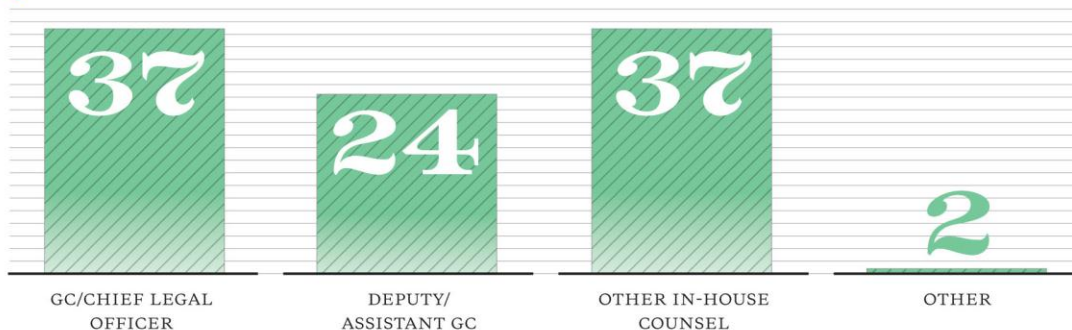
# METHODOLOGY

In November and December 2011, Greentarget Strategic Communications, *InsideCounsel*, and Zeughauser Group distributed the In-House Counsel New Media Engagement Survey via email to a group of corporate counsel across the nation. The results were tabulated, analyzed and released in early 2012.

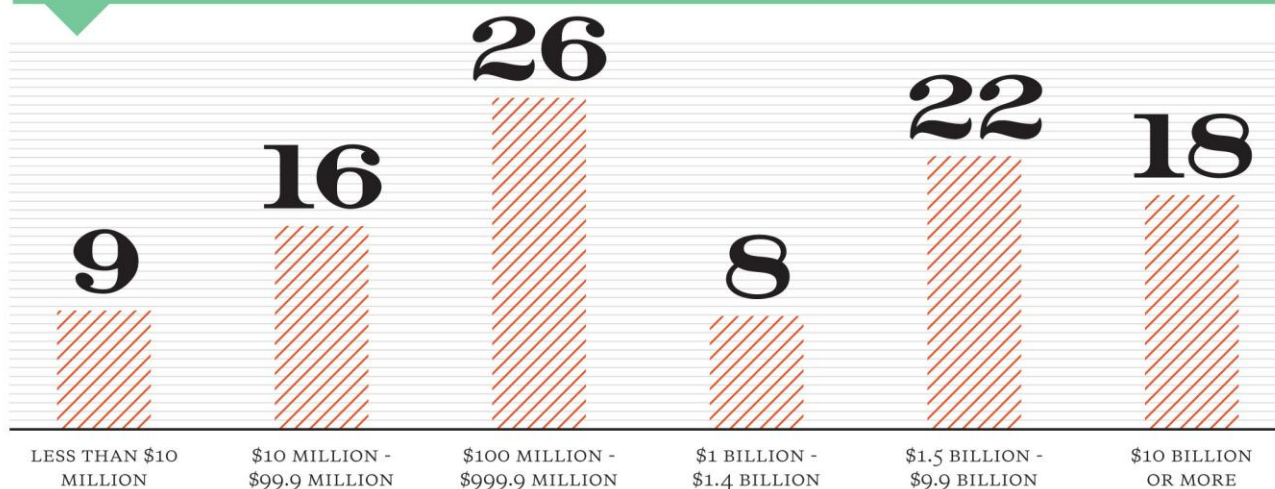
Respondents identified themselves as GCs/Chief Legal Officers, Deputy/Assistant GCs, In-House Counsel, and related titles.

Percentages in certain questions exceed 100 percent because respondents were asked to check all that apply. Due to rounding, all percentages used in all questions may not add up to 100 percent. A few minor edits were made to verbatim responses to correct spelling and verb tense.

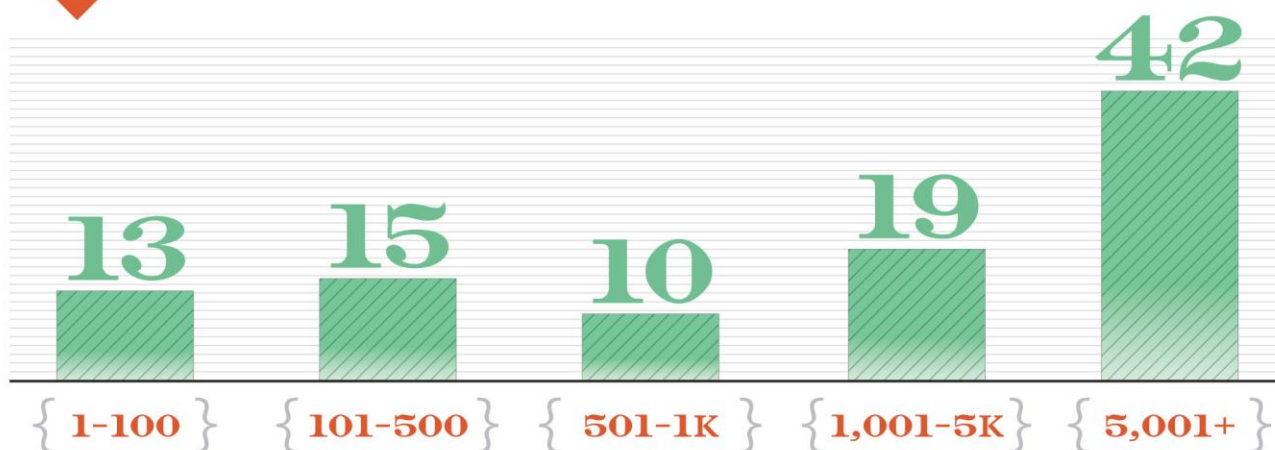
### What Is Your Job Title?



### What Were the FY 2011 Revenues of Your Company?



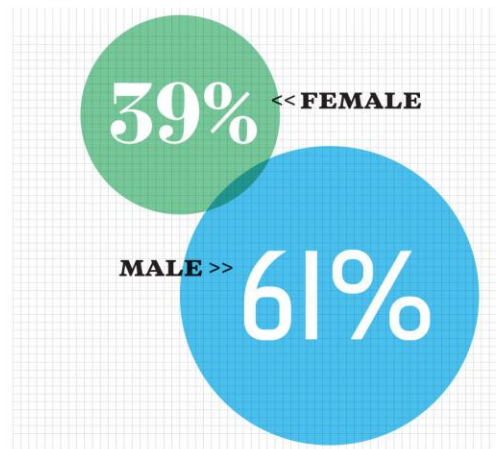
### How Many People Does Your Company Employ?



What Is Your Age?



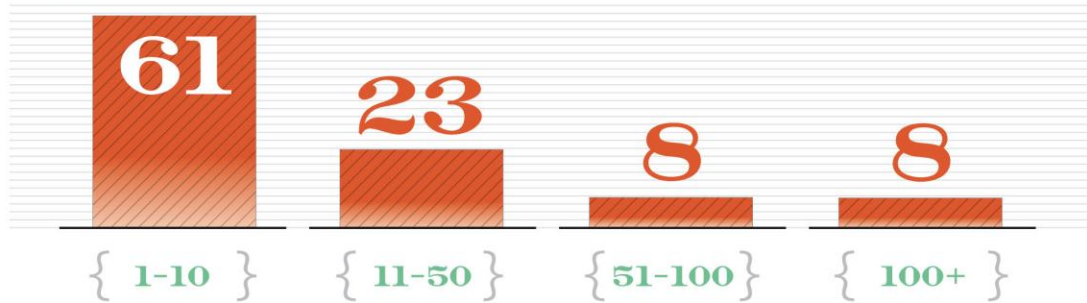
What Is Your Gender?



In Which Range Does Your Company's Annual Budget for Outside Law Firms Fall?



How Many Lawyers Are In Your Company's Legal Department?



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**ABOUT**



## About Greentarget

Greentarget is a strategic communications firm focused exclusively on the communications needs of highly competitive business-to-business organizations. We counsel those who counsel the world's most sophisticated businesses and direct the conversation among their most important audiences to help deepen the relationships that impact the long-term value of their organizations.



## About InsideCounsel

*InsideCounsel* is the premier monthly magazine serving general counsel and other top in-house legal professionals. It is the oldest monthly magazine published exclusively for the in-house community with an editorial mission to provide the strategic tools that general counsel need to better manage their legal departments and fully understand the business risks companies face today.



## About Zeughauser Group

Zeughauser Group is the firm of choice for legal industry leaders seeking to increase competitive advantage and profitability, enhance market position, and strengthen organizational culture.

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