

# Why do employees leave? A study on employee' psychology and its influence on engagement and organizational politics

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## Abstract

In today's VUCA world, companies are trying very hard to increase their overall organizational performance, which can majorly be possible if they are well engaged. It helps in increasing the productivity, as well overall morale of the workforce. However, increased turnover intentions are one of the major problems faced by organizations. This study aims to understand why employees leave and what impact engagement has on the employees' turnover intentions. It shall also consider the role of perceived organizational politics. In order to understand what causes turnover intention in the pharma sector, we made use of a finely structured questionnaire to collect the responses. The respondents are employees from the pharma industry. We used the statistical tests namely, correlation, ANOVA, regression, to understand what influences turnover intentions. Findings: This study will analyze why employees leave and if employee engagement or organizational politics directly relates to turnover intention. Understanding why employees leave will help the management in devising engagement strategies, which would help decrease the overall turnover rate and enhance the employees' job satisfaction levels. Engagement levels within the organization should be assessed by conducting annual surveys. Keeping organizational politics in check will also promote job satisfaction. It is an original study, which currently focuses on the pharma sector. However, this can be applied to others as well.

## Keywords

Employee Engagement, Turnover Intention, Perceived Organizational Politics, Job Satisfaction, Engagement levels

## Imprint

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## 1 Introduction

In today's VUCA and competitive environment, organizations focus on reducing employee turnover intention. When employees quit the organization, the overall morale of the workforce is negatively affected. It also incurs heavy costs. It also affects the performance of the employees. Hence, much focus must be on keeping these employees engaged. The root cause of why employees leave must be explored in depth. To the organization, employees are considered to be a very important asset. If they are kept engaged at regular intervals, it will help improve organizational success [1]. When the employees felt valued at their organization and satisfied with their job, they will relate more to their vision and put more effort into reaching their aims. These employees are more likely to spread the good word about the organization, further strengthening the employer brand and improving its brand visibility. Millennials are always looking for a work-life balance. They prefer working in an environment where the tasks are challenging and support their personal goals. If the work is not satisfying enough, the employee may not put in the necessary effort and hard work and feel constantly disengaged. The employee may spread negativity within the organization, hence decreasing the overall morale. Suppose the employee has not received good feedback in the performance review ratings. In that case, the employee may feel that there occurs some kind of politics in the workplace. Namely, favouritism and nepotism would not value the organization much, resulting in less productive behaviour. Other employees in the organization may also get influenced, causing an overall bad impression of the organization. Unhappy employees usually express their anger and frustration on external forums to stay anonymous, which would hamper the organization's brand image.

It is usually a common belief that employee engagement includes fun activities, interactive media, and

various events. However, it is much more than that. It is associated with growth and innovation. Organizations must not inculcate the one size fits all approach as the expectations of every individual differ. Hence a successful organization is more and more employee-centric. These organizations succeed financially as well. It becomes relatively easier to attract more talent if the focus is on increasing engagement.

Employees keep the organization functioning, and it is important to cater to the employee's needs to remain competitive and even survive. As per the extensive research in pharma, "The variables that affected work fulfilment were found to be salary, merit, advancement, and work requirement. Salary can also be a powerful motivator. If the company guarantees that all of the above-mentioned meet the workers' needs, the workers' output would be excellent, resulting in increased efficiency [2]." HR practices that are more employee-focused help improve the organization's financial performance, along with satisfaction and productivity within the organization. "It leads to creative results in the organization. Every phase of the company, as well as all the staff, should be included in the commitment process [3]."

Employees also decide to leave the organization owing to job satisfaction and pay satisfaction issues [4]. Suppose the employees are dissatisfied with the compensation plan and presume that the system is unfair. In that case, they will reduce their hard work and effort, which would lead to low job output, decreasing their productivity, and eventually deciding to leave. Employees sometimes decide to quit due to various external factors which are beyond their control. Organizations are now devising various retention strategies to keep the employees happy and cognitively engaged. However, the point in question is whether the employees will not leave the organization and look for other opportunities if the employees are engaged? Will they be faithful to the organization even in the long run? Hence, our research surrounds these areas. Our study focuses on whether engagement affects the yield purpose of the employees and if perceived organizational politics moderates this relationship. "We have considered the study around perceived organizational politics because previous studies showed that it affects in the turnover intention of the employees, where they took factors like organizational justice, colleague relations and organizational reputation under consideration [5]"

Politics, in general, is viewed negatively, and employees believe that it reduces efficacy in a company. "Workers can be dissatisfied with their duties as a result of the person's self-centered choices at performance [6]."

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Employee engagement

"Work fulfilment, staff responsibility, interpersonal behaviour, and other factors all contribute to employee engagement. Workers who are occupied are still willing make a special effort to achieve their employers' progress, resulting in improved company's efficiency [7]."

As per the survey data in a previous study, it was found that about 40% of the employees are not engaged. Only the remaining 60% are. There are certain organizations, which are branded as "Best Employers." These usually do well in the following domains: infrastructure facilities, total rewards, leadership category, and employee value proposition. The leaders in these organizations believe in transparency and open communication. They have a well-defined EVP, a just rewards structure, and state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure. These organizations do well financially and show compelling business performance [8].

Employees' working conditions, as well as the environment, must be considered. "Good working conditions ensure better team and co-worker relationship and hence improve the workforce's productivity" [9]. Managers and leaders must always extend support to their subordinates, understand their individual goals, and focus on their personal development. If the leaders possess good decision-making skills and act with integrity, the employees feel valued and motivated [10].

The human resources department should encourage good practices in the organization. The focus must primarily be on the employee's development, which can be achieved if the organization offers tuition fee reimbursement and training facilities to make employees feel supported [11].

Surveys are very important as it helps to analyze the engagement levels within the organization. Therefore, it is important to conduct it from time to time, as the employees' needs and expectations differ at various stages of the employee life cycle [12]. The management should strategize and create a good talent management strategy to increase. Career advancement opportunities should be offered. Additionally, even

incentives make the employees feel valued. Organizations must consider them as partners in business and provide support at every stage of their career, which would help gain their loyalty [13].

## 2.2 Organizational politics

Employees' behaviour in the workplace, especially their control of power which they use for their self-serving benefits, all comes under organizational politics. Employees usually try and influence other people and show their authority, which is usually perceived as something negative. Organizational politics takes place in every organization, sometimes it is visible, but most of the time, it is not. It can be attributed to behavioural factors or sometimes to personality factors, which degrades the work environment. The overall job satisfaction levels dropdown. Employees feel stressed and less motivated to do their job as their politics lead to anxiety.

In order to get a clearer picture, we will try and understand more about organizational policies vs. organizational politics. Organizations follow a fixed set of legal rules and legal policies, which apply to every employee. These must be diligently followed and adhered to by everyone at the working. There are HR Legal policies and documents, which are clearly stated and explained to the employee. These may include leave policies, grooming policies. These are referred to as organizational politics. When another person controls how you will succeed in the organization or when someone else is allotted an important task, which should be yours, we can say that it is due to organizational politics. Any kind of nepotism, favouritism that occurs due to unexplained factors and reasons points to organizational politics. It does not depend on the organizational policies, but clearly on what is happening informally at the workplace, which can decide where you stand in the future in your organization and if you will have the right number of opportunities in the coming time.

It has been observed that conscientiousness affects an individual's job performance, especially when the employee believes that the level of organizational politics ranges from average to high but usually does not affect the job performance when the level of politics in the organization is slightly on the lower side [14]. Personal and situational factors impact workers' perception of an organization's administrative activities and affect other outcomes, namely, job involvement, job-related stress, and job satisfaction [15].

However, organizational politics can also be perceived positively. For example, employees who fully understand and become familiar with organizational politics may understand what brings about more opportunities and different organizational rewards. Hence it the employees will be more involved in their job [16].

## 2.3 Turnover intentions

The previous study about the pharma industry suggests that employees give much importance to career development opportunities. If they believe that the proper amount of support and training is provided, they are less likely to quit. These employees would prefer to stick with the company for a lengthier duration [17]. Studies have earlier proposed that "emotional pressure, work displeasure and specific interactive purposes play a significant provider of business in the company [18]."

Previously, the turnover intention was associated with two factors. These factors were known as the push and the pull factors. The pull factors referred to those factors beyond the organization's control. They reached mainly when employees were attracted to a new company or when employees expected a promotion, the legal rules and regulations, equity and fairness, and higher pay expectations. Along the same lines, the push factors were those which were in the control of the organization. For example, these included health-related issues the employees were going through, family problems, manager's behavior towards the employees, motivation levels, the size of the organization, opportunities for further education, job difficulty, words of encouragement, and conflict within the team. The family problem had the highest impact. The discussion supported the fact that as compared to push factors, pull factors had a higher role in the employees' decision to leave the organization [19].

Factors like job satisfaction, the amount of stress associated with a job, leadership style as factors that lead business purpose through "specific considerations, such as observed company's guidance, staff compensation, work liberty, coaching and growth, and observed administrator guidance, ought to be prudently investigated and acknowledged." Organizations must conduct proper research on why employees decide to quit an organization after devoting time there. Organization success mainly takes place due to efforts put forth by the employees of the organization.

Additionally, various demographic elements were studied. These include “wage, tenure, working department, position and its influence on the turnover intentions was found out, and it was concluded that they do have an influence.” According to the research paper, we found that female employees had a higher intention to leave the organization as opposed to males

Female employees have certain family obligations to follow. Also, in the corporate world, they have lesser promotional opportunities and a decreased number of career development opportunities [20].

If good human resources practices are followed, then the employees will be more committed. Individuals always favor support. Suppose they believe that the company frequently extends organizational support to the employees. In that case, they will be faithful and loyal to the organization, making the employees feel valued. It will help the employees up skill and increase their knowledge in different domains, which would increase satisfaction and have good things to say about the organizational culture. A gap has been found in the employee development of the pharma industry. The employees do not seem to be satisfied with the type of training that the organization provides. Hence companies must design training programs that coach and help the employees to up skill.

The focus must be on the working conditions, especially if it is associated with accomplishing a task. If the working environment is not up to the mark, employees may not want to work with such an organization. Adequate tools and resources must be available at the employees’ disposal to motivate them to do the job. Along with the above-mentioned factors, if the employees feel that they will not develop or if the work they do has no meaning, the turnover intention increases to the organization or them individually. All these factors must be considered to increase the organizational commitment and the employees’ motivation to work [21]. POP causes a lower engagement level in employees, and hence they decide to quit. If the employees believe that there are unfair decisions or nepotism, the employees would not feel motivated enough to do the job.

Researchers in their previous study have proved that as engagement increases, perceived organizational politics declines. However, how an employee perceived organizational politics in the workplace depends upon his/her emotional intelligence. Additionally “observed company’s growth and administrative

activities arbitrate the part of sensitive mentality on work gratification, careless behavior as well as the intention to leave” [22] However, a negative impact on the engagement factor can occur due to the perceived organizational politics, which can happen mainly if there is a lack of resources available [23]. “Large phases of observed job space post-position activities enhance worker discomfort, lower work gratification results in decreased business purposes.”

Suppose the employees experience stress during their work hours in the company. In that case, they may eventually quit, which is further supported and strengthened if the employees perceive organizational politics in the workplace. If there are fewer levels of perceived organizational politics, the employees are again less likely to quit” [24]

With more job opportunities, controlling turnover becomes a crucial element. Work engagement negatively influences turnover intentions. However, we must also consider the psychological capital in this study. Suppose employees have good levels of psychological capital, i.e., their self-efficacy or how optimistic they are. In that case, this will strengthen the relationship [25].

Research about human resource development practices suggests that if the employees show a high number of participants in these activities, it helps increase the overall engagement. If the employees regularly feel motivated, encouraged, and supported in their career goals, they would stick to it in their workplace. Suppose better learning and development initiatives are undertaken. In that case, the employees will strongly believe that the management genuinely cares about their personal development goals [26].

Work engagement levels would differ for employees in different positions. Dedication is a primary factor that helps the employees achieve a sense of satisfaction and makes them stick with the company, regardless of their position. Person organization fit helps in understanding the compatibility level of the individual with the job and workplace surroundings. Suppose an employee strongly believes in the organization’s values and understands its goals. In that case, they will be more actively engaged, which gives rise to a positive attitude in the workplace, improves their behavior, and leads to better performance in terms of commitment. Hence these employees would believe they would fit better and would have negative turnover intentions [27].



### 3 Proposed hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant moderating influence of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on the relationship between engagement and turnover intentions

Ha: There is a significant moderating influence of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on the relationship between engagement and turnover intentions.

### 4 Proposed systems

A survey was floated among the population, and the data was collected. Data were obtained from 240 pharmaceutical industry employee respondents. Pharmaceutical Industry has been chosen because this sector is rapidly increasing brand identity when lowering attrition rate. Hence, there is a major challenge to retain the employees, thereby enhancing the organization's brand name.

The study also suggested that employee engagement drives employee retention [28]. In order to deep dive into the reason for the pharma employees to leave the organization, we focused on this sector.

The participants of the study were ensured that the anonymity of the data would be kept. The respondents were mainly comprised of around 45% men and around 55% women. The age, expertise in the current company, and complete knowledge in duration were all collected. These were collected categorically in order to maintain the anonymity of the employees. The survey consisted of seventeen queries from employee engagement, three queries from business purpose, and fifteen queries from perceived company's post-position activities.

A 5-point scale evaluated worker commitment. The business purpose was measured using a 5-item scale. The surveyors were requested to assess specific things on a five-point Likert scale.

### 5 Data Analysis

#### 5.1 Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha values also referred to as reliability coefficients were found out for each construct. For employee engagement, the coefficient came as  $\alpha = .88$ , while for turnover it was  $\alpha = .61$  and for perceived organizational politics  $\alpha = .80$ . Hence, the Reliability was found to be statistically significant.

#### 5.2 Common method variance (CMV)

Cronbach's before any further analysis, a test for CMV was done, namely the Harmon one-factor test.

Owing to the large size of the questionnaire and the fact that the data was taken from the same respondents during the same time frame, CMV could create problems. The presence of a principal factor that is responsible for a significant part of the change. So, we check for it using the Principal Component method based on Eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1. The result was that the first factor explained only 25.3% of the variance. Thus, it can be concluded that CMV is not an issue in our case.

#### 5.3 Control variables

We have taken up a total of 4 different types of control variables, which are demographic, in this study. These include age, gender, number of years spent at the present organization, and total years of work experience. These were included as past research indicated that "they have an influence on turnover intentions" [20].

#### 5.4 Hierarchal moderated regression analysis

In this study, hierarchical moderated regression analysis (HMRA) was used for hypothesis testing. In the first step, only these above-mentioned control variables were entered. The second step involved putting in employee engagement. The third step included the variable business post-position activities. At the same time, in the final stage, the communication word was introduced.

There was a numerically important association amid employee engagement, and business purposes ( $r = -0.540$ ,  $p < .01$ ) is referred to in Table 1. The correlation turned out to be negative, which meant that the more the engagement, the less the turnover would be.

Table 1  
Statistics

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean
Gender	0.5	1.53
Age	1.06	1.89
Experience in organization	0.88	1.9
Total Experience	1.097	2.21
TI	3.87	3.87
EE	2.2	2.2
POP	3.67	3.68
Interaction	7.78	7.78

The moderating variable, i.e., organizational politics, was found to have a significant relation to turnover intentions ( $r = 0.362$ ,  $p < .01$ ) is referred to in

Table 2. It had a positive correlation, which meant that turnover intention increases with increased perceived organizational politics in Table 3.

Table 2  
Correlation table

Variables	TI
Gender	0.062
Age	0.072
Experience in organization	0.044
Total exp	0.017
EE	-0.54
POP	0.362
interaction	-0.35
TI	1

Table 3  
Correlation table

Model	R	R square	R square Change
1	.103a	0.011	0.011
2	.544b	0.295	0.285
3	.560c	0.313	0.018
4	.560d	0.313	0

**Model 1:** Here, we looked only at the control variables. Nevertheless, considering the demographic variables only, the model was unremarkable numerically meaningful as  $\rho = 0.644$ , and only 1.1 percent of the variation in business purposes was clarified. (From R sq. = 0.011).

**Model 2:** When EE was introduced, we observed that the data was statistically significant ( $\rho=0.000$ ) and explained the data variance of 28.5 percent.

**Model 3:** The control variable was considered along with employee engagement and even perceived business post-position activities. It was comparatively remarkable for a better predictor of turnover intention. We can see that the value ( $\rho=.000$ ) is statistically significant and told 31.3 percent change in information, with an extra 1.8 percent variance behind restraint variables and worker commitment.

**Model 4:** Finally, we entered the interaction term we determined in the fourth phase and affirmed that it was positively connected with business purposes; an addition of Model 4 is, as it had, statistically important ( $\rho=.000$ ). We also noted that Model 4 and Model 3 fit fittest in foretelling employees' business purposes.

Table 4 shows the influence of our control variables on the engagement-turnover intentions relationship.

Table 4  
Demographic correlation

Gender	EE-TI
For Males	-0.527
For Females	-0.548
Age Range	EE-TI
20-30	-0.504
30-40	-0.403
40-50	-0.857
50 above	-0.599
Total Experience	EE-TI
1 to 5	-0.667
5 to 10	-0.424
10 to 15	-0.661
15 above	-0.576
Experience in current Org	EE-TI
1 to 5	-0.524
5 to 10	-0.501
10 to 15	-0.697
15 above	-0.667

We may tell from the above that gender does not play a very important part. In both male and female employees, the correlations are nearly similar. Given the years of employee experience in the current workplace, we will find that the negative correlation is the strongest among workers who have completed in the organization for more than 10 years. That is the result of the monotonous nature of work. When the job gets repetitive, employees lose their interest in working harder.

From Table 5, we can see that the sig value (p) Model 1 is coming to greater than 0.05, which shows that the effect is not significant when only the demographic/control variables are considered. However, when we use all the independent variables together for predicting our dependent variable, i.e., business purposes (Model 4), we observe that the value of sig (p) is less than 0.05; it is statistically significant. It is the most accurate model for predicting the turnover intention Refer Table 6.

Table 5  
ANOVA

Model	Sig
1	.644b
2	.000c
3	.000d
4	.000e

Table 6

Coefficients table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error
4	(Constant)	4.3	0.659
	Gender	0.07	0.107
	Age	0.015	0.049
	Experience in org.	-0.009	0.086
	Total exp	0.049	0.069
	EE	-0.585	0.259
	POP	0.143	0.156
	Int	0.013	0.07

So, the linear equation comes out to be

$$\begin{aligned}
 TI = & 4.3 + (0.07 * (\text{Gender})) + (0.015 * (\text{Age})) + \\
 & + (-0.009) (\text{Experience in org})) + \\
 & + (0.049 * (\text{Total Experience})) + (-0.585 * (\text{EE})) + \\
 & + (0.143 * (\text{POP})) + (0.013 * (\text{int})) \quad (1)
 \end{aligned}$$

Hence, all the above-mentioned independent variables influence the employee's turnover intentions.

## 6 Discussions

The current employees must accept that they live in a VUCA world where the chances of turnover are very high. Due to this, the competition is high, creating a must to hire and keep the right kind of talent. Employees tend to reduce their productivity when they lose interest (in all aspects) in their job, forcing them to seek other job opportunities. It will lead to an increase in the attrition rate. The other attractive firm might even be the competitor firm, leading to severe damage to the company's talent pool. Retaining talented staff will avoid heavy financial losses to the organization.

When an employee is satisfied with the task at hand, he/she will contribute the required amount of energy, efforts, and enthusiasm, which will improve the overall organization's productivity levels and prove to be beneficial for the organization. Satisfied employees tend to be punctual, dedicated, bold, resourceful, and creative. They will spread positivity in the workplace and maintain a good image of the company amongst their informal group. They tend to behave in this manner as they enjoy their work.

Today's employees assess the work-life balance offered by a company before accepting their offer. It has become a highly prioritized factor nowadays. An organization needs to respect its employees' preferences and allow them to choose to work on weekends. An

incredible change (positively) in employees' contribution can be observed when flexibility in work-time and work location and supportive managers are offered. "It will increase an individual's commitment to the job, increase his satisfaction levels and help reduce the absenteeism [29]." Existing studies in the pharma industry largely state that "there is a negative impact in job satisfaction, supervisor's support on subordinates' turnover intentions, compensation and promotional opportunities of co-worker's attitude." The factors tend to damp when the satisfaction levels amongst employees increases. It will reduce the attrition rate and improve the quality of the company's talent pool. Hence the leaders should focus on increasing the employee's satisfaction [30].

Some authors suggest that organizational factors affect self-esteem levels and job commitment levels. "Job satisfaction also affects turnover intentions. Opportunities for promotion, non-monetary incentives, relationship with co-workers, compensation and communication style will be affected". Therefore, we can also say that the decision to quit may not result from a single isolated factor but all the different factors and their moderating [31].

## 7 Conclusions

We can infer from the afore-mentioned study that the staffs who are engaged are unlikely to move and would stick with the company for a lengthier duration.

Hence, we deny the null hypothesis and approve the other hypothesis that asserts an important moderating influence of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on the association amid commitment and business purposes. However, conducting the company's post-position activities is crucial to retain workers' happiness and interest in the job space. Large rates of commitment and reduced extent of observed workplace post-position activities reduce the desire of the workers to leave. Therefore the employee remains with the business for a lengthier duration Organizations have to build a community that embraces the results mentioned above.

If the employees are engaged in workplace gossip or politics, their rates of productivity will decline. They will be investing much time in this, thus taking their attention away from the required task. Transparency must be maintained at the workplace.

Teamwork must be promoted, and all individuals should be treated with fair respect and equal treat-

ment. The decorum of the place of work must always be upheld.

## 8 Limitations

The paper has been drafted based on a cross-sectional design of the current study due to financial and time constraints. Therefore, any inference based on causality is limited. Data for the paper has been collected from employees of India working in the pharmaceutical sector. Further studies on understanding why employees leave are required to support our findings in other parts of the world and cultural environment.

Additionally, those studies must focus more on the factors beyond an organization's control that affect the organization. These factors are pay, employee benefits, etc., offered by an organization. Studying these factors will help to determine its role in why employees leave. Further research is also needed to comprehend the impact of demographic variables on the engagement turnover intention.

### 9 Implications for management practice

Employee engagement strategies of strategic importance and properly defined guidelines are important for organizations. Transparency, engaged leadership, and commitment are the principles on which the management should prioritize. Upper management should support the employee's development, which should help retain employees [32]. Organizations assess engagement levels within the organization by conducting annual surveys. Frequent surveys, in-depth analysis, and a thorough investigation of the responses should be done to understand the root cause of any disengagement felt by the employees.

People are always trying to find an easier way to climb up the corporate ladder. Hence the organizations must try and minimize organizational politics as much as possible.

An employee's performance may be hindered due to politics. As a result, the employees may not feel committed to the job, which may likewise happen if employees and their supervisors have different priorities altogether. Goal congruence also has an impact on the same. Hence, the managers should communicate the goals, which will make sure that politics does not influence the employee's morale [33].

Some recommendations would be to:

Because of the present COVID situation, the level of perceived organizational politics has risen. All the

different employee engagement strategies undertaken by employees are going to vain. Employee feedback is very important. Most of the employees are working overtime in this current situation, which brings more stress. Therefore, a suggestion would be to set certain schedules for the task at hand and give importance to work-life balance. Additionally, it is important to regularly check in on the employee and listen to his worries/concerns.

One of the most important things is to conduct exit interviews. The upper management can get an idea of what happens at every level and what problems the employees face. Several areas of improvement may be identified. If the HR leaders promoted more transparency, the employees would feel more valued. They would be able to talk about their concerns freely.

During annual reviews, open communication must be encouraged. They must be allowed to talk freely about their task at hand, the problems they are facing, how they think the organization's culture is, and much more. The employees must feel included in conversations. For example, the management can ask the employee for his/her recommendation for any general problem.

A hostile work environment must be created so that most of the employees would want to devote their time and energy there. In certain cases, they must provide flexibility, namely work-from-home opportunities/flexible schedules. Owing to the present COVID situation, there has been an increase in the perceived organizational practices. All the above recommendations must be taken into consideration and implemented in order to reduce the turnover intention.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest among the authors

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I have attached the Similarity Index Report

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