

Comprehensive Question Three

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A Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements of

OM9995 Comprehensive Examination II

April 2004

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High Performance Organizations (HPO) place people ahead of processes (Pfeffer, J. 1998).

Sustaining high levels of quality output for an organization is a critical success factor, in the survivability of an organization. Analyze the ability to maintain high performance teams when using virtual teams, located around the globe. Evaluate the challenges, obstacles and barriers when creating virtual teams in a High Performance Organization

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## Executive Summary

Virtual Teaming can best be described as teaming via electronic means, whether locally, regionally, nationally or globally. Challenges often lead to opportunities, and globally positioning a workforce that is capable of remote interaction can possibly lead to a very High Performance Organization. The issues that surround organizations in general along with those specific to the virtual teaming concept will be addressed from the perspective of some of the key researchers and theorists on the topic. The concept of using technology to enable teams to virtually communicate, collaborate and accomplish business objectives is of vital importance as corporations grow into global entities.

*"It is not that I do not know of such things; I am ashamed to use them."*

*Chuang-tzu (Morgan, 1997)*

### Introduction

The term virtual teaming implies that a team is not really in existence, but exists only in a virtual reality. This is a misconception of the concept, as it truly only refers to the interaction between team members by way of electronic means. Virtual Teams, truly exist as teams, and could possibly be better characterized as having different geographical locations. The growth of the Internet and the capabilities in communication and computing has evolved into a wide array of technological capabilities for companies, both internally and externally. The characterization of the vast world-wide communication capability of today into three levels, Internets, Extranets, and Intranets, seems over simplified, but sufficient at the macro level to define the environment within which we operate as professionals.

The variety of information available today and the speed at which it is conveyed, can enable teams located at opposite corners of the globe, the ability to develop from physically remote locations, what may take longer, even if they were co-located. Geography, in the physical world may mean less than "Access" in the case of virtual teams, although there are limiting factors that apply to either the traditional teams, or their virtual counterparts.

Organizational Researcher Gareth Morgan (1997), offers a wide variety of metaphors to describe organizations. Classically these metaphors have been studied and applied to a variety of institutions, as well as denied by those blind to their own structure. The organization is a powerful tool, and a key element to the development of high performing virtual teams. It is of prime importance to understand the characterization of organizations and the categories they may include, in order to better understand the nature of current research, theory and the general body of knowledge.

These are characterized by the following general categories:

- Organizations as Machines
- Organizations as Organisms
- Organizations as Brains
- Organizations as Cultures
- Organizations as Political Systems
- Organizations as Psychic Prisons
- Organizations as Flux or Transformation
- Organizations as Instruments of Domination

Morgan (1997)

The metaphors offered by Morgan present characterizations of Organizational Models that can be observed in the workplace today, and apply to HPO theory as well as traditional models of organizational structures.

Kotler and Brown (1985) specify a group as "a collection of persons gathered together for compatible goals" (p.177). The idea that a group is compatible and is entwined with a common focus, effort, and the ultimate common goal of the group or organization in question is evident. Virtual teams in a High Performance Organization are faced with similar challenges, and common characteristics, although the physical functionality of the group is separated by geography and global location. Individual members of groups nearly all have specific agendas and their participation and contribution fulfills those personal objectives or desires. Participation

fulfills those personal needs or objectives. Virtual Team Members (VTM) cooperates under the governing norms and rules of accepted behavior in order to achieve these compatible goals.

I have observed the interaction of teams, whether virtual, or collocated in a variety of situations with differing goals or objectives. The resulting productivity of a group, team or organization is enhanced by a teaming that is both compatible with congruence of effort, if not actually parallel in nature. The development of such teams is imperative to the organization seeking high performance output, and mission accomplishment. The focus on business is to generate profit for the stake-holders, which can be best accomplished through the use of well organized, prepared and communicative teams.

There is no simple solution to the question of the "best" or "universal" practice that will make teams efficient, or organizations "high performers". There has been a great deal of study since the beginning of the industrial revolution as to the best courses of action, or practices with disparate results along the way. An overview of the works that have been added to the body of knowledge, along with the various advantages and disadvantages of such practices will be observed to synthesize a working model of practices available. This can be used by today's managers in order to select an appropriate course of action to facilitate their own needs.

It is important to note that the very complexity that defines the interaction of groups, cultures, political spheres, and individuals defines the primary disadvantages of team building and thwarts the efforts of organizations to become high performers.

### Literature Review

The earliest research into the functioning of an organization came with the introduction by Frederick Taylor of the mechanistic approach to managing an enterprise. Taylor suggested five principles for managing group activity in producing goods and services. The focus of this approach is on the organization as a whole, with the individual used as a tool for the greater good of the organization and its profitability. The five elements of Taylor's theoretical model (Morgan, 1997) can be summarized as:

1. Managers should bear the responsibility of organizing work on behalf of workers. Little input into the process is left up to workers, who are then only responsible with the task of implementing directives and producing output.
2. The organization must utilize scientific methodology to determine the most efficient way to accomplish a task. The worker is to utilize the precise chosen method to accomplish the task. This perspective of breaking down a task is the primary reason Taylor's approach has been dubbed scientific management.
3. Tasks are then matched with the appropriate worker. A specific worker is chosen based on their ability to accomplish the task.
4. The worker should be trained to accomplish the task as efficiently as possible.
5. All work should be monitored to make sure the task is being produced efficiently.

In describing Taylor's model, Morgan (1997), using a metaphoric approach to associate styles of organizational interaction with descriptive functions, suggests this approach relates to a machine. The machine produces output with the least amount of effort in exactly the same way during each cycle.

The initial research by Taylor was seen as innovative for the time, but some (Foster, 1996 & Perrow, 1973) viewed his principles as authoritarian and stifling. Workers were seen as machines, carrying out rote steps, dictated by management, in an effort to control productivity. One of the more important elements in Taylor's work was the identification of methods to efficiently complete a given task. An example of his research included the study of shoveling coal at the Bethlehem Steel works. By observing the activities of coalers, Taylor was able to design a shovel that increased efficiency and reduced labor costs. The latter presented serious concerns for labor unions and worker rights advocates. According to Foster and Perrow, additional scientific studies applied similar principles in other work environments due to efforts by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and Henry Gantt. Amidst the many useful principles associated with the research of Taylor, one concern is the lack of participation given workers in the scientific management model. Managers are the primary source of direction for the workplace. Little attention is paid to interaction between labor and management. Despite the concerns, a number of important principles resulted from the work of Taylor that is in use throughout industry to this day.

Perrow (1973) suggests more desirable models are replacing classical organizations due to the following four factors:

1. Labor is becoming specialized and hence more difficult to control through policies.

Organized labor has promoted an environment of collaboration between management and the masses spreading the responsibility of leadership into lower levels of the workforce.

2. Globalization of markets and manufacturing has required many organizations to adjust policies and procedures by considering local customs and traditions. The organizational

expectations used within the United States or Europe is not as likely a workable model in other corners of the globe. Motorola encountered such problems when the company began transition into multi-cultural, international markets (Peach & Murrell, as cited in Thompson & Strickland, 2001). The company found the ethical standards that had been a part of Motorola corporate culture since inception were unacceptable in some newly adopted countries in which Motorola built manufacturing facilities. In response to the concerns from fellow executives in other cultural environments, Motorola reworked the encompassing Statement of Purpose, Objectives, and Ethics. The adjusted approach involved responding locally to minor issues or adjusting the policy globally to permit the company as a whole to operate in a common ethical framework.

3. Political and social changes, including a worldwide concern for the use of child labor, have had an impact on many classical organizational approaches. Levi Strauss and Company uncovered the use of underage girls in a Bangladeshi factory. The company was able to support an effort to educate the girls, with pay, until they became of working age. Levi Strauss reemployed the girls at the factory following schooling (Gamble, as cited in Thompson & Strickland, 2001).
4. Rapid expansion of many small companies transitioning into large corporations has driven out the leadership of a single individual, being replaced with highly skilled management teams. Many of these executive leaders rely on group effort by other employees in successfully building the organization. The founder, Charles Kaman, started Kaman Aerospace Corporation in 1945 to develop and manufacture helicopters. The expansive growth of rotary-wing aircraft in the mid 21st century drove the company toward diversification in aerospace and aircraft products and services. As the company

grew, so too did the need to recruit and hire experienced corporate leadership. Charles Kaman would later relinquish daily operations of the corporation to other management leadership (Kaman Corporation web site, n.d.).

Perrow takes the extreme of an almost communal approach to organizational lifestyle. His factors may have influenced research into more contemporary motivational theories that attempted to reestablish connectivity between the organization and the individual.

According to Craig (1986), Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs represents a person's ongoing efforts to develop full potential. The pyramid shaped hierarchy describes the needs of a person from the lowest level in which one requires simple essentials such as food and shelter toward the highest level in which the person feels full potential has been met through career, education, or family accomplishments, which is termed self-actualization (Huitt, 2002).

According to Huitt, the hierarchy represents two levels of need, including deficiency and growth needs. It might be assumed various workers have different needs. Maslow's concept is important to comprehend in an organizational context as it is suggested that all participants have the same type of need levels. One advantage to understanding the hierarchy of need is that everyone within an organizational structure, no matter what their employment status, must be considered. In contrast to the perception that has been formed of Taylor's separation of duties, and therefore as some assume, difference of need, Maslow draws all participants toward common ground. Everyone has similar needs and should be considered with the same concern.

One disadvantage in engaging Maslow's hierarchical model is the complex nature of human concerns, attitudes, and interaction. The simplicity of the mechanistic approach in which a

worker does a task as commanded, with little thought for the personality of the individual, is lost, as the manager must cope with a variety of needs and concerns.

Clayton Alderfer presented another model entitled ERG. In similar fashion to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer suggested everyone has three levels of need, including existence, relatedness, and growth. Although his research closely characterizes Maslow, his emphasis includes progression and regression concerns within the three need paradigms. Alderfer stresses the potential for a person to move up and down these levels throughout a lifetime. This can present problems for organizational leadership as participants change needs status. An advantage, according to the Internet Center for Management and Business Administration (2002), is Alderfer's theory of motivation that provides an explanation for the pursuit of multiple levels of need concurrently. Maslow's original model presented a structured hierarchy with no defined path for seeking satisfaction at the various levels. Although Maslow might agree that one could achieve fulfillment at two separate levels at once, the model does not provide this flexibility, a core concept of Alderfer.

One key advantage of motivational theories is the opportunity to include everyone within the organization in the process. The organization's responsibility for discovering each worker's need levels and establishing the opportunity for the individual to succeed in reaching their potential is likely to exist in the form of providing an environment in which the employees' need level can be fulfilled.

In contrast to an organization's management controlling the individual's workplace, Foster (1996) believes that the "emerging new world order" should consider an organization structure involving community, described as a communitarian approach. This approach takes the inclusion of individual participation to the next level. The literature review for the study equates the concept of a communitarian style of organization as fundamentally democratic. Groups are ruled by a "communal ethos" (p. 7) and guided by a common goal, bonded together as one unit due to the community of which each is a part. The theory is at odds with the typical authoritarian approach traditionally found in past organizational history. Foster points to pivotal research by Huntington to study the rising interest in communitarian dynamics within organizations.

The communal model appears to be a panacea for the working class, but does present a concern that the lack of leadership could allow a group to operate in an unproductive manner. Few theorists would agree that an organization could run entirely without supervision.

Mackenzie (2001, p. 116-148) provides a summation of organization theory through the development of his Levels of Organizations. In its simplest form, an organization can be characterized as a structure or thing. Mackenzie describes this as a "zero order" form of an organizational dynamic. As a "black box", in which nothing more than the shell of the organization is studied, no attention is paid to the dynamics of the participants of the enterprise. Mackenzie states the common belief that this model is "too barren and abstract" for any relevant, practical management practices. There may be many managers that do view the organization as a structure, with little concern for the individuals that make up the inner workings.

Mackenzie's first order theory views the organization as a "living system". This form includes a wide range of management styles including bureaucracy, group structure, and hierarchies of group interaction. The organization is viewed as a top-level or compartmentalized entity, with workflow and group interaction centering on the functional domain of the department. This model includes the participant as a whole, but excludes individualization or uniqueness of the person.

The second order form carries the "living system" to a more complex level in which the individual entities become interdependent on each other. The actions of other departments now influence the organization as a whole. This form is more closely related to real-world interactions in the business environment.

Mackenzie's third order expands on the overall concept by including organization within the departments. Each individual segment of a business environment in and of itself is organized, with concern for the individual. The natural progression is that each sub-level of an organization is an organization within itself, providing that level with self-actualized characteristics.

Mackenzie's study summarizes a variety of earlier research projects as he stratifies the levels of organizational dynamics. Viewing an organization as simply a box to study does not cover enough variables to provide any valuable results. Nearly any contemporary theorist would agree the dynamics of an organization are far too complex to leave the interaction of the varying processes within the business organization. The second and third order epitomizes the breadth of

characteristics that influence a group. The advantage of using the Mackenzie Levels of Organization is the ability to gauge the completeness of the subject of organizational theory.

The four concepts mentioned above are general theoretical models that can be applied in understanding nearly any organization. Recent research into more specific methods of managing groups and enterprises gives more usable support for use in day-to-day operations. One advantage of Mackenzie's stratified model is the ability to immediately identify the style in use by an organization.

Several theorists have introduced interpretations for understanding group and organizational dynamics. It is Morgan (1997), in *Images of Organization*, that characterizes the various personalities of groups using metaphors. Morgan chose metaphors for their rich mental pictures that help describe the methodologies that are utilized. Morgan proposes eight metaphoric models that exemplify organizational structure. Each is discussed individually to provide an opportunity to focus attention on the core elements of the style.

1. As mentioned earlier, the mechanistic style of management is closely related to a bureaucratic institution. It is generally exemplified by a single individual as the sole responsible party for direction of the organization. Most management activity and responsibility revolve around this individual, which usually is the founder or owner of the company. Little if any responsibility is given to other groups or individuals. The metaphor of a machine best describes the institution, with all participants holding very precise, pre-defined roles. These roles provide little latitude for innovation or self-directed expression.

2. Another metaphoric approach relates to the evolutionary process found in ecological sciences. Organizations can be described as organisms that may develop and adapt to the environment around them. As such, each institution has unique characteristics associated with their surroundings. Environments may change or evolve, uniquely establishing different characteristics.
3. The human brain is the ultimate processing device. Morgan enlists a view of organizations from the perspective of information processing. Any organization makes evaluations based on the wealth of information available at the time a decision is made. Morgan describes this process as holographic, where the whole can be organized into its parts and thus reorganized into the whole. This metaphor portrays organizations as self-controlling.
4. Yet another description of an organization can be found in the metaphor of a culture. In describing culture, various factors such as ideas, beliefs, and values of all participants must be considered. This concept is sometimes referred to as a corporate culture. The summation of convictions within are referenced as a unified whole.
5. The political metaphor is one of the more powerful images of an organization. Terms associated with this style of institution include, "power broker" or "office politics". Morgan refers to the wide variety of interests, skirmishes, and manipulation of position that occurs in an organization where power dominates. Morgan uses the behavior of government to draw inference to a political organization. This is not necessarily a good analogy, as it is assumed that all government organizations are dominated by a power broker mentality.

6. Morgan uses the term "psychic prison" (p. 215) to describe some organizations that present themselves to the participant as a place of entrapment. The analog is manifested in a familiar statement that someone feels "trapped in their job". Morgan sees this organization as utilizing forms of management or leadership style that encumber all with cataleptic fears. For the participant within this environment, there appears to be no way to escape.
7. Can chaos produce organization? That is a question that some theorists believe can be answered in the affirmative. As Morgan describes this style, the organization is in constant "flux" or "transformation". It could be argued that Morgan combines two separate elements into this metaphor. An organization in continual transition or flux is participating in new patterns or styles of management and leadership. The desire to achieve more successful operations drives leaders to transition again. This pattern is more likely to be characterized as orderly. Chaos theory does not lend itself to be defined as organized. A disorderly or disorganized environment can produce success when the chaos leads to transitions within groups that carry through to meet a goal. The temporary orderly activities that may emerge are likely to revert back into disarray or turmoil once the task or tasks are completed.
8. The final individualized metaphor portrays an organization as a framework of domination. The focus is on the exploitive nature of organizations. This form of organizational behavior is also the main target of communist proponents such as Karl Marx. Morgan defines this style as domineering, with the organization controlling and manipulating the greater society to accept whatever the organization or individual desires.

There are similar patterns between a dominant and mechanistic organization. The latter is probably less formidable than a dominant organizational approach.

Each of Morgan's images unites a series of closely associated behavioral patterns together to visualize a unique organizational style. These images provide a vehicle for managers and leaders to evaluate organizational practices. Individually, each metaphor defines a narrow view of the patterns that mold the practices or styles.

An advantage of using the metaphoric style to describe group interaction and organizational dynamics is its active modality. The reader can visualize, through another association, the theory. A disadvantage each user should understand when using metaphor is the potential that the visualization can influence the reaction of the reader. As an example, Morgan's use of machine in referring to Taylor's scientific management theory could negatively influence one's perception if they visualize a cold, hard piece of steel without inclusion of the functionality of the mechanism. A machine could also be visualized as a warm, spinning device with the power to change raw material into a wonderful, usable product. Metaphors must be used carefully, with their descriptions chosen with caution.

Organizational dynamics are more likely to include a wider focus that encompasses a mixture of various styles and human personalities. There are recent research studies that have provided more in-depth perspectives into both group dynamics and the impact within an organization, including the publishing of a classic theoretical model by Tuckman (1965 & 1977) and Jensen (1977) in which they suggest the following "5 stages of Group Development".

1. The forming stage is typified by dependence on an appointed group leader as a catalyst. The group members are involved in discovering the group's strengths and weaknesses. Members are seeking their place and responsibilities in the group. During this phase, members rely on the leader for the direction of activities within the group. The leader or manager also uses this stage to “read” the individuals and the group personality.
2. During the storming stage, conflict and competition begin to surface as members learn about each other. Throughout this period members' feelings, attitudes, and beliefs are continually challenged. Each member is learning the "rules" within the group structure. Passive versus dominant roles are usually observed during this phase. The leader continues to observe relationships and personality traits of members and the group as a whole.
3. The norming phase represents the beginning of a cohesive process in which members accept their roles within the group. Cohesiveness refers to the extent and depth of bonds formed between group members (Forsyth, 1997). Nearly all members adjust their preconceived opinions of the group. The level of trust among members begins to build, and group progress can usually be observed thereafter. The leader continues to observe group activities in an effort to correct any issues and motivate the group toward productive outcomes.
4. Not all groups achieve the performing stage. This enhanced level of group dynamic is characterized by a complete trust among members. The group is able to work both together and independently of each other in accomplishing group activities. This phase, if achieved, is considered to be the most productive stage a group can achieve. The leader is

likely to move into a monitoring period in which the group operates on its own with little or no direct supervision.

5. The adjournment stage is the termination or disengagement period for the group. This phase usually involves various levels of recognition of group members and an opportunity to say personal farewells. As this phase can be difficult for those members that have bonded, the leader should provide opportunities for the group to celebrate success at any level.

Applied to group dynamics, the proposed stages work well in managing a group, but can be as easily applied to the whole organization. The advantage of studying Tuckman and Jensen is the simplicity of the marked phases of transition. An understanding of the principles of group interaction can provide a focus for managers in guiding and leading the organization to success. Of particular concern is the norming phase as this transition point can be a difficult moment to achieve. The model describes the stages, but eludes the question of methods for successful achievement of the steps. In the final analysis, the methodologies are complex and vary by group or organization makeup.

Most cohesive groups can be traced to one pivotal moment. King (1999) refers to research conducted by psychoanalyst W. R. Bion in which group mentality is defined as the decisive moment where a group becomes unified. This event occurs just prior to Tuckman's norming stage of group development. A variety of converging incidences can trigger the moment of group "mentality" at which time the group becomes productive. To achieve the greatest success, every manager should be drawing a group toward this ultimate moment. If the team cannot reach this cohesive point, the manager must be ready to terminate efforts to get the group to work together.

A traditional centralized management approach promotes decision-making from an individual or small group, such as a board. Some, such as Blair (n.d.), believe larger groups can develop strong enough cohesion to self-manage themselves. When a group taps its strengths and skills, and applies self-monitoring practices among members, the group has a much higher probability of succeeding. The ultimate goal is self-management, without significant outside interference. Blair also suggests any successful group must master managerial and interpersonal skills. For many organizations, it is helpful, according to Blair, that each group is assigned a facilitator, whose function is to draw out skills in each member. Blair does concede that any group activity does require upper level monitoring and review to assure eventual success. This is one of the more important tasks for the group facilitator or leader. Ultimately, the group process can perform more adeptly than a well-prepared, single individual. Each of these perspectives proposes specific principles that can provide a much better opportunity for successful organizational leadership.

#### Discussion

It is the challenge of any leader to interpret the styles and methods that influence the variety of interactions within an organization. Taylor's scientific management theories may focus on work patterns, with little regard for the worker. The innovative process studies made work easier and more productive. The individual and the organization can benefit from the resultant efficiencies. Others have criticized Taylor, such as Foster and Perrow, for overlooking human concerns. Despite any shortcomings in the Scientific Management model, mismanagement of the worker is not necessarily Taylor's responsibility. If one takes into consideration the behavioral theories, a melding of the two greatest insights into organizational management is possible, and even

desirable. Maslow's contribution of hierarchical needs provides the necessary understanding of the human personality in life and work. His concern for the person, along with Alderfer and others, puts the human element into perspective, allowing the worker to be elevated to similar status as profits and stakeholder returns have always enjoyed. For any company that has ignored the worker's needs and concerns, loss of highly desirable staff eventually outweighs many other factors, including profits.

In analyzing the effective leader, it can be argued that he or she should be a skilled advocate of methodology and psychology. Johnson (1999) describes successful leadership as operating under a code of organizational integrity. The four elements of the code include first, reacting within an institution's goals and objectives; secondly, in understanding solid, ethical business practices; thirdly, by seeking others suggestions and interactions to the process; and finally, in seeking to inspire the organization. To summarize Johnson, know where you are going, what should be done to get there, seek advise for the trip, and cheer the team on. Although not difficult to comprehend, it can be a problem to implement as the process can begin to overwhelm a manager, appearing more like a puzzle, with all its interlocking pieces.

In the final analysis, the leader must be able to apply appropriate methods or styles to any organizational situation. It is Morgan (p.355) that suggests managers be able to scan or "read" the environment. A common concern among employees is the unorganized way in which someone in leadership handles a problem or concern. The response could be related to a lack of understanding of the situation or insufficient skill in handling issues. The ability to read or

analyze the human personalities or work environment, assess the characteristics of the situation, and apply an appropriate response can be a difficult task that should be analyzed and practiced.

### Conclusion

Team leaders and group managers must possess many abilities within an organization. One of these traits is the capability to understand people. Employees or group participants have needs, personal goals, and special skill sets. To utilize each of these dynamics, leadership must first appraise, and then encourage the best attributes through facilitation. The organization must be willing to allow groups or teams to participate in adding value and making decisions within the institution.

The synthesis of effective skills includes the many elements already mentioned. In summary, the following could be considered a working model for the everyday manager or group leader.

Managers or group leaders could benefit from an eclectic approach in assessing and facilitating participation. It must be recognized that groups and organizations are dynamic, possessing a variety of backgrounds, skills, and needs. Therefore, the leader or manager should consider developing an assortment of approaches:

1. First, develop an ability to read or scan the organizational environment. Be on the lookout for particular strengths and weaknesses of those participating. Reading a group involves observation of personalities and attitudes of group members. One must observe, listen, and be willing to ask questions.
2. Secondly, the leader may need to develop an understanding of the subject of study or action by the group. If the group is participating in a preliminary analysis of a new

manufacturing methodology, the group's leader may need to develop additional understanding of the current techniques and trends in the process.

3. The manager must acquire or extend personal traits such as common sense, tempered attitude, and facilitation skills. They must also develop a proficiency in intervention skills for use when groups come into conflict.
4. The manager or leader needs to be a "cheerleader". Encouragement provides a group with a positive atmosphere of support and enhances cooperation and collaboration. Teamwork is encouraged.
5. The manager becomes a liaison between the group and other organizational and corporate segments.

A group or organizational environment is a complex, interrelated system. Dynamic and ever changing characterizes the group mentality. The manager must be equally as dynamic in providing the leadership necessary to make the group successful.

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