



How to write a great press release ...and other PR tips

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The Benefits of an Optimized Press Release

You might wonder what the benefits are of sending out a press release. Why should you spend the time writing one and what exactly do you get out of it? How do you write an effective press release and is it really worth spending the time and effort?

The following points elaborate on how your business can benefit by sending out a press release. Some key factors are professionalism, visibility, brand building, SEO ratings, and free-targeted traffic.

A good press release shows professionalism

Sending out a compelling press release to journalists and bloggers shows that you mean business and that you are passionate about your interests, occupation or anything else you feel the urge to mention. It gives you much needed credibility and gives you the opportunity to establish yourself as an authority in your niche or field of work. Potential customers can get familiar with you, your products, services or any other informative content that you publish. Soon, you will be known as a reliable professional to whom potential clients are more likely to come to first.

Sending out a press release increases your visibility

Publishing a good press release gives you the opportunity to boost your business exposure online. The amount of exposure and visibility highly depends on how well your press release is written and how it is optimized. Relevant keywords and a prominent structure are essential when publishing. It is important that you publish your press release to an optimized directory in order to maximize your visibility and exposure.

Build your brand with the help of a press release

A well-written press release has the potential to reach thousands of interested visitors on a global scale. Imagine how you can embed your brand in the minds of a carefully targeted audience. Whether you would like to promote a service, product, blog, or brand name, a press release has the prospect to reach the desired audience of your choice. In time, your audience will get familiar with and remember your brand.

Improve your SEO rating with a good press release

Everybody knows that a good SEO rating is very important in order to be able to make money with your internet-business. An optimized SEO brings many great advantages. You can gain quality backlinks from having a higher search engine ranking. This is a very important factor and a press release can help profoundly with this.

Get free-targeted traffic from your press release

A successful internet-enterprise needs targeted traffic. A well-targeted press release can send a lot of traffic to your website. Make sure to send it to the right recipients and that you include the right links in order to lead the readers to the site you want them to visit. If the quality of your press release is good, readers are more likely to be interested in what you have to offer them.

How to write a press release

Press releases are the basics of PR management. But getting people to read them is far from being easy: journalists and bloggers often say they receive more and more of them, and that they don't have the time to read them all.

How can you maximize your chances? Here are a few tips that will help you write press releases that will stand out in the crowd.

Find a story that is really newsworthy

The first rule is: not all news is newsworthy. Always ask yourself: if I were a journalist, would I want to write a story about all this? If the answer is "no", or "I don't know", then you probably shouldn't write a press release. Use your blog or your social media accounts instead.

If you do have a piece of news that's worth sharing, don't forget to give your readers a few elements of context. Show them you have a clear idea of what your market is, where it is going, and how you fit in or differentiate. Let them understand what you are and what you do. If you want to include quotes, don't quote your own employees. Instead, quote external, trusted sources (e.g. third-party surveys or studies).

All this will turn your press release into a well-documented piece of information that people might want to write about, or share on social media.

Be honest and realistic, you're not writing an ad

Try to stick to the facts, and be honest about yourself. Not every company or product can be “the first”, “the best”, “the leader”, “revolutionary”, “innovative”, “next-generation”, etc. Superlatives are widely spread in press releases, but they're not fooling anyone – they might even hurt your credibility.

Remember: you're not selling anything; you're publishing an interesting piece of information, in a (nearly) objective manner. Your press release shouldn't read like an advertisement. If it does, start over.

Keep your press release short and concise

Let's assume you have a story that's newsworthy. How can you make sure people will read it? The first thing to remember is: your readers do have very little time on their hands. Lengthy press releases will scare them away. To avoid this, keep your press release short and concise – try to stick to a single, strong idea that your reader will identify from the very first lines.

The ideal length for a press release is 400 to 500 words. If your press release is shorter than that, you're probably not giving enough details – a good press release always answers the “5 Ws”: who, what, when, where, why. On the contrary, if it's longer than that, you're probably repeating yourself, or giving too many details (e.g. too much background information, unnecessary, lengthy quotes, etc.). Make sure your press release is easy to read: stick to the essential.

Include a clear call to action

Your press release must contain a clear call to action. If it doesn't, your readers might skip to something else, and simply forget about you. If you want to keep them hooked, tell them what's next! There's always a web page they can visit, a person they can contact for more information, a document they can download, an event they can subscribe to, etc.

Your press release should be the starting point of new relationship with your reader.

Write in a conventional, professional style

Your press release should be easy to read. Keep it conventional and professional. Write in the third person and keep your sentences clear and concise. Here's a list of things you must eliminate:

- Jargon or overly technical language
- Funny punctuation and symbols
- SENTENCES IN ALL CAPS
- Whole paragraphs in bold characters

Finally, use a text editor to check for typos, misspellings and bad grammar, and proofread the final text a couple of times. Use websites like TextMaster or Google Translate to help you with this. Remember: no matter how interesting your story is, a poorly written text will not seem trustworthy.

Provide relevant additional content

Press releases are not limited to plain, black and white text. Additional content will always enhance the overall reading experience. When relevant, do not forget to include:

- **Your logo** – so that journalists use a clean, official version
- **Pictures** – especially, high-quality photos of your products or services, or screenshots from your software or website
- **Videos** – which can be hosted on YouTube or any other platform
- **Hyperlinks** – which can point to pages from your own website.

Also, such content will save journalists a whole lot of time when they decide to write something about you – and that's something they'll be grateful for. Help them help you!

Publish it yourself! (make good use of social media)

Don't wait for journalists or bloggers to do all the work for you. Start by spreading the news to your existing friends and followers! Chances are you already have a few people reading your corporate blog, or following your Facebook Fan Page or Twitter account.

If you're lucky, people might even share the news – that's what social media is for.

The importance of a catchy headline

Most journalists and bloggers receive hundreds, sometimes thousands of e-mails and press releases every day. With such an overflow of information, it is sometimes really hard to catch their attention. How can you make sure your press release will actually be read?

There's no magical solution, but here's one good tip: **focus on your headline!** Your headline is the very first message you are sending to your readers: it will give them a good flavor of the rest of your press release. A good/bad headline will make you win/lose a reader. Try to spend time on it! It should be precise and catchy enough to stand out in your contact's e-mail inbox.

Imagine yourself reading a newspaper: you usually flick through the pages, but sometimes you stop and start reading – just because you have seen a promising headline. The best newspaper headlines are often highly informative or thought-provoking... Try to follow this model, and you can be pretty sure your return rates will rise significantly!

Finally, avoid being too optimistic or too promotional. You are sending a press release, not an ad. A headline like “Best flat screen TV on the market!!!” is not catchy at all – and it will certainly send your press release straight to the trash bin.

You need a killer headline... and a killer first paragraph

You do need to be able to catch your readers' attention in 150-200 characters. But your headline won't get them "hooked" – your 1st paragraph will. This is why you also need a killer first paragraph (or "summary").

Your first paragraph will be **2 sentences long** (that's about 250 characters). These few words must **express your main/most interesting idea**, and will determine whether your press release is worth reading or not. Don't try to create suspense here: if your first paragraph doesn't show where you are heading right away, you will lose your readers. Save your examples, quotes, figures and detailed explanations for the rest of your press release.

Chances are that your readers will only **remember one thing** about your press release. This thing should fit in a couple of short sentences: **just make it your first paragraph!**

How to optimize your press releases for SEO

Your online press releases are published on independent web pages: how can you make sure that your target audience will find them, and read them? Most of your potential readers will use a search engine, such as Google, to research a specific brand or topic – then they may come across your press release, among other search results.

How can you optimize your press releases for SEO (Search Engine Optimization)? Follow these basic tips and you will maximize your chances.

Pick your keywords carefully

The most important part of your SEO optimization is to identify the 2 or 3 keywords that best describe your product or your news. These keywords should be common expressions that people are likely to use on search engines if they want to research your brand, product type or industry. Avoid professional jargon!

If you have a doubt, search different keywords on Google and compare how many results they get.

Make sure these top keywords are included in your title: most of the times, press release titles are enclosed in `<h1>` tags and have a strong importance for search engine crawlers. These top keywords should also be included in your summary and in the body of your press release, at least 2-3 times each. This will give them more “weight” for search engine crawlers – and it’ll also help your readers under-

stand your key message!

Learn how to build great links

A good press release contains a good number of relevant links, that will enhance both the reader's experience and the web page's search engine rankings. Don't hesitate to build anchor links: pick your most relevant keywords and phrases, and link them to related pages in your own website! If possible, don't link them to your homepage, but to deeper, more relevant pages (i.e. with a single topic / a better keyword density).

If your website doesn't contain such resources, don't hesitate to create specific landing pages, with rich content and a strong emphasis on the desired keywords or phrases!

Don't forget that you're writing for "human" readers!

Press releases should never be written for SEO purposes only. Your content should always be relevant, clear and easy to read. Nobody likes to read whole paragraphs with the same keywords or phrases repeated every other line, or with 3 hyperlinks per sentence – not even search engine crawlers!

Always remember: if your overall style doesn't look "natural", your SEO optimization will do more harm than good.

How to make your press release visually attractive

Some points on how to create a well-balanced and visually striking press release.

We have already talked about how to create, how to follow-up and how to get the best results with a good press release. In this article, we would like to point out the importance and added value of using images in your PR. Journalists and bloggers are more likely to pick up on your press release when it is also pleasing to the eye. So, what exactly makes an article look visually attractive? Here are some pointers on how to make your press release more captivating and balanced.

There is no fundamental solution to making your article look good, but there is an artistic factor. In order to obtain a generally attractive design, you have to focus on a combination of a number of components such as layout, balance, imagery, color and functionality.

The layout of a press release goes hand in hand with the imagery you select to punctuate your article. The basic layout of an article consists of a header, lead, main text and images. This is a general rule of thumb you can stick with and which is globally recognized by journalists and bloggers.

Balance the imaging with your article. It is important not to overcrowd your text with too many pictures or videos, nor should you add any images that are out of

context with the subject of your article. Place your visuals where it counts. There is no need to show a video at the end of your article when it would have been more appropriate at the beginning. So, place your imagery strategically and in harmony with your text.

A picture paints a thousand words. Images and videos are very powerful tools, so be careful when selecting your imagery. Some people may find some images disturbing whilst others do not. Be aware of the fact that everyone perceives differently. There is no need to risk that your article ends up in the trash because of a troubling image. Let the picture or video do its job and tell part of the story for you. Choose imagery that fits in with the context of the article and that is neutral rather than provocative, depending on the subject matter of course. Choose carefully.

The subconscious responds strongly to color. Use it: it can be of real added value to your press release. Our daily lives are filled with color, so why not your PR? Colors affect our moods, energy and emotions. So, choose your images according to the tone of your article. This will greatly add to the quality of your content and press release as a whole. Add color wisely and you will set the right tone for your subject.

The function of imagery is to add something more to your article without the need for words. It can really add that final touch to your press release. For this, you can select pictures, videos or infographics. Be careful with the latter. An infographic can be visually stunning and quickly spread, but it has to be able to tell your story correctly. Make sure your story is suited for this, as an infographic

only consists of pictures. Just make sure to own every copyright to any image or video used in order to avoid legal issues in the process!

Adding imagery to your press release makes it more likely to be picked up by bloggers and journalists. Your story should be entertaining, compelling, informative and most importantly, visually articulate.

3 things you should check when you proofread your press release

Facts, figures and dates

Verify all the facts, figures and dates you're publishing – publishing erroneous information will damage your credibility as a professional! Make sure you have all your sources ready, and be prepared to give more details if necessary.

Grammar and spelling

Grammatical or spelling errors will also damage your credibility. Your press release needs to be 100% perfect on this point! Don't rely entirely on your word processing program, as some mistakes might slip through. Take your time, and proofread your press release carefully, 2 or 3 times. Try to find a second set of eyes to proofread it one last time when you're done.

Hyperlinks

Finally, make sure all your hyperlinks point to the right pages! You don't want to send your readers to irrelevant/old/broken pages.

Press releases: the top 12 mistakes you should avoid

With a little practice, anyone can write a good press release! But there are rules to follow. Here are the top 12 mistakes you should avoid when writing a press release.

- 1. Your press release has nothing newsworthy to report:** not everything is news! A good press release informs the media and the general public about a newsworthy topic. Try to present something that's new/relevant/interesting for your readers, not just for you or your company.
- 2. Your press release reads like an advertisement:** you're not writing an ad, and you shouldn't try to sell anything. Please avoid using hype flags, exclamation marks and hyperbolic product/service claims. You're writing to journalists, not consumers.
- 3. Your press release reads like a blog post/an open letter:** press releases are not blog posts or open letters. If you need to express your personal opinion about a person or a group, please choose another format.
- 4. Your press release doesn't target the right journalists:** don't send your press release to every single media contact you can find. Instead, try to target a limited set of journalists that will actually be interested in reading your story. Press releases are all about quality, not quantity!

- 5. Your press release contains no call to action:** your press release must contain a clear call to action. Always tell your readers what's next! Give them an incentive to do something, to contact you, or at least visit your website.
- 6. Your content has already been published on other websites:** nobody wants to read the same thing twice. Press releases shouldn't contain material that has already been published on other websites or publications – especially if this material is copyrighted.
- 7. Your press release promotes undesirable content:** don't send press releases if you're trying to promote:
 - common spam material, such as health supplements, pharmaceuticals, opportunities to “make money”, etc;
 - sexually explicit material or products;
 - online gambling, fantasy sports and related sites
- 8. Your press release is too short (or too long):** press releases should be between 300 and 800 words. Short press releases often lack information; long press releases are often difficult to read.
- 9. Your press release contains bad spelling or grammar:** spelling and grammatical errors will affect your credibility. Please proofread your press release before you send it.
- 10. Your press release contains bad formatting:** press releases should be easy to read. Please avoid using special characters, too few or too many line

breaks, and writing sentences in all capital letters.

11. Your press release contains too many hyperlinks: don't stuff your press release with hyperlinks. Please limit your link count to 1 per 100 words. Too many hyperlinks will make your links lose value and might affect your credibility.

12. Your press release doesn't match our template: all our press releases are published according to the same template. Please make sure everything is included in the right section (especially your company description and contact details)

Why and how should you follow up after a press release?

When you send a press release, most journalists won't reply right away. There are many reasons for this: they can be too busy, they can forget your e-mail, or sometimes they don't get your point and/or simply don't feel the need to know more.

This is why **following up after a few days can be a smart move** – if you follow some simple rules!

When you follow up with a journalist, don't ask him/her why he/she hasn't replied yet – this would be rude, and your contacts never owe you an answer. Don't be too pushy or aggressive: this never works. Instead, be polite and helpful. Send additional information on your product or service, or present your story with a different news angle. If you are available for an interview, mention it again, and include full contact details. Your goal isn't just to say hello again, it is to **trigger your contact's curiosity**, and get him/her to take a second look at your story or your company. Be creative, and show your contact you know him/her!

The Next Generation of Press Releases

Press releases have been used for over 100 years, ever since Ivy Lee, considered a founding father of the PR industry, sent a direct statement to journalists regarding the disastrous 1906 Atlantic City train wreck. Since then, press releases have been used as a primary source of information for journalists and a great tool for companies to share their news. But a lot has changed since 1906, and so have press releases. **Here are some new perspectives to consider:**

- 1. Think of your press release as a news article:** it's time to rethink your understanding of a press release as a means to get a great article written about you. Instead, think of your press release as the article itself! A really well-written article makes an overworked journalist's job much easier and is thus more likely to get picked up, especially if you have a hook, an angle, and a compelling story. This leads us to point number 2...
- 2. Even if your news doesn't get picked up, it's still published:** this is one of the great things that has changed since the early days of PR: even if no journalist decides to write about your news, thanks to online PR services like PressKing, your press release is still published online. Social media also enables the sharing of your press release, meaning that any news you write has a chance of going viral, and the better your news, the higher your chances. Speaking of which...
- 3. If your news isn't newsworthy, don't bother:** we know we've said this a

million times, but it's especially relevant here. There's a reason why journalists have jobs: they write well and know exactly what kind of news their readers want to read, so if you are hoping to bypass the journalist-middlemen, your story better be seriously good. Your news must have real value that encourages your readers to act, whether that is to visit your website, check out your Facebook page, or even make a purchase.

Technology has evolved immensely, and with it has the PR industry. Keep these ideas in mind when writing your next press release and make the most of your PR efforts with online PR services like PressKing.

How to pitch a journalist

Pitching journalists can be a difficult thing. Most of them receive hundreds, and sometimes thousands of e-mails every week, and they can't answer to everybody. Here are a couple of tips that will help you maximize your chances:

- **Don't contact them at the last minute:** send them a copy of your product, or if you're selling a service, set up a free account for them. Give them the time to test it and ask questions. The whole process will certainly take longer than a couple of days, so be patient! And don't forget to follow up.
- **Be selective:** don't write to all the famous journalists you know. Only pick the ones you know might actually care about your product / service / industry – even if their audience is smaller. Pitching people who've never shown interest in your industry is a pure waste of time.
- **Give them exclusives:** journalists always like to break stories before everyone else – this implies that you have some real fresh news to announce! If you have nothing new to announce, don't write – it'll probably be a waste of time too.
- **Personalize your pitch:** don't write a single e-mail that you'll copy / paste for all the contacts on your list. Instead, do some research, try to find an article that's related to your story, and write a smart remark about it. Show them you care! This might take you twice the time, but it's really worth it.

- **Make it short and precise:** try to sum up your main idea in one sentence. Provide interesting facts and figures, and highlight your benefits or competitive advantage in a few bullet points. Try to make everything fit in one or two short paragraphs – long e-mails are often discouraging.
- **Provide comprehensive contact details:** give them your phone number, twitter name, links to your blog, LinkedIn account, etc... The more details you give, the easier it'll be for them to find you if they need to ask you something. And be prepared to react quickly!
- **Go local:** never underestimate the power of local media. They're often easier to approach, and these are journalists you'll probably get a chance to meet. Also, in some cases, national media might be more likely to you're your story if you've already had serious media coverage in your own region.
- **Follow up:** just because your contact has finally written about you doesn't mean your relationship is over. Send (clever) comments about their latest articles every now and then, and always let them know if you have a major event or product improvement to announce – but all this must seem spontaneous, don't schedule anything, and don't write if you have nothing to say!

How to pitch a blogger

Bloggers owe their success and influence to their ability to express views, opinions and raise issues in a very specific manner. This is why many of them have developed specific expectations when it comes to pitches.

These tips and tricks should help you meet these expectations.

Things to remember while pitching

- **Be friendly:** your email shouldn't sound too "official" (i.e. boring). Use a "normal", relaxed tone and style (but don't be too familiar). Also, be honest and stick to the facts: your pitch shouldn't read like an ad. Finally, if you don't get a response, or if you get negative feedback, don't lose your temper: harsh words will only make it worse.
- **Keep it simple:** keep your email short and be straightforward. Your story should fit in a few sentences – bloggers don't have the time to read more than this anyway. You should only try to sell one big idea at a time. Then, if your contact decides to write something about you, you'll get the occasion to go through the smallest details in your next email or phone call.
- **Share contact details:** don't forget to share as many contact details as possible with your contact (phone number, email, Facebook or Twitter details, etc). He/she should be able to decide how and when he/she'll contact you. When this happens, you'll need to respond immediately: most articles are

written on a tight schedule, so be prepared to react on short notice.

- **Provide relevant additional content:** at the end of your email, add a few links that might be interesting for your contact if he/she decides to write something about you. These links can point to full product specifications, photo galleries, a matching press release, etc. These links can be really important, as your contact might even use them in his/her article!
- **Do your homework:** read a few recent articles from your target blog, until you find one that's related to your story (if you can't find any, then you may have picked the wrong blog). This will allow you to start your email with a nice/clever reference to a past article, and show your contact you actually care about what he/she does. This will be appreciated.
- **Show them you're unique:** if your contact has already written about your competitors, the main point of your email should be to show why you're unique, how your company stands out in its own market, why it's better than its competitors (of course, all this will have to be proven with facts and figures). Bloggers want something new and specific to write about – they won't publish the same article twice.

Things to avoid while pitching

- **Don't copy/paste your press release:** in general, bloggers don't care about press releases. Most press releases sound too "official" or are too long for a blogger to read them while browsing his/her email. Instead, be friendly, write

a short, concise email, and use a very personalized approach (see above). It will take more time and effort, but it will be way worth it.

- **Avoid attachments:** don't clutter your contact's inbox with heavy attachments. All the information you want to present must be contained in the 2 or 3 first paragraphs of a regular email. Also, many attachments will get you directly to your contact's spam box. If you want to provide interesting additional content, add a couple of hyperlinks at the end of your email (see above).
- **Don't let your interns pitch for you:** most bloggers won't care about your pitch if it has been sent by an intern, or by someone who has no real power to represent your company. They'd rather talk to your CEO. Show them you care, by getting one of your top-level representatives to send the pitch and respond in person: information always seems more important when it comes from a higher level.
- **Don't write things you wouldn't want to be published:** you can write in a relaxed, straightforward way, but always remember there's no such thing as an "unofficial" conversation with a blogger. Everything you write might be published, so be careful not to disclose confidential information, nor to lose your temper or write things you might regret afterwards.
- **Don't follow up every 2 hours:** some bloggers think it is OK to follow up, some simply hate it. If you do decide to follow up, please wait a couple of days. Your contact might be temporarily too busy to respond, or not even interested in your story. Whatever be his/her choice, writing 3 or 4 times a day will only create unwanted and unnecessary pressure.

These few tips and tricks should allow you to send relevant pitched to a handful of interesting bloggers. Nevertheless, always remember that pitching bloggers is far from being easy: only time and efforts will allow you to build interesting, long term relationships with the bloggers that matter most for you business.

Media training 101: what to say and how to behave during an interview

Media interviews can be frightening – especially the 1st ones. Some questions can be tricky, and nobody wants to deliver the wrong message, or make a bad impression. However, a successful interview is the best occasion you'll get to share your story and build a strong, positive image for your company.

Follow these simple tips and your next interview should be a piece of cake.

Before the interview: prepare!

- **Prepare 2 or 3 key messages:** nobody will remember your interview if you don't focus on a limited number of strong facts or figures. Just ask yourself: "if people had to sum up my future interview in one sentence, what would this sentence be?" This sentence contains the key ideas you will need to present throughout your interview.
- **Organize a mock interview with friends or co-workers:** tell them to ask you the trickiest questions they can find, and learn how to build coherent, meaningful answers. If you fail or stutter, start again until everything sounds perfect and natural.

Study other interviews: observe how the whole process unfolds: how long do people wait before they answer? For how long can they speak before they get

interrupted? What do they do when they're interrupted? What is the most typical attitude and body language? Etc. You will learn a lot by studying a few concrete examples, and this will help you get prepared mentally.

During the interview: stay cool

- **Be there on time:** journalists have busy schedules too! Just think of your interviewer as your biggest client: you don't want to be late for your next meeting, and let him think that you don't care.
- **Listen:** don't be too quick at answering questions. If you didn't understand a question, or if you're not sure you understood it well, simply ask the journalist to reformulate it – he certainly won't resent you for this.
- **Keep your answers brief:** the next question will always arrive sooner than expected. You only have a few seconds to convince: if you can't make your point in a few words, your interviewer won't wait – he'll just move on to something else. Stick to short sentences with simple, strong arguments.
- **Watch your language:** always remain polite. Also, try to avoid professional jargon. Don't expect your audience to know anything about your business. Use simple, ordinary words: your ideas only become clearer.
- **Stick to your key messages:** you're only here to present 2 or 3 strong facts or figures, and explain/illustrate them. When the conversation starts shifting to something else, find a way to get back to your key arguments – always

stay in your comfort zone.

- **Learn when and how to say no:** if you can't or don't want to answer a specific question, try to find a good reason – something like: “I'm sorry, the reports aren't in yet – I cannot respond to that at the moment”. If the journalist insists, remember that there's no such thing as “off the record”. Only share information that you know could be published.
- **Watch your body language:** maintain a good posture, let go of nervous body language (shaking your leg, constantly smoothing your hair, etc). People will always pay more attention to what you're saying if they're not distracted by your physical attitude.
- **Don't take things too personally:** if the journalist arrives late, keeps interrupting you, or doesn't seem to be listening: stay calm and polite. Losing your temper will always do more harm than good.

After the interview: follow up!

- **Be helpful:** make sure the journalist has all your contact details, and always offer to answer additional questions by e-mail or by phone. If you realize you've made a mistake (e.g. given a wrong figure, mispronounced a name, etc), don't hesitate to call the journalist ASAP and ask him to correct it.
- **Send a thank you note:** sending a quick e-mail shortly after your interview will have 2 positive effects: 1) it'll give you an occasion to remind the journalist that you're here to help if he needs anything, and 2) you'll be remembered as a nice guy!



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