# Creating a High Converting Ecommerce Welcome Email Series

## Quick Reference Guide

**eFOCUS Marketing**

# Introduction

Reaching your prospects when they're most likely to respond is crucial to **building customer lifetime value**.

An **automated welcome series** provides an incredible opportunity to build and nurture the relationship, develop brand loyalty, and prompt sales.

This quick reference guide will show you the key elements of a post sign-up welcome email series.

You will learn the key elements needed to implement an engaging welcome email series that starts a mutually rewarding customer relationship properly in the right way.

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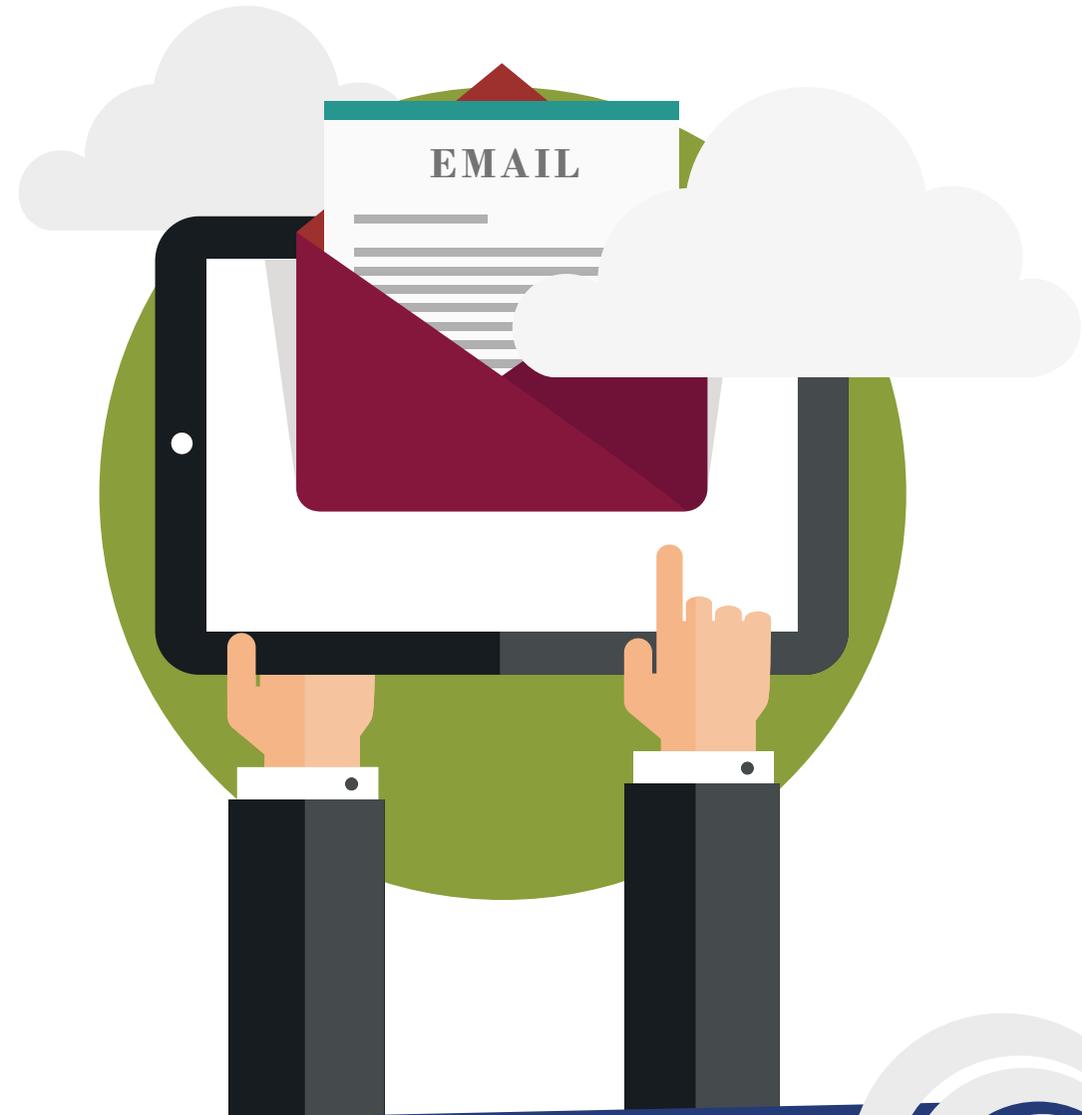
# What Is It?

A welcome email series is your **first chance to communicate with a subscriber** and welcome them to not only your email programme, but most importantly, your brand. It gives you an opportunity to **start the relationship off on the right foot** and build a positive interaction with them in the right way.

The **welcome email** is the first communication they will receive from you (unless you are using double opt-in to confirm the subscription, in which case this will technically be the second email they receive from you. [Read more about single and double opt in on our blog here >](#)) following registration on your sign-up form; this could be a standalone form on your website, squeeze page, or opt in as part of an account registration process, for example.

The **on-boarding series** follows the welcome email and **extends your opportunity to talk to the subscriber** during the critical time period following this action, when they are most likely to be positively engaged with your brand. This series of emails following the initial welcome email aims to:

- Treat new subscribers differently
- Maximise opportunities for engagement and conversion
- Initiate a positive, and meaningful experience with the brand
- Ensure you don't bombard the subscriber with too much information in one email
- Further build the relationship with the subscriber
- Focus on educating the subscriber - on why they need your products/how they can benefit from them
- Showcase key areas of your website
- Introduce your brand and story

Subscribers who opt in as part of the purchase process should be sent a different type of programme that, although including some of the same elements discussed in this quick reference guide, focuses more on **informing** the new subscriber about their purchase, **educating** them as to how to make the most of it and **encouraging** a repeat purchase.

# Why welcome the subscriber?

## Welcome messages are among the most engaged with emails you can send

Welcome messages see an **86% life in unique open rate and an 196% life in unique click rate** compared to standard messaging sent by a brand. Additionally, people that read at least one welcome message read more than 40% of their messages from the sending brand in the following 180 days. [1]



## Build recognition with subscribers early

If a subscriber signs up and you don't send them anything for 3 months (for example) they're **likely to forget they subscribed**, and have a higher propensity to register a complaint in the future or not engage at all with your messages (leading to a lost opportunity for revenue!), unless you do something to build the relationship with them and stay front of mind. Almost half of consumers (47%) sometimes wonder, *"how brands got my email address"*, with a third (35%) often or always wondering this. [2]

Welcome messages sent in real-time following the sign up see **10 times the transaction rate** of those sent in delayed batches [2], plus subscribers who receive a welcome email show on average **33% more long-term engagement** with a brand. [3]

[1] *Bluehornet Welcome Email Guide Infographic*
[2] *DMA Consumer Email tracking study 2015*
[3] *DMA Insight: Marketer Email Tracking Study 2016*

# Why welcome the subscriber?

## Encourage the subscriber to make an initial purchase

Delivering value early in the relationship, such as a special offer (e.g. an opt in offer), is about building trust with the subscriber from the start of the relationship, and helps to train them that your emails are relevant and worth their time opening going forward.

**43% of consumers consider money off discounts as the most effective** in encouraging them to sign up for emails, 32% free delivery and 37% a % off discount. [4]

Welcome emails have **320% more revenue per email than other promotional messages** [5], however only 1% of retailers on the Internet Retailer 500 send a welcome series. The ones who do, see a **13% increase in revenue** compared to the original welcome email. [6]

## It's expected for brands to send a welcome message

Almost 74.4% of **consumers expect to receive a welcome email** when they subscribe[1] and can be disappointed or doubt if the sign-up process worked if they don't; this doesn't give a good first impression of your brand.

4 *DMA Insight: Marketer Email Tracking Study 2016*
5 *Easy SMTP hWelcome Email Marketing Optimization*
6 *MyEmma.com*

# Why welcome the subscriber?

## Don't overwhelm subscribers

By using a series of emails to highlight key elements of the email programme, website and brand, you can **build interest and engage** the new subscriber without overwhelming them with too much information all in one email.

An optimised welcome email series can help initiate a positive experience with the brand and reduce the likelihood of complaints down the line. Research shows that the second, third and fourth mailings in a series out-perform the promotional mailings sent during the same time period. 4
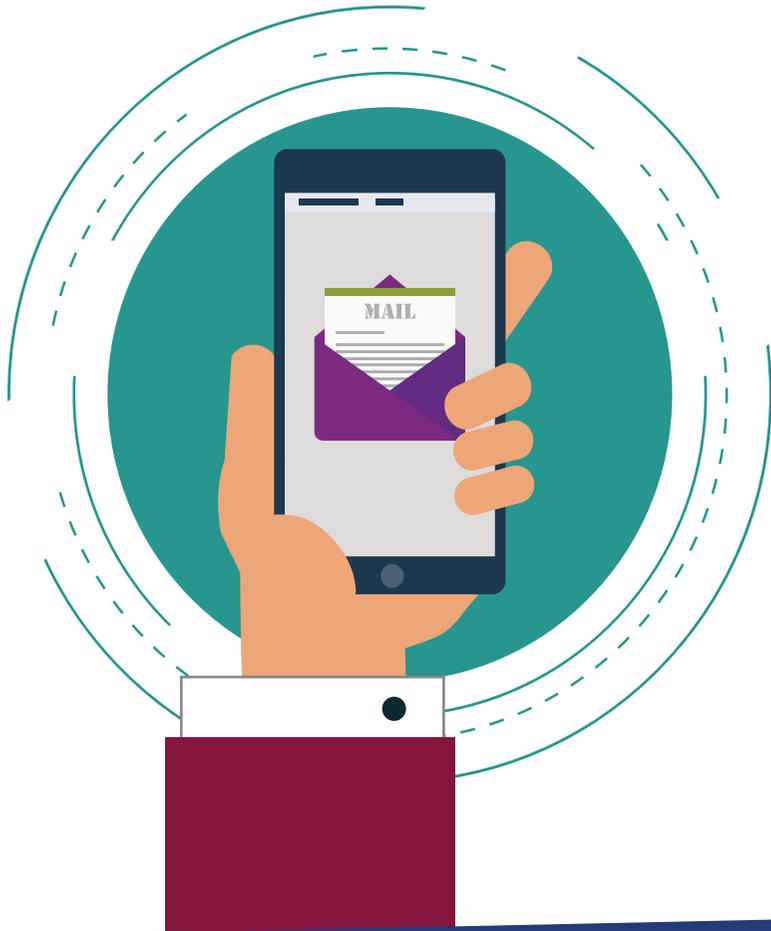
# Getting Started With Your Welcome & On-boarding Series

# Before you build your series, consider the following three steps...

## What is the goal of your on-boarding series?

For example, the most common goal for retailers is to **encourage a subscriber to make a purchase**, but you may also want to **encourage them to order regularly** (e.g. a retailer selling gifts, or a product that benefits from a repeat purchase or subscription could offer order reminders via email or text).

Or, your goal may be for them to learn more about using different aspects of your service (e.g. an online retailer selling a service where a subscriber can create their own content, such as personalised products or photobooks etc., may want to show subscribers how to use their technology easily and use basic and advanced features quickly).

**Once you know your goals you can also format a hypothesis for your programme.**

For example, you may want to **reduce the amount of time** between the point at which a prospect registers for your email programme and when they make an initial purchase (from a current average of 28 days to an average of 7 days) by providing **actionable advice and education** to getting the most out of your brand, as well as directly encouraging the purchase, directing the subscriber to key areas of your website and product catalogue to do so.

## Decide how many emails you want in the series

Ensure that you...

- **Time the emails** so that it doesn't look as if you are sending more email than your subscribers would normally expect from your programme

- Determine how the content is going to **build over time**

- Start to take them through the **first 3 stages of the customer lifecycle** – acquisition, consideration and purchase. Encourage the natural flow of information and movement through the lifecycle with your brand

- Focus on the **first 30 days after a subscriber registers,** as well as taking into consideration the length of your sales cycle – for example, if prospects are most likely to buy in the first 48 hours, you may want to front-load your welcome series.

**If your sales cycle is longer, make sure you're creating messages over the course of a few weeks or months.**

## Decide on your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

In order to ascertain how successful your welcome email series is, you need to know **how you're going to measure it and a benchmark to compare against.**

To prove you've achieved your original hypothesis, you also need to ensure you have the correct data available – e.g. your current average time between sign up and purchase, and the ability to re-analyse this data after implementing the new series.

It is also helpful when you first start sending your series to **benchmark against your standard promotional messages** in terms of your standard metrics and monitor statistics such as:

- Open rate
- Click rate
- Conversion rate
- Unsubscribe rate
- Complaint rate

As you move forward and generate results for this series, you can benchmark against its previous performance to ascertain if your results are increasing / decreasing as changes are made.

Use Google Analytics (or a similar program) to also analyse statistics such as the average time on site and customer journey after clicking on an email to the website from this series to gain further insight as to its effectiveness in fulfilling your goals.

# Welcome Email Series Checklist

Trigger welcome email immediately after sign up

Welcome and thank the new subscriber

Set expectations of the email programme (e.g. *'you will receive emails two-three times per week'*)

Reinforce the benefits the subscriber will now receive after registering (e.g. '*you'll be the first to know about our latest offers, receive exclusive subscriber only discounts, early access to our sales, weekly trend tips and much more!*')

Give subscribers somewhere to go next (e.g. explore key areas, top selling products, product categories or features of your website)

Display your contact details

Deliver the opt in offer (if you offered one on sign-up e.g. discount voucher code)

Refer to your upcoming on-boarding email series so that it's expected (Hint to the content of the next email in the series so that subscribers know to expect it and want to read more. E.g. '*Keep on an eye on your inbox for our next email with 5 tips to ensure you're always on trend every season*')

Give a Whitelisting (add to address book) prompt

Personalise your message – if you know your subscriber's name, use this to start building trust in your messages. If you've collected data around their interests or location etc. on sign up, use this to present relevant information / product suggestions / local store information from the very first email they receive from you

# On-Boarding Email Series Checklist

While these communications should contain offers and / or incentives, they should also educate the subscriber and make their experience with the email program as positive and meaningful as possible.

Ensure other messaging is turned off (or frequency reduced) whilst the subscriber is moving through the on-boarding series

Consider the actions that will stop the on-boarding series. (e.g. someone making a purchase or triggering a new series of emails; such as abandoning a basket), or having a negative interaction with your brand (e.g. registering a complaint – this requires an integrated CRM system)

Differentiate your welcome emails from regular messages in the subject line; consider labelling each email so it's clear it is a series – e.g. Part 1 / Part 2 etc. This builds recognition with the subscriber as well as a subconscious need not to miss a part in the series, further encouraging the open

Create a series that changes based on a subscriber's activity / inactivity with previous messages - Change the messaging for anyone who has not engaged with any emails in the series, for example, present a different special offer

Adjust content dynamically based on behaviour; with previous messages (e.g. which links they clicked on) and the areas of the website they have interacted with (e.g. categories/products they have viewed) to ensure offers are highly relevant; increasing the opportunity to drive a purchase

Keep your emails short and to the point – recipients frequently skim emails so keep copy short, bold and underline key points, craft headlines, use well laid out imagery and bullet points to highlight important information.

# Welcome & On-Boarding Series
# Best Practices

The way in which you present the emails in this series has a big impact on how you're perceived by subscribers going forward and the effectiveness of the series itself.

Consider elements of your email design including...

Ensure consistent branding (e.g. fonts, colours, logo, imagery used)

Use a clear from address to provide brand recognition from the first message - many companies send the initial welcome message from a different platform than their standard marketing communications, which can create a disparity in the sending address as well as creative elements of the messages. This can cause a disconnect for the customer and affect future engagement with your email communications.

If you're including images, ensure they are well chosen and support the message, with your call to action and key information in text (so that even with images disabled, the main message can still be read and your call to action, acted upon)

Consider using an animated GIF image to bring your email to life

Include a short video (link to a video on a landing page) to welcome subscribers

54% of opens now happen on a mobile device[7] so ensure your emails are optimised for engagement on a mobile device.

Optimise the pre-header text – the very first line of text that appears in your email, is also pulled in underneath the subject line in many email clients. Ensure that you optimise this text to support the subject line, and include your main call to action; so that when a subscriber does open the email, even without scrolling down, they can immediately act on your main call to action straight away

Friendly 'From' Name

Subject Line

Pre-Header Text

TripAdvisor

Review the place you rated

Thanks for that rating... don't forget the review   ...
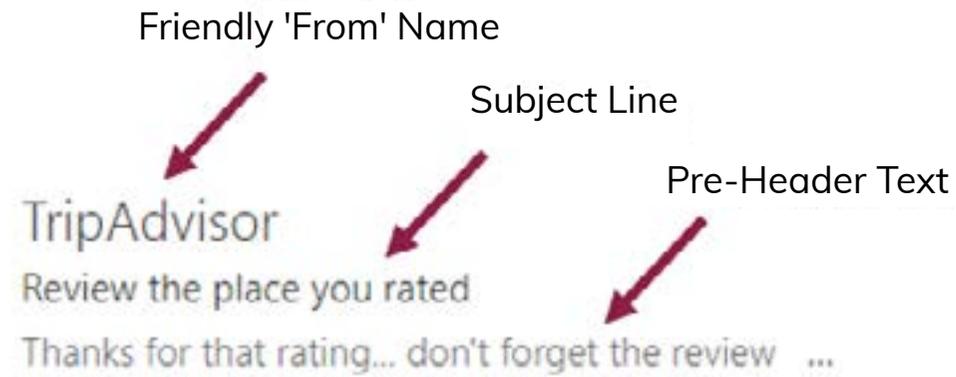
Ensure a clear call to action in each email

Direct subscribers to appropriate landing pages to create a consistent customer journey and encourage the desired action

# Welcome & On-Boarding Series Content Ideas

Consider the types of questions and needs that subscribers have after discovering your brand and going through the consideration stage of the lifecycle before making a purchase.

What are their key concerns/feelings? What do they need to know/understand before they move to the next stage and make a purchase?

**For example:**

Why they should purchase from you (e.g. 3 reasons to purchase from us; fast delivery, free returns etc.)

Encourage a sale – follow up your initial opt in offer, if offered (time sensitive encouragement), showcase bestselling products, lead them to key categories on your site, present an offer specifically related to their preferences or behaviour shown during the on-boarding series (such as products/product categories they have shown an interest in by clicking on links or visiting on site)

For companies offering a service (e.g. creating a photobook), consider including quick start instructions – how to set up an account for example, link to resources or a how to get started guide

Find out more information about the subscriber using progressive profiling in order to provide more personalised and relevant content and product recommendations based on their specific needs (e.g. if they haven't already, encourage them to update their preferences, send a survey, offer an in-email poll)

Highlight key areas of your offering such as postage options, return policies, satisfaction guarantees etc.

Examples of how other people have used the product/service (e.g. images shared to you on social media showing your products in place in their home etc.) (ensure you have permission to use the content)

Present reviews from other customers (about specific products they have shown interest in / about using your brand generally) to build trust

If you have a catalogue, encourage the subscriber to sign up to receive a copy

Social media email – join you on social media channels to extend the relationship further

Invitation to join a loyalty / VIP programme (if applicable)

Invitation to refer friends/family for an incentive such as a discount or upgrade

Answer FAQs before they are even asked

# Consider a multi-channel strategy

Think about how your email marketing integrates with social media, direct mail, telesales, offline adverts and other channels your organisation may use, are all important to getting your message across, further building the relationship and increasing conversions.

For example:

- Consider adding in SMS as part of your series to drive people back to your email content (this could work well if the subscriber has not interacted with any emails in the series)

- Add a targeted piece of direct mail to the series or use retarget campaigns (using custom lists) on social media (e.g. Facebook) or search (e.g. Google) to reinforce welcome series messaging

*Don't Forget*

When using channels such as SMS and Direct Mail, ensure you have the correct opt in permission in place.

# Key testing opportunities to maximise your results

Testing and optimisation of the content and sending frequency for the welcome email series should be carried out to ensure that opens, clicks and conversions are enhanced. Also pay close attention to the complaint and unsubscribe rates during testing and ensure that these metrics remain as low as possible.

Conduct testing on key elements such as:

The ideal number of emails and cadence of messaging in the series

Content included in each email

Design/Layout

Subject Lines

Call to action placement, colour and copy
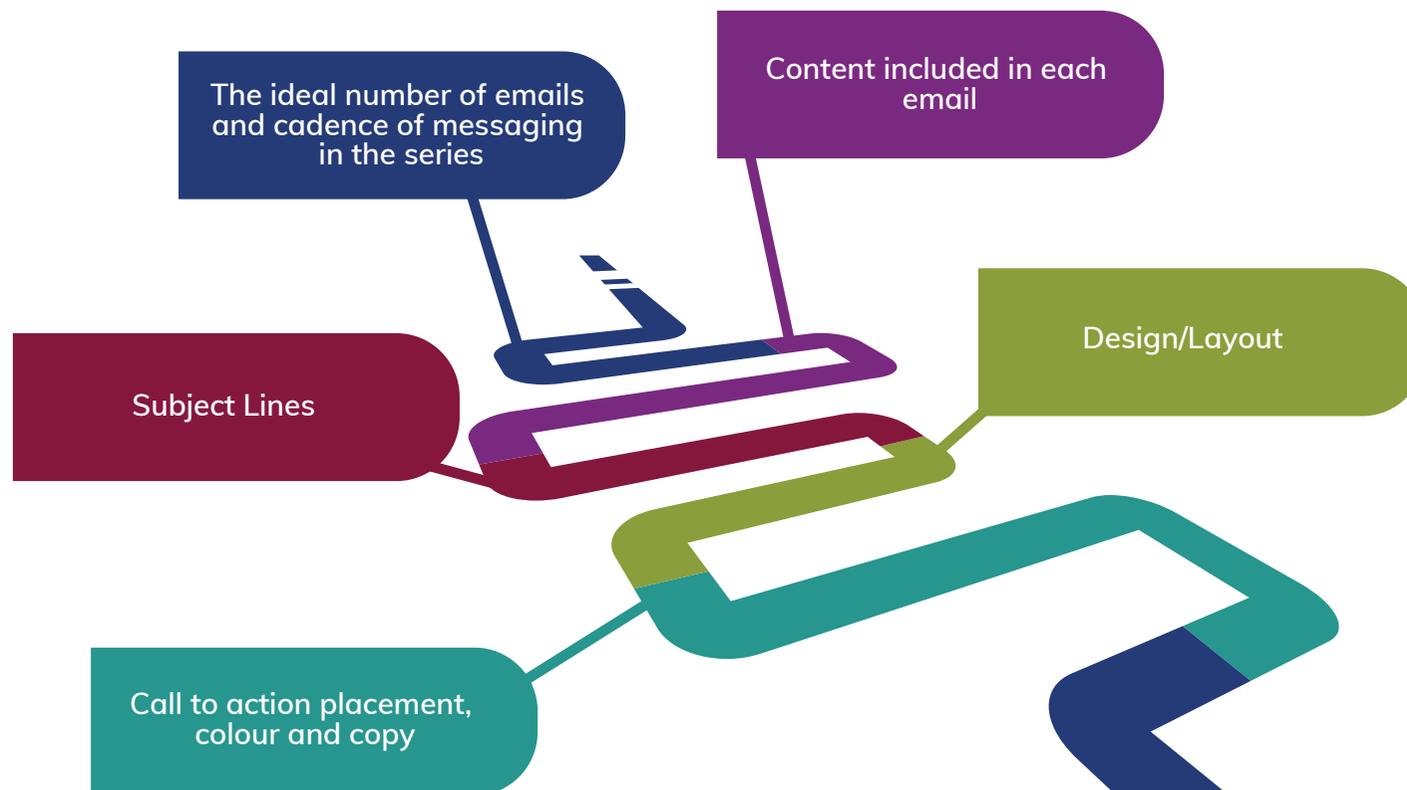
# About eFocus Marketing

**eFocus Marketing** is a leading specialist email marketing agency.

The eFocus Marketing team provides a dedicated email marketing resource to ecommerce companies looking to optimise, automate and grow their email marketing programme.

From strategic consulting, to full service management and training, we address every aspect of an email programme to produce successful email marketing campaigns. If you want to boost your conversions, fix deliverability problems or increase response rates, you need to ensure you are communicating with subscribers at every stage of the email marketing lifecycle.

Our team of experts will work out the best options for your business and offer solutions in bite-size pieces so that you can focus on quick wins that will increase your success as well as longer term changes to become a better sender and increase your results.

eFocus Marketing can assist you in making the most of your campaigns through the following services:

- **Email Marketing Consultancy**
- **Implementation & Management**

- **Bespoke In-house Training**
- **Online Training Courses**

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# Convert.
# *Grow.*

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