



# PRO BONO AS A PEOPLE STRATEGY

How companies can create shared value between CSR and HR

Taproot has long made the case that a strong corporate pro bono program is a triple win—nonprofits receive the support they need, companies build deeper relationships with their communities, and employees have the opportunity to apply their skills in new and meaningful ways. While there is a robust foundation of evidence supporting the claim that pro bono is a powerful social impact strategy, practitioners often struggle to articulate the business case for pro bono.

Through Taproot's work developing pro bono programs across the corporate sector, we've learned that pro bono can help companies meet key HR objectives like attracting, retaining, and developing their employees. In this paper, we explore how pro bono practitioners can align their pro bono efforts with their company's HR strategy to create shared value across the company.

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# HOW CAN PRO BONO ENHANCE A COMPANY'S HR STRATEGY?

Many companies share a common set of HR objectives, although each might have a different way of approaching or prioritizing them depending on a variety of factors, like company size or industry. Liz Joyce, an Executive Advisor at Gartner, identifies four key areas where pro bono can support HR outcomes: attracting talent, developing talent, retaining and promoting talent, and diversity and inclusion.

## ATTRACTING TALENT

Today's job seekers want to find purpose in their work and are looking for ways to align their personal values with their day-to-day work.

A recent MetLife survey found that 9 out of 10 people would rather choose to work at a company with similar values over a job with higher pay.<sup>1</sup> Pro bono is a powerful way to communicate key company values and demonstrate the company's commitment to its culture. In so doing, companies are able to differentiate their value proposition to potential employees and attract candidates who share the company's cultural values. Companies that engage employees in pro bono service understand that prospective employees want to use their skills to do good work for their company and their community.

## DEVELOPING TALENT

Members of today's workforce highly value professional training and development as a job benefit.

Pro bono allows companies to demonstrate investment in their talent and provides experiential learning opportunities through which employees can apply a variety of functional and leadership skills in new settings. Companies can help their staff build competencies like collaboration, agility, and change management through pro bono.

## RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT

A company's employees are one of its most valuable assets and are critical to its ability to meet strategic goals, yet many companies struggle to retain talent and promote from within.

Pro bono experiences provide important opportunities for employees to take on stretch assignments, which companies can leverage to focus on the leadership development of high-potential employees. This investment often results in increased employee job satisfaction by helping to align personal and corporate values.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Companies are increasingly focused on establishing an inclusive workforce that values a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds.

Pro bono not only provides companies with the opportunity to engage diverse talent but also allows participants to work across teams and departments, become familiar with people and processes from a different sector, and hone inclusive leadership skills.

<sup>1</sup> MetLife, *Role of the Company Survey* (2017)

## WHY AREN'T MORE COMPANIES ALIGNING THEIR PRO BONO AND HR STRATEGIES?

While most companies share a common set of HR objectives that pro bono can help support, there is often a disconnect between those who run pro bono programs and their HR counterparts. Here are a few of the reasons why:

### Embedding intentional talent development strategies within pro bono programs is a relatively new venture.

Experiential learning has emerged as a major trend for connecting talent to meaningful, high-stakes learning opportunities. Pro bono can be a dynamic approach to experiential learning. However, many practitioners have yet to build programs that intentionally leverage the talent development benefits of pro bono.

### Many pro bono practitioners don't have a strong relationship with their HR counterparts.

Distinct corporate departments often operate in silos, and there may be a variety of HR representatives focused on different groups of talent. This division can make it difficult to establish the right partners, build trust, and align on a shared strategy. Also, pro bono practitioners may not have a clear understanding of HR's specific goals and strategies, making it hard to find a place to plug in.

### Many pro bono practitioners lack the "proof" to demonstrate to internal stakeholders that pro bono is an effective HR strategy.

Pro bono practitioners are often asked to provide data that demonstrates the business impact of their programs. But measuring the HR benefits of a pro bono program can be challenging, especially without a sense of how one's HR team measures the impacts of their broader talent development efforts.

## HOW CAN COMPANIES TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY?

Although aligning pro bono with HR strategies is a relatively new venture, many pro bono practitioners have done so successfully. After interviewing several companies that are already working to create shared value, we culled a few of the key best practices that can help pro bono practitioners get in sync with their HR counterparts.

### Learn your company's overall HR goals.

Although each company has a unique approach and philosophy around talent, many HR experts agree that there are a few key talent objectives that make or break a company's HR strategy. Understanding HR's goals and what success looks like for them can help you translate the benefits of pro bono and align on impact. On the next page, we share some helpful insights and data that can help pro bono practitioners make a compelling case to HR.

### Identify an HR champion that sees the potential for collaboration and build a partnership.

Critical to collaboration is finding the right HR partner focused on talent development and establishing shared goals and clear responsibilities at the outset to ensure a win for both sides. For instance, CSR can take point in running the pro bono program, while HR is responsible for targeted recruitment and identifying key skills for participants to develop throughout. By leveraging HR to do what they do best, CSR supports a strategic partnership and demonstrates the potential for pro bono as an embedded talent development strategy.

### Measure the talent outcomes of your pro bono program.

Whether HR is already on board or you're working to get them engaged in your pro bono initiative, tracking relevant data will be an important way to demonstrate how pro bono can support HR objectives. Oftentimes, HR practitioners are interested in some of the data you are capturing—such as levels of employee engagement, exposure to experiences that broaden thinking, or rates of internal promotions—but consider aligning your data more closely to the outcomes that HR cares most about.

Pro bono practitioners are often under pressure to prove that positive impacts of pro bono on employees are **caused** by participation (causation), yet pro bono is often just one of many talent development interventions. Instead, pro bono practitioners can prove that the positive impacts of pro bono are directly **correlated** to participation (correlation). A strong case for correlation can go a long way, as this is often how impact is demonstrated across other talent development interventions.

# ADVANCING KEY HR OBJECTIVES THROUGH PRO BONO

	HR OBJECTIVES	HOW PRO BONO CAN SUPPORT	INDUSTRY DATA
ATTRACTING TALENT	Hire Top Talent	Demonstrate strong commitment to professional development	<b>87%</b> of millennials say professional development and growth opportunities are very important to them <sup>2</sup>
	Hire Talent that Reflects Company's Values and Culture	Communicate company values and attract people who share those values	<b>58%</b> of prospective employees consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work (including 76% millennials) <sup>3</sup>
DEVELOPING TALENT	Develop Talent	Develop skills like: communication, adaptability, empathy, vision, flexibility, and nimbleness <sup>4</sup>	Pro bono programs develop new, job-related skills at a rate <b>95%</b> higher than traditional volunteer programs <sup>5</sup>
	Develop Leaders	Provide stretch opportunities for rising talent to take on new roles and hone specific leadership skills like executive presence and team management	<b>73%</b> of managers of pro bono participants found employees had developed leadership skills as a result of their pro bono experience <sup>6</sup>
RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT	Engage Talent	Build employee morale and satisfaction and reinforce company culture	<b>78%</b> of managers of pro bono participants indicate employees exhibited improved attitude and motivation <sup>7</sup>
	Retain Talent	Reduce employee turnover by engaging employees in meaningful work	<b>88%</b> of employees feel more fulfilled by their jobs when provided opportunities to make a positive impact on social or environmental issues <sup>8</sup> <b>41%</b> of pro bono participants say they are more likely to stay at their company because of their pro bono experience <sup>9</sup>
	Promote Talent	Prepare high-potential employees to enable promoting future leaders from within	<b>67%</b> of millennials would leave a position that lacks growth and leadership development opportunities <sup>10</sup>
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	Engage Diverse Talent	Bring together traditionally siloed groups or teams for a common purpose	<b>67%</b> of job seekers view diversity as an important factor when considering job opportunities <sup>11</sup>
	Expose Employees to New Communities, Social Issues, and Work Styles	Broaden perspectives and social consciousness among employees	<b>92%</b> of participants feel more culturally aware due to their pro bono experience <sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Gallup, *How Millennials Want to Work and Live* (2016)

<sup>3,8</sup>Cone Communications, *2016 Cone Communications Millennial Employee Engagement Study* (2016)

<sup>4</sup>Taproot Foundation, *How Can Pro Bono Service Cultivate Your Leaders?* (2017)

<sup>5</sup>Points of Light, *Benefits of Skills-Based Volunteerism: ROI Tracker Findings* (2012)

<sup>6,7,9,12</sup>Pyxera Global, *Global Pro Bono* (2018)

<sup>10</sup>Bridge, *Generational differences in workplace loyalty* (2018)

<sup>11</sup>Ideal, *Workplace Diversity Through Recruitment: A Step-By-Step Guide* (2018)

# WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN ACTION?

Now that you have a sense of how your pro bono strategy can effectively align with your company's HR strategy, you might be wondering how to make it happen. The following four companies are at unique points in their journey, but are prime examples of how pro bono and HR strategies can align. The profiles provided offer insight into the approaches these corporate pro bono practitioners have taken and key points of success they've experienced along the way.



## ADOBE ALIGNING WITH HR TO PROVE CONCEPT

### Pro Bono Residency Program

The Pro Bono Residency Program is Adobe's most intensive pro bono offering, matching volunteers with nonprofits to provide two to five hours of consulting support per week, over a six-month period. Now in its second year, the Pro Bono Residency Program is currently engaging 14 nonprofits and 28 employees across three locations. In addition to advancing the missions of Adobe's nonprofit partners, this program helps employees hone critical leadership skills and further develop their own expertise.

## PROGRAM SPECS

Teams of two Adobe volunteers are matched with one nonprofit client to help address a critical strategic challenge in the areas of marketing, strategy, or technology.

### Talent Engaged

High-potential Adobe volunteers are nominated by their managers, thereby encouraging participants to engage leadership in their development throughout the program.

### Key HR Objectives

- ▶ Improving employee satisfaction
- ▶ Improving employee retention

## ADOBE'S APPROACH

Adobe's Sustainability & Social Impact team designed their post-program survey for the Pro Bono Residency Program participants to align with their annual company-wide survey, which tracks retention, engagement, and talent development. For Ashley Roberts Rhodes, Program Manager for Adobe's Sustainability & Social Impact Team, mapping pro bono impacts against the company's broader goals is a way for other departments to understand the value of their program. By comparing pro bono participants to the general population of their peers, Adobe is able to illustrate how the Pro Bono Residency Program can be a key driver for attracting and retaining their company's talent. Demonstrating these unique gains against key data points that are relevant to Adobe's broader HR and business goals will provide a compelling case for pro bono to share with senior leadership and HR practitioners as they begin to forge a partnership.

## APPROACH TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Adobe has been able to demonstrate the unique benefits pro bono participants experience compared to the general employee population. As they grow the Pro Bono Residency Program, they are focused on continuing to build their evidence base by aligning their key metrics with the broader company-wide survey and identifying the right talent development stakeholders to establish buy-in.

	METHOD	KEY OUTCOMES
RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT	<p><b>Participant survey feedback</b> Self-reported gains on specific skill development, satisfaction with the program, and investment in Adobe.</p>	<p><b>Employee Satisfaction</b> Compared to the general population, participants responded an average of eight percentage points more favorably to questions about retention.</p> <p><b>Employee Retention</b> Participants reported improving an average of five applicable professional skills through the program, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Generating customer insights</li><li>▶ Project management</li><li>▶ Strategic thinking</li></ul>



## PRUDENTIAL FINANCIAL BUILDING HR PARTNERSHIPS

### PruBono Programs

Prudential has built a suite of pro bono programs offered annually, including a one-day pro bono marathon that provides intensive strategic support to local nonprofits as well as two long-term programs that match employees to local nonprofits and small businesses to provide consulting support over a three-month period. All three PruBono programs are designed as intentional leadership development opportunities and are run in partnership by Prudential's Office of Corporate Social Responsibility and Talent Management Center of Expertise.

### PROGRAM SPECS

Teams of employees partner with local nonprofits and small businesses to address critical challenges they face in the areas of strategy, business development, finance, marketing, operations, or HR.

- ▶ **Marathon:** Teams of three to five employees work with a local nonprofit to build an implementation plan to address a capacity-building challenge.
- ▶ **Nonprofit and Small Business Consulting:** Teams of four to six employees are matched with a nonprofit or small business to build a solution to a capacity-building challenge.

#### Talent Engaged

High-potential Prudential employees are nominated to serve as Team Leads and are then given the responsibility of recruiting a team of colleagues who have the expertise to address the challenge.

#### Key HR Objectives

- ▶ Developing talent
- ▶ Retaining and promoting talent
- ▶ Increasing focus on diversity and inclusion

## PRUDENTIAL'S APPROACH

Prudential's CSR team sought a partnership with their Talent Management counterparts from the very outset of program development, identifying colleagues who were passionate about the potential connection to pro bono. Once engaged, they established working sessions with their Talent Management partners to understand Prudential's talent objectives, find opportunities for alignment, and establish shared goals. These touch points served to build rapport between teams and position pro bono as a truly shared talent development strategy.

In order to make the PruBono Programs a compelling and feasible investment, Prudential incorporated a focus on talent development that would provide a strategic value-add to the company's HR initiatives. The CSR team prioritized engaging high-potential senior leaders and focused the talent development components of their pro bono program on key skills that weren't addressed in other programs, such as agile thinking and comfort with ambiguity. According to Beverly Wallace, Prudential's Vice President of Executive Development, the successful partnership between Prudential's Talent Management and CSR teams stems from shared alignment on the firm's overall business strategy, co-ownership of the PruBono programs, and integrated measures demonstrating impact on overall leadership development.

## APPROACH TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Prudential has leveraged both qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate the HR benefits of their PruBono programs, including benchmarking data and key HR metrics used across the company's other talent development programs. Prudential's Talent Management and CSR teams plan to continue evaluating their existing metrics to identify opportunities for improvement and to develop new methods for capturing impact that will support a broader evidence base.

	METHOD	KEY OUTCOMES
DEVELOPING TALENT	<p><b>Participant survey feedback</b> Self-reported skill development gains and correlated retention data for director-level participants.</p>	<p><b>Developing Talent</b> 80%* of program participants agreed they were able to enhance one or more leadership competencies, showing gains in key skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Comfort with ambiguity (92%)</li> <li>▶ Collaborating to seize opportunities (69%)</li> <li>▶ Transforming strategy into action (62%)</li> <li>▶ Establishing clear vision and strategy (54%)</li> <li>▶ Taking intelligent risks (46%)</li> </ul>
RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT	<p><b>Retention and promotion rates</b> Tracking data from HR on retention and rates of promotion after participation.</p>	<p><b>Retaining and Promoting Talent</b> 99% of pro bono participants are still with the company, and 15% of participants were promoted after their pro bono experience (2014 - 2017 cohort).</p>
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	<p><b>Participant demographic data</b> Quantitative data on gender, diversity, and generation that benchmarks participants against the general population data.</p>	<p><b>Diversity and Inclusion</b> Early HR data shows that the pro bono programs engage more women (55%), people of color (39%), and millennials (16%) compared to the general population.</p>

*\*This data is representative of the 2017 Nonprofit Consulting Program only.*





## GSK CULTIVATING INHERENT TALENT DEVELOPMENT

### PULSE Volunteer Partnership

GSK's PULSE Volunteer Partnership is an opportunity for eligible employees to be matched with a nonprofit and provide full-time skills-based volunteering over the course of either a local three- or six-month assignment or an international six-month assignment. The PULSE program is rooted in GSK's threefold change mission:

- 1 Change communities by sharing their talent to support nonprofit partners;
- 2 Change employees by supporting their leadership development through participation;
- 3 Change GSK through employees' application of new skills, bringing fresh perspectives and renewed energy when they return.

## PROGRAM SPECS

A GSK employee is matched with a nonprofit based on skill set for a full-time assignment working to solve healthcare or education challenges their nonprofit partner is currently facing.

### Talent Engaged

Employees with a minimum of three years' experience at GSK, who have sponsorship from their line manager, and have demonstrated a strong motivation to give back, develop their skills, and apply their learnings to their work at GSK when they return.

### Key HR Objectives

- ▶ Developing talent
- ▶ Retaining and promoting talent

## GSK'S APPROACH

GSK's focused recruitment process targets highly motivated employees who are committed to leveraging the inherent talent development components of the PULSE program. Throughout the application process, participants must demonstrate how their participation will allow them to develop professionally and apply new learnings to their work at GSK. Line Managers are also required to submit sponsorship on behalf of applicants, identifying their top development objectives and observations regarding why the applicant is suitable for PULSE. Manu Juneja, Acting Director for GSK's PULSE program, noted that this process is about determining whether the opportunity is in line with an applicant's growth and career trajectory and how it fits in their development plan. GSK establishes broad investment in the PULSE program as a key talent development strategy by targeting best-fit employees and engaging their managers and colleagues in recruitment and impact measurement.

## APPROACH TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Through survey data and performance tracking, GSK has captured the business impacts and return on investment of the PULSE program by surveying not only the participants but their colleagues as well. Looking forward, the PULSE team is focused on refining their survey design, identifying opportunities to incorporate new data points, and aligning with GSK's broader goals for communicating impacts of their program in order to further make the case for pro bono.

	METHOD	KEY OUTCOMES
DEVELOPING TALENT	<p><b>Participant survey feedback</b> Self-reported leadership skill development and application of new skills and innovative ideas of their work at GSK.</p>	<p><b>Developing Talent</b> PULSE volunteers experienced development across competencies like adaptability (96%), cultural awareness (91%), and communication (89%).</p> <p>Of PULSE alumni from 2009 - 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 90% report having developed leadership skills and competencies through PULSE</li> <li>▶ 83% agree that they have made positive changes to the way they work because of PULSE</li> <li>▶ 79% report that PULSE helped them make a positive impact on GSK</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Line Manager and colleague survey feedback</b> Feedback on volunteers' improved performance, increased engagement in leadership opportunities, and demonstration of key leadership competencies.</p>	<p><b>Developing Talent</b> 94% of GSK colleagues believe that PULSE helped the volunteers develop their interpersonal skills and learning agility.</p> <p>71% of GSK colleagues agree that the volunteer took on increased leadership responsibilities immediately after PULSE.</p> <p>83% of GSK colleagues agree that volunteers brought reinvigorated energy, spirit, motivation, and morale to GSK.</p>
RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT	<p><b>Retention and long-term engagement</b> Tracking data on the rate of promotions and other lateral moves experienced by volunteers over the long-term.</p>	<p><b>Retaining Talent</b> 24% of participants have been promoted since returning from their PULSE assignment (2014-2016 cohort).</p>



## DELOITTE INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT

### Deloitte's Pro Bono Portfolio and *stepup*

Over the years, Deloitte has developed a broad portfolio of skills-based volunteering programs: a formal pro bono program that deploys teams full-time, board service opportunities, week-long international service trips, and one-on-one coaching support for social entrepreneurs. The *stepup* program, one of the programs supported by Deloitte Consulting LLP, pairs professionals with local nonprofits to use their skills and experience to help tackle pressing challenges. In the last two years, *stepup* has grown to 10 chapters globally, engaged over 500 practitioners, and delivered over 15,000 hours of in-kind consulting to 50 nonprofit organizations.

# Deloitte.

## PROGRAM SPECS

The *stepup* program deploys teams of five to seven professionals to deliver pro bono consulting that addresses a wide variety of challenges such as business strategy, talent development, data analysis and visualization, and stakeholder management. Support can range from one-day workshops to six-month projects where individuals volunteer two to five hours per week.

A national leadership team provides shared resources and guidance while individual chapters manage project selection and delivery based on the skills and interests in their local office.

### Talent Engaged

Deloitte professionals across all levels and businesses are encouraged to participate.

### Key HR Objectives

- ▶ Accelerating talent development
- ▶ Engaging talent through interesting, purposeful work

## DELOITTE'S APPROACH

The *stepup* program allows participants to move from “team member” to “team lead” to “project advisor” to “program lead.” They are given the opportunity to “step up” into a stretch role where they learn through hands-on experiences and are mentored by leaders within the organization. In addition to social sector training, learning modules are developed in collaboration with Deloitte Consulting's Learning & Development Team to help accelerate the development of skills that are often harder to learn in a classroom setting, such as dealing with ambiguity and owning client relationships. A strong emphasis on community building, innovation, and sustainable social impact is also built into the project experience to foster lifelong learning and purpose-driven leadership.

Several years ago, pro bono was mainly seen as a volunteer activity to engage talent and make an impact in the local community. Today, it is much more than that. Deb Johnson, Deloitte Consulting LLP’s Chief Learning Officer, views pro bono as a powerful way to drive talent development and retention, and ultimately help professionals find purpose and meaning at work. Debbie Chou oversees Deloitte Consulting LLP’s Pro Bono Program and helped to support and grow these efforts. Her advice for other organizations hoping to do the same is to create buy-in by working directly with HR and talent leaders to design pro bono experiences that support their goals and are integrated into the organization’s talent strategy.

## APPROACH TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT

In addition to assessing self-reported gains in areas such as skills development, Deloitte is working to assess how participation in pro bono impacts key talent metrics such as performance, promotion, and engagement.

	METHOD	KEY OUTCOMES
DEVELOPING TALENT	<b>Participant survey feedback</b> Self-reported gains on skill development, satisfaction with the program, and engagement with Deloitte.	<b>Developing Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 98% had an opportunity to practice their professional skills</li> <li>▶ 87% learned new technical skills</li> <li>▶ 90% learned new soft skills</li> </ul>
	<b>Participant survey feedback</b> Self-reported gains on skill development, satisfaction with the program, and engagement with Deloitte.	<b>Engaging Talent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 97% would recommend the program to others</li> <li>▶ 94% strengthened their internal Deloitte network</li> <li>▶ 91% reported that the experience positively affected their job satisfaction</li> <li>▶ 93% reported that the experience positively affected their pride in working for Deloitte</li> </ul>
RETAINING AND PROMOTING TALENT	<b>Project mentor/advisor feedback</b> Self-reported observations from project advisors, integrated into the standard annual review process.	Sample survey questions: <i>Based on what I observed of this person’s performance on this work, I would always go to him/her for this kind of work.</i>  <i>I would always say that this person created outstanding impact through this work.</i>  <i>Please describe the Team Member’s impact based on your experience and observation of their performance.</i>

Note: Annual survey metrics for stepup are not yet available. The practitioner feedback above is from another one of Deloitte’s longstanding pro bono programs and was initially used to make the business case for stepup and other similar volunteer programs.

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## NOW WHAT?

Aligning pro bono with your company's HR strategy and measuring shared impacts can seem daunting, but the insights above prove that this investment is worthwhile and achievable for your company, too.

The practitioners featured here each bring different perspectives to the alignment of their pro bono programs with their HR strategies, but all share the experience of learning as they go. Ultimately, they move the field forward by developing innovative ways to align with HR and achieve shared objectives.

We know that corporate pro bono is a powerful and effective talent strategy. By employing the best practices outlined in this paper, you can demonstrate the shared value of that impact to compel broader corporate investment and ownership of pro bono. We hope you will seize this opportunity to deeply embed pro bono within your company, mobilizing the corporate sector to drive increasingly sustainable social impact.

**Ready to get started? Connect with us today:**  
[advisory@taprootfoundation.org](mailto:advisory@taprootfoundation.org).

### FOUNDATION

**Taproot Foundation, a national nonprofit, connects nonprofits and social change organizations with skilled volunteers through pro bono service.** Taproot is creating a world where organizations dedicated to social change have full access—through pro bono service—to the marketing, strategy, HR, and IT resources they need to be most effective. Since 2001, our Advisory Services practice has partnered with over 85 leading companies across the globe to develop best-in-class, customized, in-house pro bono initiatives. For more information, contact [advisory@taprootfoundation.org](mailto:advisory@taprootfoundation.org)

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