

# Access West

Western Economic Diversification Canada

## Will Canadian Farmers be Ready for the Year 2000?

*In November 1998, \*The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) made a presentation to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry during the second round of hearings into the preparedness of Canadian government and industry for the Year 2000 computer date roll-over. This article provides some insights into that presentation.*

The CFA's experience has been twofold. First, while awareness of the Y2K issues is high among farmers and farm managers; awareness is only now beginning to be translated into any formal or informal action. Second, with the date rapidly approaching, the concern remaining is whether rural farmers will be ready.

### Industry Preparedness for Y2K

Canada is a leader among nations in preparedness for the Year 2000 date roll-over. The agriculture and agri-food industry and government agencies such as the Canadian Wheat Board have been leading the way and working through those parts of the industry they touch as they approach full Year 2000 preparedness.

The processing industries are well on their way to being ready for 2000, according to CFA's experience. The same can be said for Canada's national marketing agencies for poultry, eggs and milk. Chicken Farmers of Canada, for example, has had a Y2K plan in effect since October 1997.

Although larger processing industries are not a major concern, the issue lies with the smaller rural farm.

*\*The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) is an umbrella organization representing more than 200,000 farmers and farm families across Canada. It is the nation's largest farming organization. Its members include provincial general farm organizations as well as national and inter-provincial commodity groups.*

Continued on page 3

Industry Canada  
Library - Queen

MAY 11 1999

Industrie Canada  
Bibliothèque - Queen

APRIL-JUNE 1999

VOLUME NUMBER 2 ISSUE NUMBER 2

# Marketing Your Business on a Shoestring Budget

*You've worked hard to develop your business or product and you know its good and so do your customers. But, finding new customers and keeping current ones is the life's blood of every company including yours even when the budget is tight. Western Economic Diversification (WD) and the Western Canada Business Service Network can help you determine cost effective ways to promote your business.*

The key to marketing on a shoestring budget is to do as many things as possible to generate business **and follow up**. Let us outline a few ideas as to what you can do dollar-wise to increase your company's customer base.

## Cross Promoting

Most successful companies understand the value of cross promoting. Simply put, it is when two or more businesses agree to promote each other without the exchange of cash payments. When approaching a company about cross promoting you should always present the aspect of "what's in it for them" first. Be open to negotiate and if you can't work out a win/win situation, don't be discouraged. Move on to another prospective business.

For example, if you make wedding cakes you may be able to do cross promoting with a local florist. Negotiate with the florist that you will purchase all live flowers for your cakes from their business if they refer brides to you. Propose to trade photo albums of each others work, forward your clients to the florist in return for the same gesture.

## Presentations

User groups is the key for doing presentations. Find out what local stores, hobby groups or clubs may be interested in your business or product and offer to do a presentation.

For example, if your business is involved in the tourism industry offering clients exciting holidays exploring the western Canadian outdoors, you may want to contact stores selling outdoor products, photography clubs, singles groups and so on. A retail store could have an evening show or wine and cheese party for their customers featuring your presentation as the entertainment. Of course the store is open for business and so are you.

## Flyers

Producing an interesting and professional looking flyer is fast, easy and very low cost as they can be produced on your own computer or photocopied. Use graphics if possible and keep the wording concise and descriptive.

Remember, brevity is best. Flyers can be circulated easily by sending them with your delivery personnel, placing them as inserts into neighborhood or business newsletters or handing them out.

## Articles

One of the most overlooked methods of getting customers to call you is to write informative articles and have them printed in newsletters, local neighborhood newspapers, or other types of publications available to your targeted potential customers.

For some, coming up with the basic idea of a story is the most difficult. But, if you think of topics related to your industry, business or product, your choices are unlimited. For example, a cleaning company could write about an environmentally-friendly product they use; a heating and ventilating company could write how to increase the life of your furnace.

The articles can be nothing more than common sense. Due to the need for stories to fill publications, the articles are printed and when they are read by a potential customer, it can result in calls. The need for selling the caller on using your products or services requires only confirmation of what they have already read. By calling you, most have already decided to buy from your company.

## Charities

Offering your product or services to a charity is an excellent way to gain experience, exposure and new customers. Do some research before choosing a charity to make sure their members, sponsors and audience matches your target market. When you have determined two or three charities, find out what sort of events they hold, how many people attend, who do they get for sponsors, what sort of advertising do they do and so on. Based on this information, decide what you can offer this group and what you would like in return. Be specific and be fair. Set up a meeting with the appropriate group representatives and outline your proposal.

Now that you are ready with lots of ideas on how to generate more customers on a limited budget you have to remember to follow up. Don't do all that work and then never speak to them again. Cultivate your contacts. Call them back, ask them what they thought, write down their ideas and incorporate what is appropriate, thank them with recognition in other things you do such as a testimonial in a presentation or article, in a conversation, or, give them a small product sample as a gift. Cultivating your client base will only result in your customers and business contacts speaking the praises of your work to others and coming back for more.

# Affordable Help to Solve Y2K Problems

Small businesses or organizations wanting to take that important first step toward Year 2000 compliance can do so affordably and easily thanks to a new program called **Year 2000 First Step**.

The program is offered jointly by **Industry Canada's Student Connection Program (SCP)** and **CIBC** to provide a basic awareness and help small businesses take the initial steps towards Year 2000 preparedness.

For \$195, plus applicable taxes, a specially-trained SCP student will visit a client's office to assess up to 10 computers and software, and then discuss how the company can confidently prepare for the Year 2000. Additional PC assessments (above 10) are just \$15 each.

Each assessment includes:

- Year 2000 awareness;
- what the Year 2000 means to a company's technology and business relationships;

- inventory of computer system;
- simple diagnosis of the software and hardware on up to 10 PCs;
- a review of business risks; and
- a detailed report and suggested action plan.

Year 2000 First Step is only one of a number of stages a company may need to go through to prepare for the millennium. The program cannot address all Year 2000 issues but it will help a business take that initial step toward Y2K readiness by identifying potential risks.

Call the Student Connection Program's toll-free number, 1-888-807-7777 to be automatically connected to their nearest administrative centre. Assessments in more remote communities can be easily arranged if more than 10 businesses in the area are interested in Year 2000 First Step. For more information, you can also visit the SCP Web site at [www.scp-ebb.com](http://www.scp-ebb.com) or the CIBC site at [www.cibc.com/y2000](http://www.cibc.com/y2000).



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## The Rural Factor

One of the unfortunate realities of living and operating a business in rural and remote areas is that if there are disruptions in services, they will last longer than similar disruptions in more populated areas. The same rule should be applied to any need for replacement equipment. It will take longer to get there and it will probably cost more to ship, as well as import any expertise needed to perform the repair. The need for contingency planning is higher in rural areas due to the realities of distance and population. This is one feature the CFA has been careful to stress in its awareness efforts, because even the most compliant of embedded chips needs a power source to function properly.

The reality of rural life is that, as with most professional services – rural Canada and, as a result, farmers – have very limited access to targeted services which would help them perform assessments of their farm's vulnerability to the Y2K Bug and develop priorities and strategies for managing the path to Year 2000 preparedness.

The CFA has worked with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council on a project to produce Y2K information materials targeted to individual farmers and farm managers. The result is a booklet entitled, "**Time to Act: the Year 2000 Computer Bug and Agriculture**," and a Web site at <http://www.cfbmc.com/y2k/> where people can access information more specific to their own farming operations. The Web site also offers several links to other sites including lists of contacts for processors and farm equipment manufacturers.

The booklet was the first of its kind anywhere which spoke directly to the people responsible for managing not only Canada's, but the world's farms. It has since

## Will Canadian Farmers be Ready for the Year 2000?

attracted the attention of the American Farm Bureau as well as Australia's National Farmers' Federation.

### Will Farmers Be Ready?

While it is safe to say that farmers operating within any of Canada's supply-managed commodities (poultry, eggs and milk) have a higher chance of being prepared for the date change on January 1, 2000, this should not be taken for granted.

While the Year 2000 compliance of egg hatcheries is very much an issue of ensuring a supply of young birds to poultry producers, much rests on the ability of the individual farmer and farm manager to ensure that their own operations are prepared. That's the only way Canada's farms, all 276,000 of them, will be in full production in the Year 2000.

Dairy and turkey farmers may have a highly inter-related industry behind them pushing them toward being prepared, but this is not the case for commodities such as hogs, greenhouse flowers or shellfish.

Canadian farmers, like the rest of their industry, can and must prepare for the problems associated with the Year 2000 computer bug. Awareness is the first step and the industry is already actively involved in that effort.

Although there is less than a year to go before January 1, 2000, Canadian farmers still have time to prepare for a productive and a Y2K compliant season the following year. If you would like further information on programs and services in your area regarding Y2K preparedness, contact WD or your local Community Futures Development Corporation. Call WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378) for the office nearest you.

# Taking You from the Beginning to the End Stages of Business Development is What We do Best

As a Client Service Officer at Western Economic Diversification (WD), Anastasia Lim has seen many entrepreneurs struggle with a business idea and then finally find the help they need at WD or through one of the Network partners.

“It makes me proud to see how much help a client can receive through the **Western Canada Business Service Network (WCBSN)** regardless of where they are in the West. I would like to share with you what I consider a success story with a client who was able to benefit from the client services provided through the years through various points of contact. I have known Anthony Lam since about 1994. Here’s the story,” says Anastasia.

From his early days in the nursing profession, Lam had an idea for a medical device. Not knowing where to start he found his way to what was then called the “Canada Business Service Centre” (CBSC) in Canada Place in Edmonton. He sat down with an officer and discussed his idea. Lam invented a medical device, now known as the **Caow™** (Compressed Apparatus On Wheels), a tool that helps stop bleeding following a cardiac catheterization.



Anthony Lam, President and CEO of Analm Corporation, is happy his medical device is ready for market.

As a nurse, he was familiar with the amount of pressure someone had to apply in order to close a wound. In doing so, nurses often received stress injuries and the patient felt considerable discomfort. That is where the **Caow™** came to the rescue. It can be rolled to the side of the patient’s bed and the plastic disposable pad clamped onto the bed frame which then administers a steady pressure on the blood vessel.

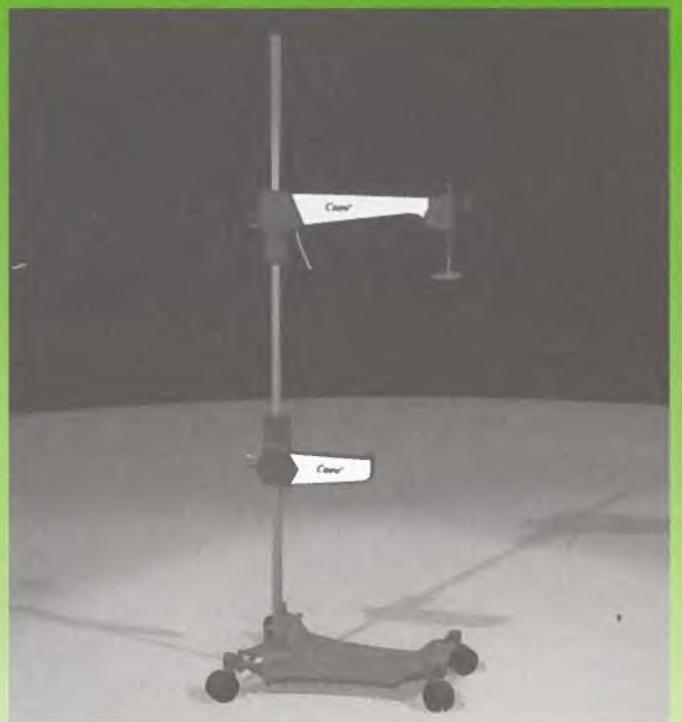
At the CBSC, his journey to entrepreneurship had begun. He was given information and processes on patent protection by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office and the U.S. Patenting Office. He was also given contacts who could advise him through the regulatory issues, information programs for funding, research and development, commercialization, etc. and general business start-up information.

“We had helped him to get the ball rolling and maintained brief updates on his project. Since his first contact with the CBSC, the Centre had become

**The Business Link**, a member of the WCBSN along with WD, Community Futures Development Corporations, and the offices of the CBSCs and the Women’s Enterprise Initiatives,” says Anastasia. Lam had gotten the **Caow™** underway in the patenting process through the U.S. and started up the company **Analm Corporation**. Through some of the contacts and programs indicated to him throughout the years, Lam received funding support from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Alberta Economic Development, Western Economic Diversification and the National Research Council, and also achieved ISO 9001 certification in 1998.

“In July 1998, Lam once again found me. This time I was working as a Client Service Officer at Western Economic Diversification. He invited me and my colleagues to the grand opening of the new Analm Corporation office and the official launch of the **Caow™**. He was now looking at “the next steps,” says Anastasia.

The **Caow™** is being sold to hospitals in Alberta and Ontario. “What about export markets?” he asked. As funds were tight due to the commitments to the research and development phase, his company needed help to break into the U.S. market. WD discussed in



The **Caow™** eliminates tiring manual compressions on wound sites, leaving the operator free to attend to other healthcare needs.

## What's New on the Web

detail Anlam's target audiences and marketing strategies abroad, and suggested the Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) offered through the International Trade Centre (ITC). Lam was put in touch with the ITC, applied for PEMD and was approved for a contribution towards market development and attendance at one of the largest medical trade shows in the U.S.

Lam will continue to receive our counselling support on development of export strategies and market entry through WD, as well as our partners with Trade Team Alberta. The Caow™ is undergoing a demand in the marketplace and he has two other products for cardiac catheterization currently in a patent pending stage. The orders will continue to come in and the business and markets will continue to grow.

"As an officer in the client service role, I have seen him expand from the idea stage to the stage of international market development over the last five years. I am confident that Anlam will continue to grow and benefit from our services and the services of the WCBSN," says Anastasia.

This success story is only one of hundreds WD's client service officers could tell you about. There are client service officers in every WD office across the West ready to help you with your business success. Please feel free to contact Western Economic Diversification at 1-888-338-WEST (9378).

*Are you looking at developing a Home page for your small business or interested in expanding your business to include advertising your products or services on the Internet? If so, here are two sites relating to e-commerce which you may find interesting.*

*The first site will give you some tips on how to get your product or service on-line. The second is about a series of e-commerce conferences being held in Toronto this fall. Although the organizer currently doesn't offer the conferences in the West, they are looking to expand.*

ECNow.com describes themselves as a high-end electronic commerce consulting firm helping companies satisfy customers through electronic commerce and electronic communication. They believe that the Internet is a great way to spread the word about your product or service. Their site takes you through various components of using the Internet including: generating traffic, being found, soft consulting and additional marketing tools.

They say they can help you define and implement "profitable change today" through strategic electronic commerce consulting:

- goal definition;
- architecture creation;
- new product/service strategies;
- direct and channel-friendly sales strategies; and
- business integration and process re-engineering strategies.

They can also help with Internet marketing and implementation support. So, if you're interested and would like more information, contact them at the addresses or telephone number below.

<http://ecnow.com>  
E-mail: [Mitchell.Levy@ecnow.com](mailto:Mitchell.Levy@ecnow.com)  
Tel.: 1-408-257-3000  
Fax: 1-408-257-7257

E-commerce & New Media Marketing Canada is a series of one-day e-commerce and new media marketing conferences offered by IT Awareness Campaign Inc.,

a Toronto-based networking organization for information technology professionals.

The conferences highlight how Canadian organizations of all sizes can use e-commerce technology to sell traditional products and services on the Internet; link on-line catalogs with existing legacy databases; reduce operating expenditures; improve brand awareness and improve relationships with customers and suppliers.

The conferences present demonstrations and case studies from e-commerce experts representing major players such as Chapter's, the Globe & Mail, Liberty Health, Hyundai, Globe Information Services, IBM, Oracle, VeriSign, CyberCash, Click Interactive and WebPromote.

Attendees learn how to integrate e-commerce strategies into their current business systems; use e-commerce to reduce operating expenditures, increase sales revenue and improve profitability; encourage repeat sales; improve customer service while minimizing security risks and how to select the right development environment and tools.

The event planned for this fall seems to have a bit of everything. Over 30 confirmed speakers represent many areas of the growing e-commerce industry. Topics include: the legal implications of using e-commerce; how to sell and distribute goods and services; how Chapter's and the Globe and Mail created Canada's leading Web site for book lovers and industry-leading e-commerce vendors like Oracle and IBM will show how the Internet can be used as a business platform.

"We plan to use the Toronto market as a base for launching affordable e-commerce and new media marketing conferences all across Canada including key markets in Ottawa, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal," says Kenneth Hazelwood, Manager, Conference Development, IT Awareness Campaign.

*For more information call (416) 252-6896 or visit their Web site at: <http://www.ecommerce-research.com>.*

# Speakers Corner

*I have a small enterprise which has been in business for a year now and have tried different ways of marketing my product. Would exhibiting at trade shows make sense for my small business?*

Trade shows offer a unique marketing experience as they allow everyone from vendors to browsers or customers to network. Opportunities are endless to meet other entrepreneurs, forge new business contacts (many of which will have a similar client base to your own), as well as develop possible partnership opportunities.

But remember, trade shows can be quite demanding. In a short period of time you will deal with a large number of people, all of whom will decide if they like your product or service and if they want to do business with you. You will need to be very alert and aware of everyone you meet, as they could be potential customers or business partners, or have some other product or service that could help your small enterprise.

If you decide that trade shows are for you, the next challenge will be to pick the show that best suits your needs. Not all trade shows may not be appropriate venues to market your product or service. Shows can be geared to specific industry sectors, regional audiences or international visitors and general business forums. The cost for each of these types of shows will vary and it's up to you to pick a venue that is the right size to best reach your target market. Getting your product or service to as many people as possible depends on picking the right show.

Here are three important steps to help determine if a trade show will meet your marketing needs.

## Define Your Objective

There are many reasons to exhibit your products or services at trade shows. Some reasons include: exposure for a new product or service; making direct sales and generating orders; gathering qualified leads; networking with dealers, agents or company representatives; meeting the media; gathering market information or checking out the competition.

Choose the reasons you want to participate in the trade show and focus on them. Once you have determined one or two objectives decide on a way in which you can measure if you have been successful. For example, if you are there to make contacts, some measurable components are how many business cards did you collect, how many people did you speak to and with whom are you going to follow up. You will know if you are successful if your efforts result in further business related to your efforts.

## Define Your Target Market

It is important to define exactly who your customers are and what they want. If you have a clear definition of your target market it will be a tremendous help when choosing trade show opportunities.

## Where to Go from Here

Now that you've determined your objectives and target market, you'll need to determine the best venue for your product or service. Alberta Economic Development suggests that you should try to visit the trade show before you exhibit, if at all possible. Attending a variety of shows before making your decision will provide you with ideas as how best to market your product, as you will see what works and what doesn't. It will also enable you to get on mailing lists about upcoming events. Here are some information sources that may help you get started.

- ◆ **Show Directories** are like telephone books that list shows – categorized by industry, timing or geography – and include a thumbnail sketch of show opportunities by the thousands. For example, Shows and Exhibitions (416-596-5888) or provincial government economic development offices often prepare yearly provincial trade show listings. These listings include dates, location, previous attendance numbers, admission costs, booth space and costs, theme and contact information. Many exhibit halls also have listing of upcoming trade shows.
- ◆ The **Internet** has an increasing number of trade show sites. These sites offer much of the same information as listed in the directories, but many also offer the opportunity to order information on services on-line. A good site with lots of valuable information is the Canadian Association of Exhibition Managers at [www.caem.ca](http://www.caem.ca).
- ◆ **Trade associations, chambers of commerce and boards of trade** are a valuable source of local trade show information. The organization may be hosting an event or can point you in the right direction. Trade magazines often include a calendar of events that lists upcoming shows for specific industry sectors.
- ◆ **Governments** – federal, provincial and municipal – offer a variety of programs for small businesses that often include trade shows. Western Economic Diversification has taken the lead in Western Canada over the past several years in Small Business Conferences and Info-Fairs which provide invaluable government information for small businesses as well.

## Get a Snapshot of Your Businesses Financial Profile Before You Start it

No one has all the answers. And no one can predict the future with certainty. But a new database from **Statistics Canada** gives you instant access to benchmark financial data that can help you construct your business plan.

**Small Business Profiles (SBP)** is now available through the Western Canada Business Service Network (WCBSN). SBP is a business plan assessment and counselling tool and is the latest iteration of a bilingual financial database on CD-ROM. It can provide detailed financial and employment data on small businesses by industry for all of Canada.

The data can be used to construct performance benchmarks for the financial planning of start-up and established SMEs. You can obtain individual profiles from any of the WD Network partners free of charge.

Let's look at an example profile. You're an entrepreneur in British Columbia and you're interested in starting a computer services business. You check the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes on the CD, determining to which industry your computer business belongs. Although the financial data for this industry can reflect Canada as a whole, or be filtered by region (e.g., the prairies or Atlantic region), you decide to select the province of British Columbia.

The resulting screen will show you:

- average business size in terms of sales revenue and number of employees;
- total costs in thousands of dollars; and
- amount spent on key expenditure items such as wages and cost of goods sold, both in thousands of dollars and as a percentage of total sales.

You can look at a snapshot of your business before you start it! Once you get started, you can also compare your cost structure to the industry average and demonstrate that your costs are under control.

Financial profiles of this kind are part of a well-researched business plan, a plan that sets a strategic direction for the business and helps you keep the firm on track. A good business plan will also help you to communicate your vision to investors and lenders.

A large number of new firms start up each year but only a fraction of them see their fifth birthday. The **Small Business Profiles** will help new and established firms find out where they stand compared to a relevant industry average. The **Profiles** will also help you discuss opportunities and options with business counsellors and lenders. In this way, the information in the database will help entrepreneurs cope with the wide range of tasks involved in starting a new business.

The raw data in this application comes from Statistics Canada and is based on a sample of 193,000 tax returns submitted to Revenue Canada by businesses representing nearly 700 industries across the country whose annual sales range from \$25,000 to \$5 million.

The complete set of profiles for 1993 and 1995 is available from Statistics Canada on CD-ROM for \$500, and individual profiles are available at \$20 each (\$40 minimum purchase). But you can obtain these individual profiles from any of the WD Network partners free of charge – and see how your business fits with the industry. Call WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378) for more details.



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Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 1472429

WD Edmonton  
Suite 1500, Canada Place  
9700 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5H 4H7

## The upside to running your own business is doing it all your own way.



As a small business owner it's easy to feel alone.  
So it's good to know that help is available.

At Western Economic Diversification our people  
are one of your best resources.

They are knowledgeable, approachable and can  
provide access to a wide range of services for  
small businesses:

- help with business planning
- advice on financing options, exporting and selling to government markets
- hiring programs in international trade, science and technology
- access to business seminars and a variety of related resources

Canada

**It's your business. We can help.**  
1-888-338-WEST or [www.wd.gc.ca/welcome](http://www.wd.gc.ca/welcome)



1-888-338-WEST(9378) [www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca)

**British Columbia**

Suite 700, Price Waterhouse Bldg.  
601 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5G9  
(604) 666-6256

**Alberta**

Suite 1500, Canada Place  
9700 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5J 4H7  
(780) 495-4164

Suite 400, Standard Life Building  
639, 5th Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, AB T2P 0M9  
(403) 292-5458

**Saskatchewan**

P.O. Box 2025  
Suite 601, S.J. Cohen Bldg.  
119 - 4th Avenue South  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3S7  
(306) 975-4373

2nd Floor  
1925 Rose Street  
Regina, SK S4P 3P1  
(306) 780-7625

**Manitoba**

P.O. Box 777  
Suite 712, The Cargill Bldg.  
240 Graham Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 2L4  
(204) 983-0697



This newsletter is published quarterly by Western Economic Diversification Canada. If you would like to contribute to this publication or have any questions, please contact the editor, Johanna MacDonald at: Tel.: (780) 495-4320 Fax: (780) 495-6223 E-mail: [access.west@wd.gc.ca](mailto:access.west@wd.gc.ca). Aussi disponible en français.

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