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2013 Readers Survey

BY BUSINESS RECORD STAFF

Friday, June 21, 2013 7:00 AM

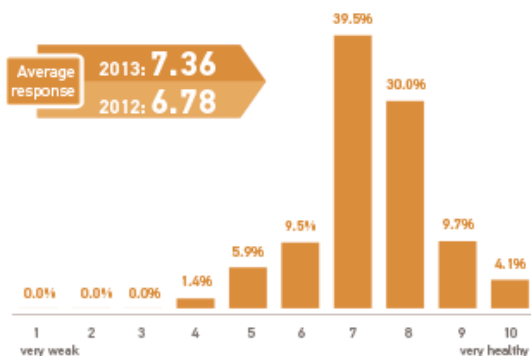
Check out the article below to see the results and selected comments from our readers. The results are far from scientific, but, they do give a peek into the behaviors, beliefs and general mood of the community.

But, we couldn't have done this without you, the reader. So, as always, a big thank you to the hundreds of readers who participated in our survey again this year.

— Chris Conetzkey, editor of the Business Record



Rate the overall health of the Iowa business community.



7 – Stephen Fry

Co-founder, Spindustry Companies

“We’re fortunate to have a strong financial services-based economy in Central Iowa and an ag market that is experiencing a long-term period of great success.”

Most Viewed	Most Commented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best of Des Moines 2013 Women of Influence honorees announced Can the Wild survive? No more immediate departures planned at Aviva USA A Closer Look: Jeff Russell 	

8 – Rick Tollakson

President & CEO, Hubbell Realty Company

“Overall the agricultural component to the state’s economy remains very strong. In Central Iowa we are seeing employment growth and a lot more optimism.”

7 – Rob Schweers

Director of communications, Iowa State University Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost

“The community is healthy overall, but we’re also on the cusp of great things, which will bolster Iowa business in the decade to come.”

10 – Eric Burmeister

Executive director, Polk County Housing Trust Fund

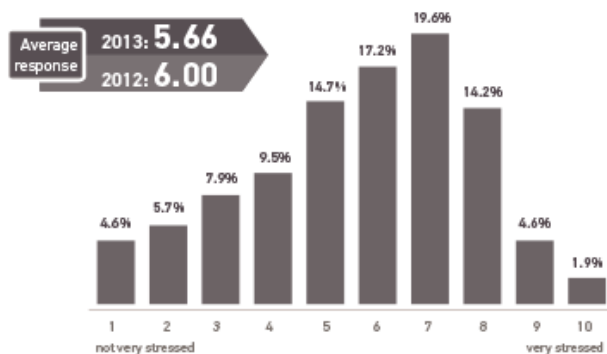
“The health of our business community has little to do with the health of the general economy. The strength of our business community comes from the long-standing, healthy relationships among business, government and education.”

5 – Angie Duncan

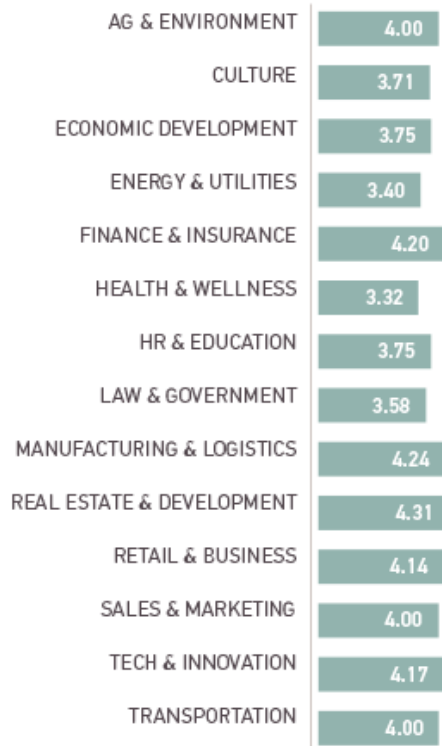
Business development specialist, First Children’s Finance

“Many small businesses and entrepreneurs are struggling or can’t get a startup going, but it’s not always known to the public or overshadowed by large corporations announcing expansions or increased profits.”

How stressed are you feeling at work?



In comparison to 2009 during the worst of the Great Recession, the health of my particular industry is:



2 – Judy Ralston-Hansen

Executive vice president, Homesteaders Life Co.

Finance & Insurance

“Investment environment is still a challenge for a life company.”

5 – Veryl Kroon

CEO, Iowa Digestive Disease Center

Health & Wellness

“Stress was making people sick.”

4 – Mark Weinhardt

Partner, Weinhardt & Logan P.C.

Law & Government

“The impact of the recession on the legal industry in Iowa was remarkably mild.”

5 – Creighton Cox

Executive officer, Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines

Real Estate & Development

“2012 year-end housing unit totals were higher than 2006, and 2013 year-to-date is stronger than 2012.”

1 – Amelia Lobo

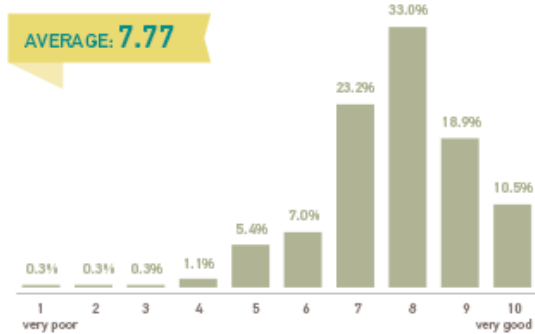
Director, ISED Ventures Women’s Business Center

Economic Development

“Small businesses are struggling under the decrease in credit, and funding for small business development has

been cut dramatically.”

How would you rate the quality of the restaurant scene in the Des Moines metro area?



8 – Ashley (Heath) Sly

Tax and financial analyst, Belin McCormick P.C.

Finance & Insurance

“Unique specialities - more restaurants that have a ‘wow’ factor that will impress visitors with what Des Moines has to offer.”

9 – Dave St. John

Station manager, Life 107.1

Sales & Marketing

“Great Chicago-style pizza. Wig and Pen is on the right track with the right sauce and cheese, but no one has yet to really nail the Chicago-style pizza crust in Des Moines.”

9 – Stephanie Hanson

Examiner, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago - West Des Moines office

Law & Government

“I would love to see an Au Bon Pain, PotBelly or Five Guys. I do love the number of places that have found a home on Ingersoll.”

4 – Tej Dhawan

StartupCity Des Moines

Tech & Innovation

“Fusion or contemporary Asian. We have too much of the same - burgers, fries, French and expensive cuisines.”

Editor's note: More ethnic restaurants was the overwhelming sentiment, with suggestions such as Ethiopian, Peruvian, Indian, Greek, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Korean. There were quite a few suggestions for a Brazilian steakhouse and also one suggestion of an all-bacon (all-heart attack?) restaurant. Oh, you want my suggestion? Glad you asked. My Chicago area roots mean I love the Chicago-style pizza suggestion, and that I'd die for Portillo's, a Windy City chain that does Italian beef, hot dogs, Polish and Italian sausages among other things.

Fill in the blank: The biggest issue facing Iowa businesses right now is _____

Bill Knapp II

Chairman, Knapp Properties Inc.

Real Estate & Development

“Dysfunctional governments, especially at the federal level.”

Scott Bowman

Principal, KJWW Engineering Consultants P.C.

Real Estate & Development

"Need for increased investment in infrastructure."

Bobbi Segura

Owner, B.Segura Consultants

Sales & Marketing

"Not enough women-owned businesses!"

Mary Hunter

Executive director, JDRF

Health & Wellness

"The lack of work ethic."

Mark Vanlandschoot

Senior vice president, Lincoln Savings Bank

Finance & Insurance

"Retaining talent."

Gerard Neugent

President, Knapp Properties Inc.

Real Estate & Development

"Skilled labor force."

Ken Benkstein

Senior counselor, The Meyocks Group

Sales & Marketing

"Attracting top talent."

Lloyd Vanderkwaak

President and CEO, ChildServe

Health & Wellness

"Fear of taking risks which are at the heart of being an entrepreneur."

Bob Darr

CEO, Darr Land Development LLC

Real Estate & Development

"Lack of high-speed Internet systems."

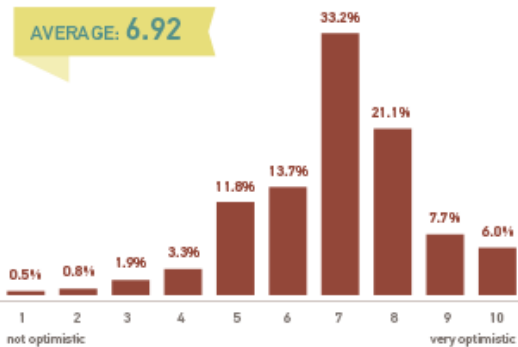
Dick Edwards

Senior vice president, U.S. Bank

Finance & Insurance

"Education reform. We've fallen behind many states."

How optimistic are you about the job market outlook for your particular industry?



8 – Grant Oswalt

Owner, AllKlean LLC

Real Estate & Development

“I hire mostly part-time, and I am getting a lot of applicants that are having their full-time job hours cut because of the government’s health care initiative.”

7 – Mary Hunter

Executive director, JDRF

Health & Wellness

“The fundraising world is difficult. The tighter the belts of the donors, the more difficult it is to retain and attract great fundraisers.”

8 – Carrie Schuler

Principal, Schuler & Stone Interior Design

Retail & Business

“The current plans for develop-ing downtown DSM will have a very positive influence on the design community.”

9 – Stephanie Hanson

Examiner, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago - West Des Moines office

Law & Government

“With new regulations coming from the Consumer Protection Bureau, there are more areas needing more focus and time spent. Therefore we will eventually need more resources.”

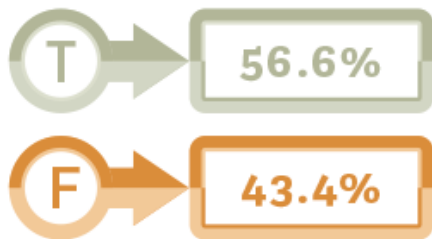
3 – Mark Weinhardt

Partner, Weinhardt & Logan P.C.

Law & Government

“My less-than-optimistic outlook for the job market in the legal industry is not a function of the level of economic activity or legal business, but a function of years of law schools turning out more new lawyers than the market can absorb.”

TRUE or FALSE: It is very important that Des Moines has access to high-speed passenger rail to and from Omaha and Chicago.



FALSE – Joey Beech

Executive director, Ankeny Economic Development Corp.

Economic Development

“It would be nice, but given the population that would use it, I’m not sure the cost-benefit would justify it. Megabus seems to be working well.”

FALSE – Jeff Greteman

President, Windstar Lines Inc.

Transportation

“Des Moines already is served by a few bus lines that can more efficiently handle current and future demand with little or no taxpayer subsidy.”

TRUE – Rob Schweers

Director of communications, Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost at Iowa State University

HR & Education

“The easier it is to get to Chicago (and Kansas City and Minneapolis-St. Paul), the more people will be willing to stay in Iowa after college.”

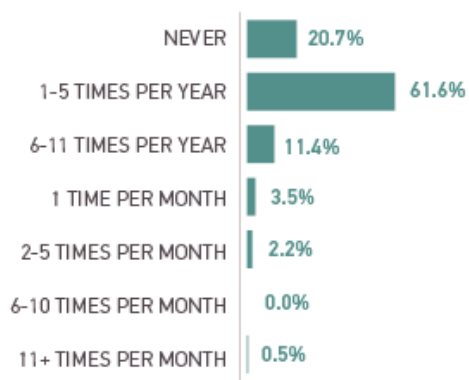
TRUE – Mary Gesiriech

Development director, Hoyt Sherman Place

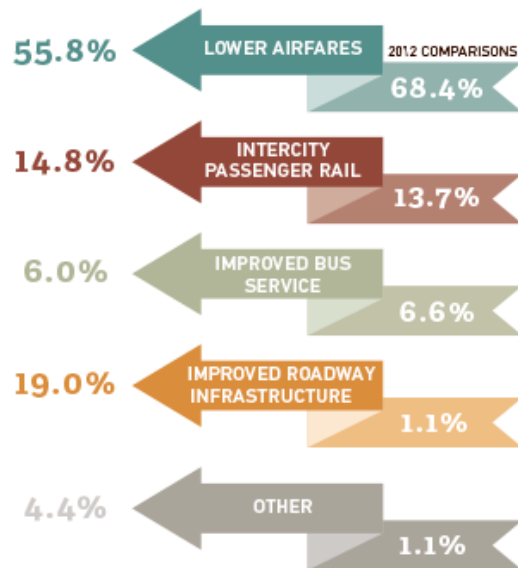
Culture

“It will make us more attractive and more competitive for tourism dollars.”

If Des Moines had passenger train service to/from Omaha and Chicago, how often would you see yourself using it?



What is the most pressing transportation need in Central Iowa?



Lower airfares – Randy Roth

*Managing partner, Corporate Contracts LLC
Tech & Innovation*

"We're a small business that has to travel as we do business nationwide. The airfare cost is killing us."

Lower airfares – Steve Chapman

President and CEO, Ruan Transport-ation Management Systems Inc.

"We need expanded service by Southwest Airlines to the East Coast and Phoenix."

Other – Kathryn Dickel

*Founding partner, MIDWESTIX
Culture*

"I would say 'inner' city passenger rail. Cities who effectively get off the dependence on cars and fossil fuels will be more healthy, efficient and attractive places to live."

Improved bus service – Brandon Butters

*Operations manager, Iowa Sleep Disorders Center
Health & Wellness*

"I would use the bus if it was more available. When I lived in Seattle, I only used my car if the bus was not available. It was so convenient to ride the bus!"

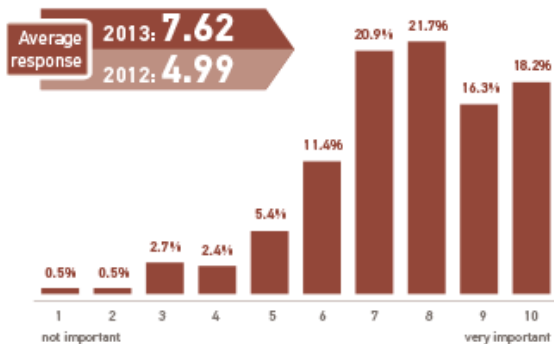
Improved roadway infrastructure – Terry Ebke

*General manager, Security Equipment Inc.
Tech & Innovation*

"Southwest Airlines' entry into the DSM market has already affected airfares in a good way. Roads and bridges need to be maintained better or improved when replacement is warranted."

Editor's note: Those surveyed once again cited lower airfares as the most pressing need, but that response did drop from 2012, with the shift in votes moving to a need for improved roadway infrastructure. The drop was probably due to the arrival of Southwest Airlines Co., which has lowered prices and helped to increase passenger traffic. However, many still said there is work to be done to get prices down.

How important do you think the growing tech start up scene is for the overall health of the Des Moines business community?



10 – Steve Chapman

President and CEO, Ruan Transportation Management Systems Inc.

“It attracts other industries and helps further diversify our businesses and workforce.”

6 – Sean Pelletier

Assistant vice president of government affairs, EMC Insurance Cos.

Finance & Insurance

“While the growth creates notoriety, I am not sure how much employment it creates.”

9 – Michael Sadler

Assistant vice president, CenturyLink

Tech & Innovation

“Having a vibrant startup scene lends national ‘street cred’ to Central Iowa as an exciting place to do business.”

7 – Tej Dhawan

StartupCity Des Moines

Tech & Innovation

“Tech is not a vertical but embedded deep into every business - from ag, bioscience, finance, insurance and even government. Innovation in tech permeates all other areas of growth.”

2 – Brian Hagedorn

Senior private banker, Wells Fargo Bank

Finance & Insurance

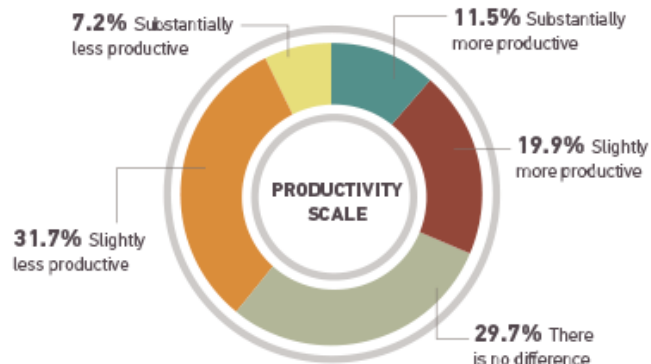
“The tech startups will not provide any significant employment growth or capital investments for the community.”

Editor's note: We mentioned this isn't scientific, but there is a stark change in the views on the tech scene from last year. Although many respondents thought perhaps this segment was still a bit overhyped for its impact, many pointed to some of the intangible benefits (publicity, keeping young talent and diversification) as reasons for its importance.

On average, how many hours per week are you working?



In comparison to when employees work in the office, when employees work from home, in general they are:



Slightly less productive – William Reed

Owner, Strategic Marketing & Management Solutions

Sales & Marketing

“Really depends on the job function. Some are substantially more efficient at home, whereas other jobs need to be collaborating in the office.”

Substantially more productive – Lauren Bartusek

Client services coordinator, CBRE/Hubbell Commercial

Real Estate & Development

“I have worked from home before. You end up working more than you do when you’re at the office because you realize you stop watching the clock and it is harder to walk away from work.”

There is no difference – Chris Long

Category analyst, Anheuser-Busch InBev

Manufacturing & Logistics

“There are just as many distractions at an office as at home. A person has to recognize those distractions and stay focused.”

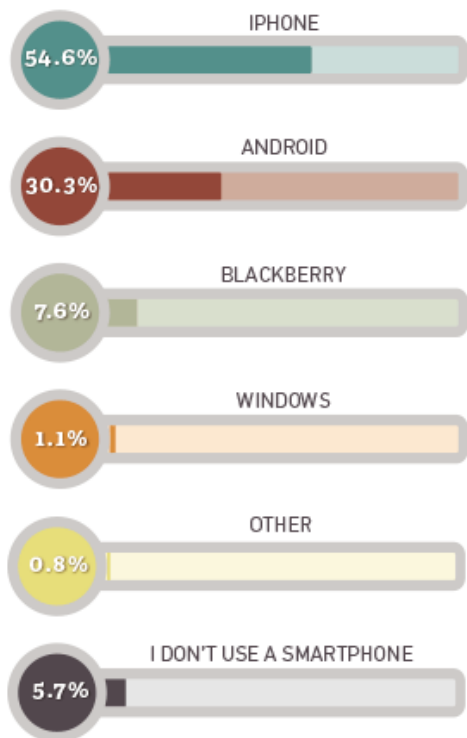
Slightly more productive – Dick Edwards

Senior vice president, U.S. Bank

Finance & Insurance

“In the long haul, I think office workers are more productive, but the occasional ability to work from home to accommodate personal or business needs can really be productive for that period.”

Which brand of smartphone do you use?



TRUE or FALSE: Long-term, health care reform will be a positive thing for businesses.



FALSE – Russell Jensen

President, Jensen Consulting

“Requires a substantial investment of time, planning and money to manage, resulting in reduced hiring and less focus on profitable growth.”

FALSE – Wayne Hansen

President, Control Installations of Iowa Inc. (CI3)

Tech & Innovation

“It is unsustainable in the current form. This could break the back of small businesses.”

FALSE – Mike Ralston

President, Iowa Association of Business and Industry

Manufacturing & Logistics

“The Affordable Care Act in its current form is unworkable.”

TRUE- Hal Chase

Director, Farmers & Merchants State Bank, Winterset

Finance & Insurance

“More of the collateral cost of health care will be reduced as more people are covered by health care and therefore engage more in preventive medicine.”

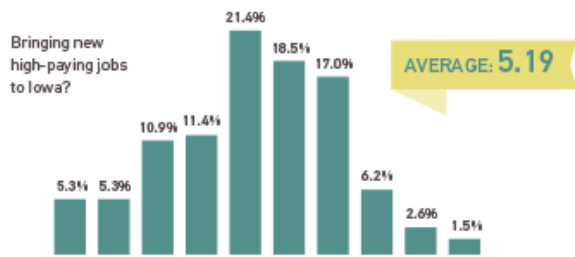
TRUE- William Brauch

Director, Consumer Protection Division, Iowa Department of Justice

Law & Government

“Less reliance on getting health care insurance through employers will free up business funds for other uses.”

How effective are Iowa’s tax incentive programs for ...



8/8/8 – Rick Tollakson

President and CEO, Hubbell Realty Co.

Real Estate & Development

“I believe the state of Iowa does a good job in attracting business to the state. There is always room for

improvement, but we have seen some major wins over the past year.”

1/1/1 – Steve Sink

CEO, EBB

Economic Development

“What attracts business is a quality workforce. Incentives are meaningless if the business cannot find the level of competence it needs. I deal with many businesses which cannot grow because they cannot hire/find employees qualified to do the job. Tax incentives are a temporary fix and remove tax dollars which could go towards education.”

7/5/5 – Monica Dolezal

Owner, BIZSTARTS LLC

Retail & Business

“Are the cost of the tax incentives less than the jobs/economic development that they bring in? Over how much time? Is this what we want? Should the tax incentives be in different forms/formats?”

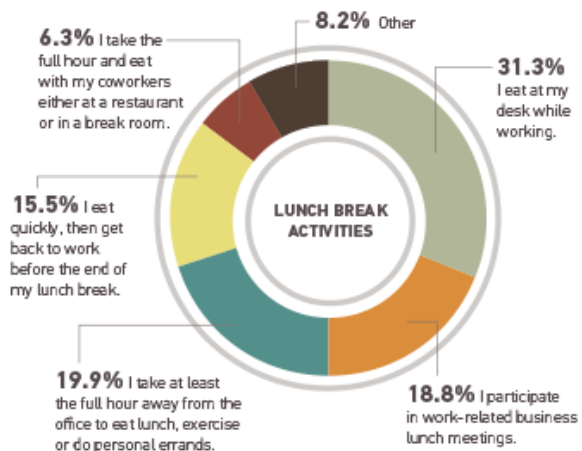
2/2/2 – Eric Burmeister

Executive director, Polk County Housing Trust Fund

Real Estate & Development

“I believe quality-of-life issues have more to do with sustaining economic growth over the long term. There is not enough money in the world to bribe someone to come to a place they don’t want to be.”

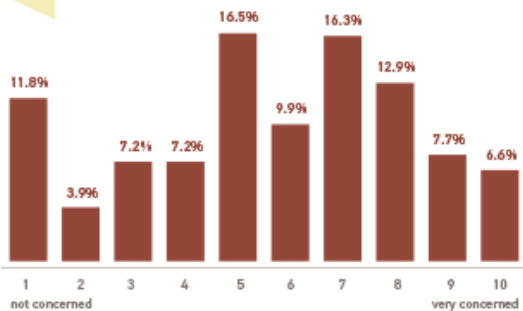
What do you do most often during your lunch hour?



Editor's note: The idea for this question came via our publisher, Janette Larkin, who has often made a point to tell the employees not to work through the lunch hour. It’s easy to say, but we all do it on occasion. I wonder if it has always been like this, or whether this happens more today. I also wonder if a gain in productivity after a lunch away from your desk outweighs the work you can get done working through lunch.

How concerned are you about the price of farmland reaching record levels?

AVERAGE: 5.65



1 – John Bergman

Director of real estate management, Terrus Real Estate Group

Real Estate & Development

“We have seen many records set in farmland prices over time with no significant long-term negative impact.”

8 – Doug Pullin

Senior vice president, Liberty Bank

Finance & Insurance

“While the timing is uncertain, the farm-land value bubble will burst at some point.”

9 – Suku Radia

President and CEO, Bankers Trust Co.

Finance & Insurance

“We tend to go from bubble to bubble to bubble.”

2 – Kyle Yencer

Vice president, Community State Bank

Finance & Insurance

“Unlike the ‘80s, it appears much of the farm ground is being bought with cash, thus not a major debt burden when prices decline.”

9 – Creighton Cox

Executive officer, Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines

Real Estate & Development

“Housing prices are increasing due to government regulations, higher building costs and increased farmland prices, all of which leads to fewer affordable lots for the first-time buyer. ‘Affordable Housing’ is becoming less and less available and is resulting in a greater need for more apartments and multifamily units.”

Editor's note: I found it interesting that the respondents were often on complete opposite ends of the spectrum. When you delve deeper, in general those from finance and insurance tended to be more worried, while those from a real estate and development background were not. Example: Suku Radia selected “9” while Rick Tollakson was a “1.”

1

0 Comments

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