

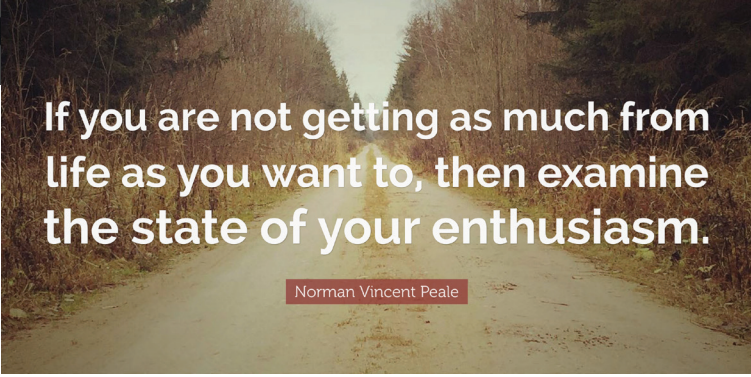


Tips of the MONTH



What is not started today is never finished tomorrow.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



If you are not getting as much from life as you want to, then examine the state of your enthusiasm.

Norman Vincent Peale

If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary.

Jim Rohn

People with clear, written goals, accomplish far more in a shorter period of time than people without them could ever imagine.

~ Brian Tracy

To get through the hardest journey we need take only one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping

~ Chinese Proverb

Innovation in the Trenches

Successful decorators dish on the technology that enables them to stay on top of their game.

By John Burns, Associate Editor



Decorators agree that direct-to-screen technology offers a significant increase in production and throughput capacity.

UPON HEARING THE term “innovation,” it’s natural to think about technology as it applies to products. But what about other aspects of apparel decorating, such as techniques, design, business practices and marketing?

In this vast and ever-changing industry, it can be difficult to understand why certain decorating styles and techniques are popular, or what shop owners can do to truly push the needle on innovation. Acquiring that knowledge requires dialogue with those that are in the trenches — standing behind the pallet, in front of the screen or over the ink bucket.

Impressions recently spoke with four shop owners about several industry trends, including

technology, innovation, techniques, equipment and marketing.

Technical Innovation

DURING THE PAST 20 years, new decorating techniques, including dye sublimation and direct-to-garment (DTG) printing, have come to prominence, but many decorators are raving about another technology that has significantly boosted business: direct-to-screen imaging.

“I think [direct-to-screen] is a phenomenal idea, a phenomenal concept,” says Pierre John Jamnicky, CEO of Blue Moon Promotional Inc., Eastlake, Ohio. “It streamlines production and removes the human element, which increases the consistency across production, which is huge.”

Direct-to-screen, or computer-to-screen, imaging can output an image directly onto emulsion, eliminating carrier film and even some human labor.

“As far as the quality of separations [and] the speed of the separations, the accuracy of direct-to-screen is one thing that has really helped propel our business,” says Tom Rauen, owner of Envision Tees, Dubuke, Iowa. “With the quality and speed, it’ll take a shop to the next level when they have that technology.”

Along with improved quality, direct-to-screen technology offers a significant increase in production and throughput capacity.

“Before we went [to] direct-to-screen, we were averaging about six to eight minutes of setup per screen on the press,” says Danny Gruninger, co-owner of Denver Print House, Lakewood, Colo. “Now, we’re averaging under a minute per screen. We’re getting jobs up on the press a lot quicker, we’re getting them down quicker and getting the next job ready to go a lot quicker. When we went [to] direct-to-screen, we saw over 40% increase in throughput right off the bat.”

Some decorators may scoff at the expense involved in direct-to-screen imaging, but Gruninger, Rauen and Jamnicky insist that if the technology makes sense for your shop, it’s worth the \$50,000-\$60,000 price tag. However, another shop owner warns of the downside to technology that affects so many aspects of production.

“Where there’s technology, there’s failure as well,” says Greg Gaardbo, CEO and creative director, Shockwaves Promotional Apparel, Arlington Heights, Ill. “Now, if something





Envision Tees' Tom Rauen says innovation is helping decorators to meet demands of customers who "place an order and want it yesterday."

fails [with direct-to-screen], your whole shop is down instead of an easy part to fix if you were doing something with an automatic or manual [press]."

There also has been significant improvement in DTG technology recently.

"The quality of direct-to-garment [printing], which has been getting a lot more consistent, is getting real comparable to screen printing now," Rauen says.

Indeed, when DTG was introduced, many believed that it would quickly replace screen printing — something that hasn't actually happened, but its capabilities are consistently improving.

"I've always thought direct-to-garment is the wave of the future," Gaardbo says. "I want screen printing in a box. The images are just unbelievable."

Screen-printing inks have become more advanced as well; whether it's silicone or water-based, environmentally friendly inks, decorators now can do a lot more than was previously possible.

"[Silicone ink] has been on the market for a couple years now," Jamnicky says. "It allows a softer, stretchy, more do-able print on some fabrics that were really difficult to print on before. It's not *easy*, but it is significantly easier. And it's a different product that wasn't available before."

Today's innovative ink systems have made printing on traditionally problematic fabrics, such as polyester, less painstaking.

"In the past we used to have certain inks — like water-based inks — that we could not print on polyester fabric," Gruninger says. "Now, we have black blocker underbases where



Finding the Buzz

One of the keys to success in apparel decorating is staying abreast of trends and techniques customers may crave. Successful decorators agree that attending trade shows is the best way to see the latest and greatest technology the industry has to offer, which can sometimes lead to cutting-edge ideas and spark innovation.

For new decorators, trade shows can be a great way to learn and ask questions, but even seasoned decorators stand to learn more about other decorating methods and further hone their skills.

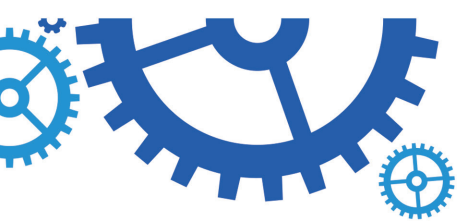
"I walked past sublimation for years at shows and I didn't give it a second thought," says Greg Gaardbo, CEO and creative director, Shockwaves Promotional Apparel. "And then I walked by [a sublimation demonstration] one day and something just hit my brain, and I thought to myself, 'I need to do this now.'"

Many of the innovative designs Gaardbo and his Shockwaves staff execute involve sublimation, including several Impressions Award-winning submissions. But in this increasingly digital world, there are other avenues for information and ideas, such as blogs and social media.

"There are several decorator communities online," says Pierre John Jamnicky, CEO of Blue Moon Promotional Inc. "I am a co-owner of one of the forums and we have a pretty good community there. In my eyes, it's the best way to get the information because you get the good with the bad. The salesperson and manufacturer won't necessarily give you that."



Operating systems also are improving, meaning the interplay between press operator and screen-printing press has never been easier.



we can print a true high-solids acrylic water-based [ink] on a polyester fabric.”

Continuing the steamroll of innovation, operating systems also are improving, meaning the interplay between press operator and screen-printing press has never been easier.

“You can communicate with the presses with a laptop, an iPad, an iPhone, a tablet or a desktop computer,” Gruninger says. “Technology is definitely improving. Mainly what we’re seeing is just (an improvement on) overall throughput in our shop.”

Faster is Better...Right?

BUYERS WANT AND expect their orders to be filled quickly, so that begs the question: How fast is too fast for production speed?

“The speed itself I don’t see as a detriment,” Jamnicky says. “Sacrificing things to gain speed is an issue. The proper answer is usually a compromise somewhere in the middle.”

In other words, producing decorated garments as quickly as possible while maintaining high quality is never an issue. Speed becomes problematic when decorators push the envelope too much, causing them to overlook mistakes. One decorator says that American decorators should use their European counterparts as a model when it comes to production.

“Over in Europe, they’re not so concerned with the speed the presses are running,” Gruninger says. “They’re more concerned about maintaining a tempo. Compared to the United States, where a lot of people are trying to hit a number, they’re trying to print as fast as they possibly can. It’s not about how fast you can print. It’s about maintaining a steady rhythm and tempo as far as production goes.”

But that’s not an endorsement of moving at a snail’s pace when it comes to production, either. Buyers and end users, after all, despise waiting for completed orders; however, they still expect quality.

“We’re in a business of deadlines where people place an order and want it yesterday,” Rauens says. “That mindset is shifting even more for your everyday customer because of the Amazons of the world that are shipping next day. People are getting used to that process and, in their mind, they think that regardless of what they order, including T-shirts, it’s going to be on their doorstep the next day. If you can’t deliver the next day or within two days, they’re going to find



Innovative Products

1. BITO Z Galva Standalone Laser

Features a laser head that can move up or down
* Can be used for a wide range of textiles and certain rigid materials, such as plastic * Advanced frame design that allows scan head to hover freely over work area

Use Info-Action #300 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

2. Champion Double Dry Interlock Tee in Camo Prints

Style CW22 * Made of 4.1-ounce, moisture-wicking 100% polyester jersey * Available in men’s and women’s styles in four different camo prints

Use Info-Action #301 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

3. Epson Wide-Format SureColor Screen Print Edition Printers

Includes 17-inch SureColor P800 Screen Print Edition and 24-inch SureColor T3270 Screen Print Edition * Come with AccuRIP Black Pearl SE software and Epson Screen Positive Film

Use Info-Action #302 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

4. Hanes X-Temp Performance Tank

Style 42MT * Features moisture-wicking fabric and a soft hand, according to the company
* Available in numerous colors, including heathered neons

Use Info-Action #303 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

5. Kati Sportcap & Bag Outdoor Cap HiBeam Lighted Camo

Style HIB602 * Blaze orange cap is made of 100% polyester, while camo styles are 60% cotton/40% polyester and brushed twill
* Features a precurved visor with three LED lights and Velcro closure

Use Info-Action #304 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

6. Gildan Ladies' V-Neck Tech T-Shirt

Style 47V00L * Made of 4.7-ounce, 100% filament polyester jersey knit * Features wicking and antimicrobial properties * Available in 10 colors in sizes XS-3XL

Use Info-Action #305 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction





“Over in Europe, they’re not so concerned with the speed the presses are running. They’re more concerned about maintaining a tempo.”

- Danny Gruninger, co-owner, Denver Print House

someone who can. The speed and turnaround are really going to play a big role in the next few years.”

The general consensus: Do a job as fast as you can without compromising the quality of what you’re selling.

Marketing to Your Audience

STAYING AHEAD OF a marketing curve is increasingly difficult in a world dominated by social media stalwarts like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. But there are ways to keep up with your potential customers’ needs.

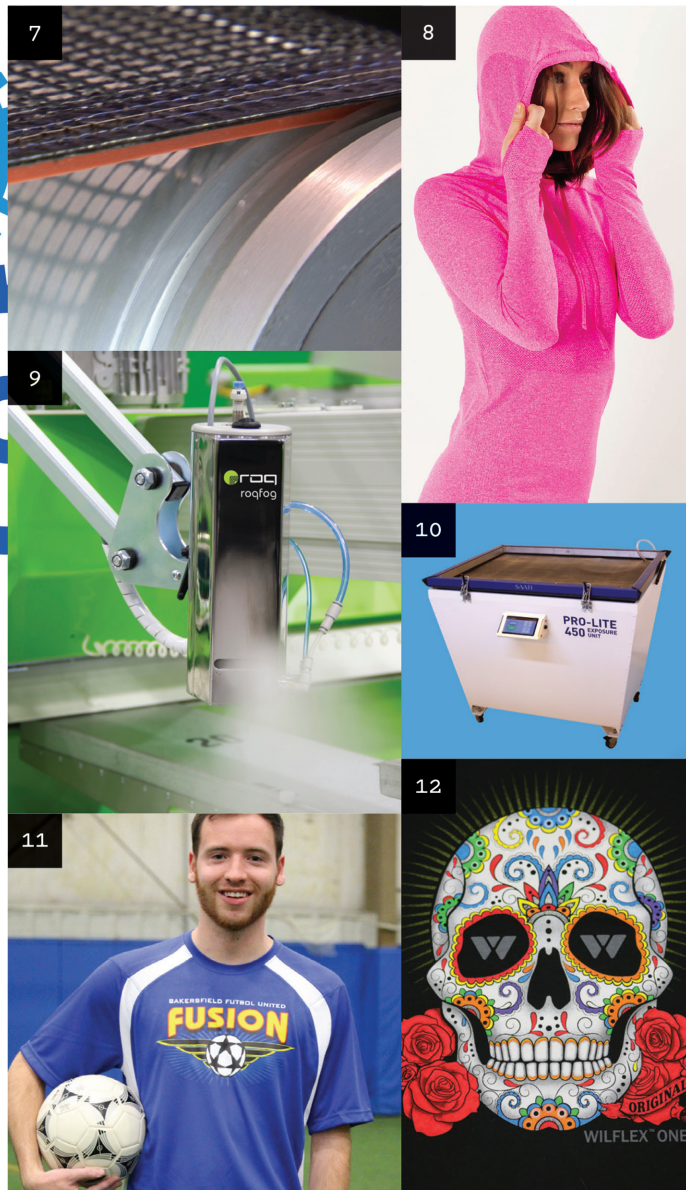
“The younger generation wants to do everything [digitally],” Gruninger says. “We’ve definitely seen a need to do more Internet, digital and direct marketing. Having a good web platform and having a good interface [also is important].”

Some believe social media is the key to marketing in this age, but others like a more old-fashioned approach. “You’ve got to be banging on doors out there,” Gaardbo says. “It’s a matter of helping people understand what’s available.”

While that’s true, reaching audiences through social media is becoming an art form, and those who master it will find it much easier to reach a broad audience.

“With marketing, you have to set yourself aside from just providing a T-shirt and add more to it,” Rauen says. “Within each niche market, you’re going to have to provide the value that the customer is going to pay to separate you from the competition.”

And in this industry, innovation is making it easier to accomplish that goal. ☐



Innovative Products

7. M&R Patriot Belt and SureTrak

Belt tracking system for M&R conveyor dryers * Red silicone guide stitched along the Patriot Belt rides in grooves, keeping the belt in place

Use Info-Action #306 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

8. Myogrid Women’s Performance Training Hoodie

Made of 65% nylon/35% polyester and features 180-degree hood vision * Moisture-management and anti-odor properties * Available in three colors in sizes XS-2XL

Use Info-Action #307 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

9. Ryonet ROQFog Automatic Press Humidifier

Keeps screens hydrated through a production run * Features adjustable spray nozzles at each print head and a 5.8-gallon tank

Use Info-Action #308 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

10. Saati Pro-Lite 450 SCZ Exposure Unit

LED screen-exposure system with programmable timer and one-touch operation * Works with all one- and two-part emulsions and stencil films

Use Info-Action #309 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

11. Transfer Express Stretch Litho Heat Transfer

Combines full-color, digitally printed artwork with screen-printed plastisol ink * Can be applied to cotton, polyester and blends

Use Info-Action #310 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction

12. PolyOne Wilflex One Non-PVC Plastisol Screen-Printing Inks

Offers ease of printing like a traditional plastisol ink, according to the company * Formulated without PVC and designed for high-speed production * Feature extra-fine points for greater precision and accuracy when cutting

Use Info-Action #311 at impressionsmag.com/infoaction



Optimizing White Ink

These five factors play a major role in successfully printing with this ink color.

October 12, 2016

By Mark Suhadolnik, Contributing Writer

I visit many screen-printing shops around the country — both small and large facilities — and one of the biggest, and costliest, issues that challenges screen printers is working with white ink. Sure, everyone prints with it, but are they doing so correctly?

Following are five factors to consider to ensure you are printing the best-possible designs using this ink color.

1. Proper Mesh Selection: Coverage and image detail are the main factors in mesh selection. Nearly every shop I visit uses 110 mesh for its underbases, which I always question. In response, I'm often told that it results in better coverage or the ink is too thick to pass through a higher mesh count.

While sometimes true, this is not the real issue when printing using a premium white ink. Such inks have undergone hours of testing and development on press in laboratories, as well as beta tests at screen-printing shops, before being released to market.

2. Screen Coating: Minimal stencil thickness, or complete lack thereof, is the primary cause of failure for most printers using white ink. If you cannot feel the image area on the screen's substrate side, you will never get a proper ink laydown. "Emulsion Over Mesh" (EOM) is the commonly used term for having the proper amount of emulsion thickness on the screen. It's ideal to have an ink well on the substrate side, as this is a major factor in the amount of ink being laid down.

One topic that always is up for debate is whether to use the sharp or rounded side of the scoop coater. I prefer the latter because it gives you a proper emulsion coating starting on the screen's substrate side.

Also, remember to dry emulsion with the substrate side down. Coating with the sharp edge basically scrapes off the emulsion. If you ever have seen or used an automatic screen coater, the troughs always have a rounded edge for this reason.

3. Press Setup: Even if the mesh is correct and you have a perfect screen and stencil, incorrect press setup will lead to problems.

Many printers use too much squeegee pressure because they mistakenly think more is better. It's ideal to print with enough pressure (25-40 psi) to shear off the ink and clear the screen, leaving the ink on top of, rather than pushed through, the garment.

Other contributing factors are squeegee angle and speed. With proper pressure, 15-20 degrees is ideal for shearing the ink.

Today's inks are formulated to run at high production speeds, disproving the theory that a slower print stroke equals better ink deposit. Squeegee selection is determined by the mesh count, image detail and the viscosity of the ink with which you are printing. A triple-durometer squeegee, such as a 60-90-60, typically works well for white or gray underbases and a 70/90/70 durometer is good for any top colors. But it still remains a personal choice.

4. Flash Temperatures and Time: Mesh selection and screen/print setup are the main contributing factors in flash time and temperature. If these two things are done correctly, you should have the proper ink-film thickness and, as a result, attain a quick flash time. This can increase production.

If you have a thick ink deposit, you will need a longer flash time, which can lead to scorched garments. It also can negate a true ink-film flash cure or even possibly cure the ink, which will lead to the top colors washing off during laundering.

If printed properly, most of today's white inks will flash at 265°F in about 1.5-3 seconds, which leads to faster production times and more jobs completed in a day.

5. Cure Time and Temperature: This is where you should reference the ink manufacturer's recommendations since there are so many different types of white ink available for printing on cotton, 50/50 blends and polyester. White-ink manufacturers have developed different formulas designed to meet specific needs, including all-purpose plastisol, fast-flashing, low-bleed and low-cure options. Most will have different settings for their products.

White-ink printing does not have to be the battle that most print shops face on a daily basis. With a little knowledge and practice, you can better perform this technique in no time.



ON TOP FOR

2017

October 12, 2016

By Lauren Volker, Managing Editor

With the year's end just around the corner, it's time to get ahead and prepare to kick off 2017 with new products that will meet customers' demands. With many factors influencing the styles, colors, fabrics and materials clients will ask for next year, here's a forecast to help you take advantage of every opportunity.

Retail Influences Loom Large

Invented at retail, the burgeoning "athleisure" trend has permeated the wholesale industry and, according to suppliers, is here to stay.

"The active-lifestyle trend continues to dominate how we dress throughout the day, and this will continue [in] full force in 2017 as we look for fashion and comfort in every piece of apparel," says John Spivey, marketing manager, Champion Athletic wear. "As we get active and stay active, our wardrobes revolve around clothing that offers day-long solutions and takes us from activity to activity."

Active wear has become synonymous with lifestyle apparel, and the lines are predicted to continue to blur across markets in the coming year. "Cotton tees and sport shirts that wick or have odor control provide solutions to daily living, even when just walking the dog or having drinks with friends," says Marcus Davis, product development manager for Hanes. "You have the look of fashion, but with performance features."

Retail's influence in 2017 won't stop at athletic-inspired lifestyle apparel, with other fashion-forward, standout details appearing in supplier offerings.



“Textures will be very important in 2017, not only for the feel, but for how a garment looks,” Davis says. “Textures add visual interest, and it’s that visual pop that is helping to drive retail purchases.”

Heathers, slub yarns and nep — small knots of fiber embedded in yarn, either intentionally or unintentionally — are all expected to be popular textures that will add visual interest to garments in the coming year.

Attention to detail will go beyond garment feel in 2017. “You’ll see pockets, including pouch pockets and kangaroo pockets, on silhouettes that traditionally come without,” Spivey says. “Hems are getting updates as well. While the squared hem has been traditional in tees for quite a while, longer, shirttail or drop-tail hems are becoming more popular. In general, consumers want something that is different.”

Suppliers also expect to see some influence from classic, heritage styles. “What’s old is new again,” Spivey adds. “Whether it is retro brands or vintage music, looking back is bringing forward a lot of today’s trends. Retro is everywhere.”

Beyond Basic

Influenced by the athleisure boom, next year’s consumers will want and expect more from their apparel.

“The basic tee is declining as smart shoppers look for added benefits,” Davis says. “Garments with ‘plus-one’ features will continue to help fuel the market.”

No longer just must-haves for athletic apparel, consumers will look for tech features like wicking and odor control in clothing they’ll wear to the gym or to run a half marathon — or for a simple trip to the grocery store.

“This is also where most innovation is occurring in polyester and synthetics,” says Jeanene Edwards, vice president of marketing and merchandising, Fruit of the Loom Activewear. “The growing sublimation market [should] really [be] able to capitalize on this performance growth.”

It also will be paramount that apparel decorators look to sell beyond the shirt in 2017, as bottoms will become increasingly important, according to Spivey. “Joggers, which once appealed only to the young and slim, are now a core item as the fit has evolved to a larger consumer group,” he says. “Now with a more relaxed fit, the appeal is growing across genders and age groups.”

Opportunity in Fabrics

Suppliers see the most room for growth in fabrics, with endless options — from tri-blends to slubs, heathers and novelty materials — that will continue to change and evolve next year.

“As the popularity of [these] fabrics increases, consumers can anticipate that more value options in [these] segments will be offered,” Edwards says.

To make the most of this opportunity, suppliers emphasize the importance of staying on top of developments. “Fleece, for example, continues to update, from technical blends to French terry,

which allows people to be innovative with cotton,” Spivey says. “French terry has long been thought of as a women’s platform. Now, as styles develop, there is a whole new segment making this a more gender-neutral, crossover fabric.”

“The softer the better” still will ring true next year, with manufacturers continuing to develop garments with improved feel.

“We see high demand for T-shirts made from fine yarns with exceptional side-seamed craftsmanship,” says Mark Seymour, chief sales officer, Next Level Apparel. “Millennials particularly appreciate the better feel and styling, and are making more of the buying decisions in the market today, but the trend in soft fashion basics is really for everyone.”

Keeping Pace

With fashion-forward and performance fabrics pervading the industry, one of the biggest challenges for decorators will be to keep up with innovation.

“Printers can differentiate themselves by offering solution-focused apparel,” Davis says. “Would your customer who is buying workwear find value in a sport shirt with odor control? The answer is likely a resounding ‘yes.’ Be the apparel decorator who sells more than a basic white or black tee.”

Beyond just supplying the latest products, mills and printers have to address new challenges that some fashion garments present when decorated, according to Davis.

“For example, while textures are a key trend, the bumps and nubs created by various blends and weaves don’t always lend themselves to embellishment,” he says. “As fashion enters the promotional market, mills need to be aware of printability issues, and educating printers is important.”

It will be crucial not only to stay apprised of shifting trends and fabrics, but also to maintain inventory and accessibility of product, according to Seymour.

“The demand for the [fashion-forward] styles dictates huge inventory levels, and customers want to place orders late in the day and have product in hand the following day,” he says. “The newer fashion blanks are no longer a niche market, but have become the center of everyday demand.”

An online presence, both with a website and through social media, will be key to meeting the intense demand of next year’s customer — even for small, local apparel decorators.

“Consumers are using [the] online [realm] to investigate decorated apparel options even if they still give you a call or come by your shop to place their order,” Edwards says. “Fortunately, there are plenty of software options out there that service our industry that make this easy.”

With new trends and exciting advancements in technology surfacing, 2017 will be full of opportunities for apparel manufacturers, suppliers and decorators.

NEWS FROM PRINTEX

By the Grace of Allah Almighty, the second Roqyou arrived at Kay & Emms Faisalabad and its Installation will be in completed in Second Week of December.

Our CEO Mr. Mustafa Kamal & Technical Director Mr. Nadeem Ahmed is going to visit Screen Print Sri Lanka Expo in Colombo during 1st week of December.

Sroque introduced the Hybrid Machine in Market means beside screen printing you can do the Digital Printing as well at the same time. For details you can visit:

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