

Art of Procurement Podcast Transcript

Episode 157

Increasing Procurement's Strength through Diverse Perspectives w/ Antonio Humphreys

Philip: [00:00:03] Hi Everybody! Welcome to this week's Art of Procurement interview. Today, I'm joined by Antonio Humphreys. Antonio is senior manager of Global Procurement at Adobe Systems based here in California. I've actually seen Antonio speak before. He's always been high in my list of practitioners that I wanted to interview, and so I am delighted that we're actually able to make it happen today.

[00:00:24] We were connected by the team at ProcureCon as Antonio would be speaking at the upcoming ProcureCon marketing conference at New Orleans at the end of November. Antonio has enjoyed the credits after an internship with NASA. He actually started in sales before he jumped over to this side of the table and joined us here in procurement. He's worked for organizations such as Shell, Hewlett-Packard and GAP before joining Adobe.

[00:00:48] Antonio has a really deep background in both procurement organizational design and development and in the marketing category. It's those two topics that were the focus of our conversation today. And so, I started by asking Antonio; you know as of tasting both the sales and procurement side of the table, what is it that actually keeps him in procurement?

Antonio: [00:01:09] That's a good question. When you look at the way that I think our function has evolved here, I think we've really come from just buying widgets and we look at like your typical supply chain and there's lots of stuff that I've done early in my career kind of in that space, but I think the fact that it's gone a lot more complex in terms of what we do end to end, it's not really just about buying things. I think it's really about being true consultants to the business. That's the part that I had really liked about my job, and I think just the function overall. I think there's still a long road way for us to kind of grow and evolve. When you see where technology is going on, I think there's a lot that we can incorporate into that into our own tool belts to make sure that we're using that to the best of our ability to be the right stewards to the business.

Philip: [00:02:05] Yeah. I guess also it helped the business integrate that into their kind of operations or what they buy because some of these technologies that are coming down the pipe that are providing opportunities for transformation are actually coming from the outside supply market so we can influence and impact that too even if it's not in procurement itself.

Antonio: [00:02:25] Most definitely. There are so many examples of when you look at all the different industry verticals and the different types of technology whether it is related to a particular vertical or just across the board and there is lots of things. And obviously, if we're talking about RPA, AI, and MI, there's a lot of that that can be applicable across the board. I think a lot of those things that they were doing

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within Adobe, I think are applicable to pretty much any company across the board that's willing to make that investment.

Philip: [00:02:58] So, I have to ask. When I was looking into your background, I noticed--. I think it was very--. The very beginning of your career you're with NASA and you're buying services for the space shuttle program. So, I was intrigued what the difference is when you bring something for a space shuttle versus the kind of services that we typically buy that you may be buying today.

Antonio: [00:03:21] Yeah. It was an awesome experience. I worked at Johnson Space Centre for NASA in Houston. When we look at that, it's just a great opportunity to work with literally the astronauts and a lot of the technical engineers that were responsible for the space shuttle program and for the ISS, the International Space Station. I had a chance to work with all of those folks and even with the Russian space project's office because there was a lot of work that was being done between NASA and the Russian agency.

[00:03:53] When you look at it, a lot of parallels, right. I mean those are basically just your business partners, your stakeholders, and you know you are looking at the requirements of what's needed for your products whether it's the space shuttle or your computer hardware or is it jeans from GAP, or cloud software that you're supporting within Adobe. It's all comparable, right. You're supporting the business in the right way to get the most reliable product and services to really kind of drive the results. But, it's just an awesome opportunity just really early on in my career.

Philip: [00:04:30] Yes. One of the things that I think sometimes when you're buying the same--. I don't know. You maybe bring the same thing but across a different industry or you're working in different industry when you get the opportunity to work at such fascinating projects like that it just kind of steps it up a gear, doesn't it, in terms of maybe even the motivation or the excitement to go to work in the morning because you're working on something that's just a little bit different.

Antonio: [00:04:54] Totally. Yeah. I mean when you look at the culture at NASA and kind of the energy especially at the time when the shuttle program was still really really vibrant, you know there was you know the true ups and downs when you look at couple of the explosions that happened and you know just the terrible sadness and you know just the downturn of what happened there. But then just on the opposite side just the massive elation of just really successful mission. And that's all we were driven to as a whole, as a collective. We were all wanting to make sure the shuttle mission was successful and making sure the astronauts gone up and came back in in a safe way. Yeah. It's definitely really exciting and motivating.

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Philip: [00:05:42] Kind of the power of a collective goal.

Antonio: [00:05:46] You name it. Any goal to really kind of make that mission. There were literally thousands of moving parts, millions. I mean there's just so many elements of it but my part that I could help contribute to, I think that's just the mindset and the culture that was just you know whether here in procurement or you're an astronaut, you're a flight control or if you're an engineer that were helping and testing and training. The Johnson Space Center as a whole is just massive. And when you look at how they partner with a lot of the other side around the state it is a pretty impressive operation.

Philip: [00:06:29] Now, I know that you're pretty proactive member of the procurement community. That's how we've got to know each other. I know that we're both going to some other similar events that are coming up. We're just chatting about that off mic. I'm interested why you invest your time in the procurement community itself and what kind of value do you get out of doing it?

Antonio: [00:06:53] I think it's a couple of things. When you look at the investment, there is a big part of I think our community as a whole where we find a lot of value in just kind of benchmarking and having good honest conversations. I think a lot of the two forums are a good place for that. Whether it's SIG and ProcureCon and Procurement Leaders or Silicon Valley Sourcing Leaders, ANA, you name it. There is a ton of different organizations out there that we use kind of that platform. I think what's important is just really having those good honest conversation of "Hey how are you doing? And by the way, what are you doing to quantify different metrics and/or savings or value? Or what's the latest and greatest that you're trying to drive innovation within your procurement or sourcing organization?" I mean that's the real value. You can hear lots of good case studies. There are different presentations from lots of folks that I think is really valuable but then I also think just having those good solid relations with folks in the industry where you can truly be a community and help each other out and provide those insights, I think that's super important. That's why, to be honest, I stay really involved because I think we need to support each other because I think there's a lot that we can learn from each other but then also just kind of support each other to grow and be fixed on all of our organizations.

Philip: [00:08:24] Yes, it's very interesting you say that because I couldn't agree more. It's incumbent upon all of us. We're in the community. I feel that to help move the function, the profession, whatever we want to call it, but to move it forward you have to address the challenges that were going to face but also to help each other take advantage of the opportunities. We can definitely see each other as competing. Even if you're in organizations that may compete against each other I

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see it more as a collective community where we're are passionate about the same thing and want the same results ultimately within the companies we work.

Antonio: [00:08:56] I couldn't agree more. There's a presentation I did for SIG a few years ago that kind of talked about the historical perspective of sourcing, the sourcing system early on in the 1700s where it's really called the putting out to some. And it was really about how folks really start looking at procuring and distributing raw materials and things like that and then really kind of evolved to the first and second industrial revolution and kind of looking at how that impacted that same type of supply chain impact in business creation.

[00:09:34] And really when you look at supply chain management as a whole really kind of came about in the 80s and then strategic sourcing as a discipline more in the 90s. And then now that were in obviously the 2000s, this is like our big our opportunity to kind of redefine. Where do we take it from here? I think we have a mix of all of those elements where we have supply chain, we have sourcing, there is end-to-end Procure to Pay but where do we go from there? I think there's a lot that we look at again from the consulting side and risk mitigation and change management and process improvements. There's so many hats that we wear that I think we have the opportunity to mold and create our function in a much better way even moving forward.

Philip: [00:10:26] So if you look then into your crystal ball, what do you think the future of procurement looks like? Or what do you think is achievable and attainable if we put our collective minds to it?

Antonio: [00:10:36] Yeah. I think when you think about just what's next, I think there's a lot that's still going to be focused on. I think there's a lot of conversations around nearshore/offshore as companies continue to grow either from if you're here stateside or if you're just in a single country or a single region. There is a lot of companies that are just scaling and growing at a pretty fast pace. So, you really need to think about what are the things that we need to do collectively to kind of meet those challenges head on and how do we address that? I know that's one of the things that we're looking at here at Adobe as well, you know just how do we continue to look for efficiency and scale in the right way. I think that's a big one.

[00:11:23] There's a lot of things obviously in the industry about process automation, and AI. Those are things likewise that we're doing lots of case studies internally as well and kind of proof of concepts just to kind of test how that can potentially drive particular efficiencies in Adobe. I know there's lots of other players that have been doing that successfully for years now and there's

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lots of others that still are kind of testing that. I think when you look at a combination of those things, it really is how do you scale your organization in the right way to support your growing functions. And on the other side of it is if you're hitting a little bit more cost constrained and that type of thing, you still need to figure out from an art perspective how are you still managing that headcount in the best way possible and still trying to balance cost and efficiency.

Philip: [00:12:23] Did you see our focus changes the way you invest those dollars in terms of headcount or resource or maybe this is as technology becomes more mature in taking away some of the more tactical and transactional activities. Do you see it shifting focus to the investments on essentially what we consider a lot more strategic, commercially focused, perhaps impacting - doing a better job of putting our money on impacting business outcomes and solving challenges as opposed to maybe what we're doing today?

Antonio: [00:13:00] Yeah. I think that's still going to be a natural evolution. And so, it's kind of very vulnerable. We've talked about not really focusing as much on some of the lower complexity, lower dollar type deals, and really going in for the much bigger strategic overarching deals that are driving the biggest impact. That to me the nirvana when you have earned a seat at the table on those big big deals. That's where you're basically part of the larger collective team, right. You're not just the procurement person. You are part of that core team that's really driving that critical business decision to take it to the next level.

Philip: [00:13:43] Yeah, you're a commercial manager not a procurement manager.

Antonio: [00:13:48] Most definitely.

Philip: [00:13:50] Do you think that changes the kind of roles that we hire for within procurement or maybe the skill sets that we hire for?

Antonio: [00:14:01] I do. When you look at skill sets, I think you can look at it in lots of ways. A lot of people are going to say "Hey, you know what? I want somebody that has a good solid foundation on supply chains/sourcing/procurement background and/or degree." Others are going to say "You know what? I really have a good mix of that within my team. I want folks that have a good sales background or a good engineering background or good HR background to kind of mix things up." I like that approach because it kind of gives you the best of both worlds where you've got folks that come in with other areas of expertise that they can leverage and you can always teach folks and ramp them up on the sourcing side of things if you're teaching about RFXs and supplier management and those types of things. But those other kind of real critical skill sets are so important just for success.

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[00:14:58] And one of the things that we really really hone in on here at Adobe and I know I have spoken with others too is really around EQ, emotional intelligence. That's the big part of showing up, really being able to understand your audience, figure out the right way to address that audience, the right way to show up, the right way to listen, and the right way to respond. I think a lot of it is that assessment being able to adjust your approach to that audience because we were basically supporting lots of different person in lots of different parts of the business. They could be an engineer. They could be a marketing person. They could be an HR person. That's the part that's critical. We need folks are going to be able to adjust and change in the right way.

Philip: **[00:15:49]** How do you measure, and this is something I always wondered, how do you measure for that EQ? Are there certain things you look for in somebody's background for example, or is it more viewing how they interact, viewing how they build relationship, viewing how they work in situations of conflict? I'm interested at how you look about really figuring out if somebody has that EQ that you think is necessary.

Antonio: **[00:16:20]** Yeah. I think you can get a sense of that when you're looking at somebody's CV or resume. Or you can look at how they comment on the way they reported different activities, projects, roles. But that's one thing. Like on paper. But two, when you're talking to somebody for the first time, part of what we do is we focus on a lot of questions that really just kind of hone in somebody's approach. So, you kind of give them the typical scenario and you're kind of working through a case study to see either if they have done this before, really kind of explain how they approached it or just say based on how have you done this. And that's like a second way just more kind of like an informational type interviews. But then really when somebody is coming in for the first time if they're new to your organization you want to really kind of hone in and focus their development in that area pretty quickly. If they end up there just outstanding at it - great. Let them run. Let them do what they know best and produce those results. If they need a little bit of help it's all good. It's all about helping them provide. Well, you help them to provide development skills in that area because in the end that is one of the most critical soft skills that you need that's going to help drive good solid business relationships and ultimately drive those results.

Philip: **[00:17:51]** Yeah. One of things that I always been interested in and I think I ask this to a number of different guests but I'm really interested in your perspective, because as we evolve and as the function kind of changes and we take advantage of some of the opportunities in front of us, obviously we see we need to evolve our metrics at the same time because that's I think one of the biggest

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difficulties or challenges we have in trying to demonstrate the value that we can create over and above cost savings. I'm interested in what you feel in terms of what metrics become important in the future as we do change. Then, perhaps how can we convince others that those are measures of which to look at the value we create versus how they may be used to actually measuring us.

Antonio: [00:18:36] True. There is a lot that -- I think we've partnered with CED in the past looking at some of their specific function on metrics that we looked at early on. Some of those are around functional cost, spend procurement FTE or basically spend per head count, and coverage, cost per FTE, savings per FTE. So, just some of those you know more kind of quantitative metrics that are kind of basis around cost. I think that that's one way that you can kind of look at those type of metrics but on the other side there's your typical savings in value. We've talked about that for years. But I think we're really evolving as companies are scaling. It's much more beyond that. There is this whole field around risk mitigation and compliance and proper due diligence on your supply modification and legal reviews. I think there's this kind of blending for someone way due in procurement. We're almost compliant internal audit, legal, finance, all in one. There's a lot that we do to wear all of those hats. That's why I say like if we're really that true kind of consulting arm we have the ability to wear those hats and that's where I think our true value add is. If we're thinking about the metrics we should be measured on, it should be a mix of how we're supporting the business in each of those ways to really address each of those kinds of value add pieces.

Philip: [00:20:14] Yeah. And how those tie into the objectives, the metrics, the category level stakeholders may have but also as an organizational level what are the three, four, five pillars or whatever it may be from an old strategy that we're measuring. How do we actually tie into those? Because often, what we measure and obviously I'm thinking about cost savings is it doesn't even tie into any great organizational metric. And then we wonder how come we don't necessarily get involved at the level that we want to get involved because we're not actually directly connected with ultimately the corporate strategy.

Antonio: [00:20:52] It's a great point. I think you're basically referencing maybe like inter-department goals that you may not be communicating to but when you look at those goals, and I'll give you one example. So, I partner with our corporate marketing organization and with our CMO. It's my job to make sure that I understand her and her team's business objectives and just critical goals for the year. And my job really should be to align to all of her goals and objectives to make sure that there were knocking those out of the park. So, for me that's number one. I want to make sure that we're supporting them in the best

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way to help achieve all of our organizational goals as a whole, as Adobe. And after that, it's like "Okay. Now what do we measure specifically within our department that we can say how are we measuring up to best in class in all these different areas?" So, spot on.

Philip: [00:21:51] Yeah. You mentioned marketing, right. I actually have some questions I want to touch on the marketing category specifically, but let me just touch first on something that we can do in procurement to market ourselves better and that's to think about our procurement brand. I wonder your perspective on is the brand procurement and having a brand around procurement actually that important? Does it really make a difference within an organization of how we perceived?

Antonio: [00:22:19] I definitely do. And so, there is a lot of what we knew have focused on in our leadership team to really think about what do we do to really develop our own, I want to call it a sub-brand if you're thinking about global Procure to Pay there's a lot that to be honest you know some people are going to say, "I just don't know anything about you." Or some people are like "Well, I know about you but I have these reservations." or "I know about you and you guys are the greatest friend." You're going to have this widespread kind of view of lots of different personalities and perspectives but I think there's still this huge opportunity to really brand yourself and kind of educate your stakeholders in a way to say in a simple message "Hey, this is what we do end to end. These are all the things that we can support you with. And these are all the tools that we can help to get you there."

[00:23:16] And so, I think that it is a huge opportunity. I've seen some really good examples of that in the industry where folks have produced really nice marketing materials around it. They've done lots of things around web content. I think that's where we are. We've developed a lot of stuff in-house that's just good solid web content, you know a lot of things around ways for folks to contact us accordingly. We're definitely in kind of like that 2.0 phase where we want to get to that next level of education and making sure folks understand really what we do to support the business and kind of drive that forward.

Philip: [00:23:55] Yeah. Are you able to work with your marketing group to actually do that because that's one thing I always recommend to folks is take advantage of the resources that you have within your own organization. Don't feel like you get to do this on your own and come up with some fantastic marketing branding strategy. You actually have experts in the company who can help you do that because that's what they do for a living.

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- Antonio:** [00:24:14] I couldn't agree more. And to echo that point, so we are working with our internal PR and communications team because I brought this up to our VP of internal communications and she owns PR for the company. She said most definitely, you know just leverage her team in anything that we can do to kind of drive that forward so we're really focused on kind of getting our basis around web content. We really want to then take it to the next level around what we really want to emphasize around just being our trusted partner to the business and where we go from there.
- Philip:** [00:24:50] Yeah. That's great to hear that you have also levered that group because I just see it so rarely and yet it's something that I think when I was on the practitioner side I never really thought about it, but now I have thought about it, it seems like a no brainer. And you know our teams, usually they have open arms. They want to help us.
- Antonio:** [00:25:11] It is all about prioritization. If you can get it on their radar with a hundred other projects that's going on, it's all good and just kind of stress the importance and what it can drive for the business. I think you'll get their attention.
- Philip:** [00:25:27] You probably helped build a stronger relationship with the marketing group too because they see that you are trying to act in perhaps a different way than what they perceived you before you started working with them.
- Antonio:** [00:25:38] Most definitely. And I was literally on a call right before our conversation here. And some of the feedback was almost like what I just mentioned, right. One person knows us really well. The other person was kind of so so. And the other person just didn't have really much idea at all. It was kind of like those three perspectives. And they are like "Yeah. We need to solve this."
- Philip:** [00:26:00] I want to finish on a couple of marketing related questions because as we've mentioned a couple of times it's an area of specialty for you. And we've talked about some of the challenges facing procurement but I think that maybe sometimes we forget this again too is that most of our stakeholders face similar challenges. What's on the minds of the CMO today? What keeps the CMO up at night right now?
- Antonio:** [00:26:29] I think when you look at the pressures, our pressure is obviously on top line to really drive and support that revenue for all the different business units and you know product lines that any company is kind of working on. That's just obviously number one part and personal. I think when you look at -- there's a lot around MRM and just return on marketing investment, right. Like that kind of ROI model. That part is just always huge because there's always that challenge of

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you have X amount of dollars where you need to really kind of prove, really prove the return on that investment in all of those critical areas whether it be advertising or production or media investments or different research projects or investment in new accounts and sponsorships.

[00:27:25] There's so many facets to kind of the marketing and sales space that then just that ROI model was just incredibly important. So, I think it's just that continual pressure to prove what sort of return are we getting. And then, I think beyond that there's a line in the industry right now. I know DAENE has done a great job of highlighting some of these things. There's different industry issues around just how things kind of operate with the agency model. There's different things that are happening there. There are different things around program. So, there is going to be continued I think scrutiny and kind of focus on how has this business been operating in the past and how has it truly evolved moving forward. I think the changing agency landscape and how that manage and then you know the work flow from there to this model of buying with kind of the third-party media property and how they're going to change with your typical traditional to digital. Obviously, that's just been lightning quick in terms of that transition, and how do you understand and manage that in the best way. That's probably one of the bigger challenges.

Philip: **[00:28:42]** You mentioned earlier a ROI model. It is something I wasn't familiar with within marketing and it was something that pick my interest. I hope you could share just a little bit more about how marketers generally will measure the ROI of their investment because I think the understanding of that for folks who may not have the background in marketing that you do is just so insightful and really helps kind of make a connection with your marketing colleagues and understand what it is that they're trying to achieve.

Antonio: **[00:29:10]** Yeah. It's basic. When you look at your ROI calculations, it's different from a basic financial perspective. So, you're going to look at that I think when you're assessing any of your general best minds from the PNL. Again, you can look at that from one line but then when you start breaking down the marketing specific items you're going to look at similar to what I mention some of the procurement quantitative metrics so you can look at there from a headcount perspective and just in terms of functional cost but then you're really looking at kind of the breakdown of different advertising campaign investments or you know broad market research efforts or huge industry events where you're trying to bring in 10,000 plus paying attendees to kind of educate around product portfolios and launches and things like that.

[00:30:07] All of those come with their own level of complexity and obviously big big spend. So I think from there what the team usually do is they really try and

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gauge what are some of the basic metrics - the amount of attendees or EPMS efforts to find a media or whatever the quantitative measure on kind of measuring that basis against the initial investment. That's the part where you could come up with a specific baseline by just kind of dividing those two. But beyond that you're really trying to think long term. Short term we are able to get this but long term what is this really driving? Ultimately, that's what you're trying to do is both get that win in the short term by kind of doing that analysis. But ultimately if you're making that investment you know how are you thinking that that's going to impact the long term from a revenue margin perspective. That's the neuron.

Philip: [00:31:06] Right. Kind of how does it play into your bigger strategy or longer-term strategy.

Antonio: [00:31:12] Most definitely.

Philip: [00:31:13] My last question today is I think that you've been pretty successful in the marketing category and that's often a difficult thing to do and it really is based on the power of building relationships. Not being a traditional procurement kind of taking a traditional procurement mindset. But I just love to hear maybe some of the tricks or the tips that you could share to really help become a trusted adviser or a consultant to the marketing function especially when I'm thinking more of those creative categories.

Antonio: [00:31:51] Hold on. I think the biggest thing is just show up as an older boy as you can about the marketing space. Be knowledgeable about what's going on in the industry. Know a bit about what's shifting. What are the changes? What are the things that are better impact and bigger? Then you show up as either on par as much as you can with your stakeholders or even above.

[00:32:21] And so, if you're just more on top of couple things that you can actually then educate them on that's going to be just a huge win because they're going to be like "Well, this guy or gal isn't just aware of buying hardware or doing something in HR. They are true knowledge experts in what's going on in marketing and advertising etc." I think that's one.

[00:32:43] Two, I think it's just really showing up and listening and just don't go in that you're going to say "Well, this is our process. This is our policy. And this is what we expect in order to work together." That's not it. That's obviously on the back end of how you want to make sure that you're using those things. You really want to listen. Listen to them first. Listen to what their pain points are. Listen to what pressures they are under. What are the hot buttons? What are the things that if you are truly understanding their business figure out a way that you can

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complement that team? Figure out a way that you can report in the right way and use your own tools that they don't have access to. Whether it's arriving the right level of data and analytics. Whether it's jumping in on strategic negotiations. Whether it's helping in agency business review where there could be a potential issue that you can help mediate. There are a ton of things that you can do if you just help listen and be part of that constructive dialogue to help solve their issues. I think that's the biggest piece.

Philip: [00:33:55] Well Antonio, I really thank you for your time today. I have one last question which is I think the easy one. That's if listeners are interested in following you and connecting with you and touching base with you, what is the best place for them to find you?

Antonio: [00:34:12] Yeah, sure. So, you can definitely just find me on LinkedIn. I mean that's pretty much the standard so you can find me out there, Antonio Humphries. Likewise, if you want to contact me via email it's ahumphre@adobe.com. I'd be happy to talk with you and again build a community and benchmark and have a good conversation.

Philip: [00:34:34] Great. What I'll do Antonio is I'll include those links in our show notes so those are going to be at artofprocurement.com/adobe. That's artofprocurement.com/adobe. One last time, I just really thank you for joining us today and for sharing some of your insights and your experiences with the Art of Procurement listeners.

Antonio: [00:34:56] Outstanding. Phil, it's a pleasure. Thank you for your time. I hope everybody found this a little bit useful.

Philip: [00:35:02] Yup. Thanks Antonio.

[00:35:03] Thank you for listening to another episode of the Art of Procurement. To find an archive of all past episodes, you can go to artofprocurement.com/episodes. And to ensure you never miss another show, go to artofprocurement.com/subscribe.

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