

HYBRID WORK MODEL PRACTICES: A CHALLENGE OR AN ADVANTAGE

Mr. K. SELVANATHAN¹, Dr. P. VEERAMANI² & Mr. A. BRITTO³

ABSTRACT

Sagi Gidali, who is the co-founder and CPO of Perimeter 81m defines “The hybrid work model signifies a flexible forward-thinking model of work that allows employees to work both from the office and from home on a consistent, regular basis”. According to the CIO of Laserfiche, Thomas Phelps “A hyper-flexible hybrid work model creates a sustainable employee experience, such as parents who have to drop-off and pick-up times for their children, or individuals who are working on degree programs and working full-time”. This research delves into a comprehensive study focusing on the hybrid work model practices and its challenges and advantages on employees’ perspective among the IT employees in Bangalore.

The evolving landscape of work, accelerated by technological advancements and shifting workforce expectations has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional work structures. The hybrid work model, blending remote and in-office work has emerged as a strategic approach to balance flexibility and productivity. This research seeks to unravel the unique strategies, policies, and practices that are adopted to effectively implement the hybrid work model. The main scope of the research was to find what are the advantages the hybrid work model offers, the challenges accrued in this model and ways to overcome these challenges as it is going to be the future of work model.

Key Words: Hybrid, Blending remote, Sustainability, hyper flexibility, productivity, etc.

¹ Ph.D Scholar, Department of Social Work, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Women’s Studies, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

³ II MSW (HRM) Student, P.G Department of Social Work (HRM), Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Tirupattur.

INTRODUCTION

Covid has made a big havoc in each and everyone's lives. We could still feel its impact in our day-to-day lives. Every aspect of our life has been affected by covid. Mostly, it has affected the work life of many, especially the working condition, style and pattern. As part of its effect, there is a rise to the 'hybrid work' model. The term 'hybrid work' is one of the top most searches in Google since the global pandemic. The companies all around the world are trying to find a balance between flexibility, productivity, safety and engagement of the employees.

In simple term, hybrid work is a blending of two worlds such as: work from home as well as work in office and ideally achieving the benefits of both. The term 'hybrid work' may be new but its meaning of flexible work and flexible work schedule have been experimented for decades. In the 1960s, Christel Kraemerer came up with 'flextime' or 'flexitime' when there was a huge labour shortage. She reflected that rigid starting and stopping times were often unnecessary at work and could be changed to a more flexible system. This allowed housewives and mothers to enter the workforce and that in return helped to ease the labour shortage. In the late 1980s, through the advent of "Summer Fridays" document, some companies in US limited the normal workweek as 4 days of work in a week during the summer months. This trend is still continued but only to those who are white-collar and knowledge workers. Finally, in the late 1990s, AT&T made headlines when they allowed 1,00,000 of their employees to pioneer an "alternative workplace". This brought out a lot of attention on the benefits of what we now know as "work from home". At present, for the last few years, especially after covid, we all witness a monumental shift in traditional workforce dynamics to hybrid blend; from all-office to strictly home or all on-site to work elsewhere.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

'Hybrid work' is one of the top most searches in the Google since Covid pandemic. Day by day more employees are demanding for hybrid work and more companies have started to offer it to their employees. While in India, it has not yet become a very official like those in the Western countries, quite many companies have continued to allow their employees work in the hybrid work model. Work is not all about production and benefits, there are so many other humane elements involved in that such as friendships, being together, sharing the same workspace, working together, helping one another, sharing joys and sorrows much more. We as humans need that kind of association, connection and

bond to remain sane in this insane world. Employees are more engaged in a hybrid workplace because they often have more autonomy and a better work-life balance. When it comes to the benefits for the employers, we could name quite a lot, such as: less production cost, less attrition, improved productivity, lesser or few commutes, access to wider range of talents, and much more. While this being the case why would still employees prefer hybrid work model is the outcome of this research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is ‘hybrid work model’ going to be in future and stay for the longer haul?
- Will it survive the test of time?
- Why would still employees prefer hybrid work model?
- Is ‘hybrid work’ a blessing (boon) or curse (bane) to the humanity at large?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To know the present condition of the hybrid work model
- To find out the best practices of hybrid, and how satisfied and dissatisfied the employers and employees in this work model
- To know the challenges faced by the employees working in this model
- To put forth the solutions that could make the hybrid work effectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Types of Hybrid Work Models

There are four types of hybrid work model and they are as follows:

1. Flexible Hybrid Work Model

Employees are given the freedom to select their worksite and shift based on their daily priorities.

2. Fixed Hybrid Work Model

The company determines and establishes the days and hours that its workers may work from home or visit the office.

3. Office-First Hybrid Work Model

Although attendance is required, employees are permitted to choose a few days each week to work remotely. This kind of structure, in which employees can choose to work two days remotely and three days in the office each week.

4. Remote-First Hybrid Work Model

The company might not have an office and instead rely on team members who live in the area to meet together when necessary.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Hybrid Work Model

Advantages

- Employees can work when and where they are most productive
- Better work-life balance
- Hire talent across the globe
- Save on real estate expenses
- Less attrition fewer or no commutes
- Reduced operating costs increased productivity

Disadvantages

- Harder to collaborate with remote employees
- Requires oversight and maintenance to keep it working
- Not suitable for all industries
- Collaboration and teamwork may be more challenging
- Relationship-building challenges
- Security risks inequity between on-site and remote employees

Article Review

Jonathan James (2023), in his research study on Hybrid work Trends in Canada in 2023 emphasizes the significance of transparent cooperation and communication methods as well as the necessity for employers to provide transparent work standards and guidelines that foster a productive hybrid work environment. It concludes that with hybrid work arrangement the industries have the potential to revolutionize how Canadians approach their professional and personal lives and it's up to the employers and employees to prepare themselves to meet whatever changes may lie ahead.

Mamta Sharma (2023), in her research article titled, "Hybrid working: A game-changer for employee health and wellness?" discusses the potential advantages of the hybrid work paradigm for Indian entrepreneurs. The research emphasizes the value of trust and adaptability in creating a productive hybrid work environment. It also ensures the necessity for businesses to prioritize employee well-being and set up clear communication and collaboration techniques in order to make sure that workers stay engaged and productive.

Pramod Guttal (2023), in his research titled, "How to balance productivity and flexibility in Hybrid work culture?" discusses the possible advantages and difficulties of the hybrid work paradigm for Australian enterprises. The research highlights the necessity for

employers to spend money on technology that promotes distant cooperation and worker wellbeing. The study also suggests that 58% of the remote employees have proper working chairs at home and 78% of people working from home do not have a dedicated desk for office work. So, the research concludes that creating a healthy working atmosphere should be the utmost priority for organizations and employees.

Riya Tandon (2022), in the research titled, “Hybrid work model: A flexible future of work”, indicates how crucial it is to have clear communication and collaboration strategies, spend money on technology that facilitates remote cooperation, and give employee wellbeing as first priority. Though change is unavoidable, one can choose to keep their face pointed in the direction of the sun. The study ensures that growth has come from thriving through the chaos that covid caused and using it as a chance to accept the alteration in both working and living arrangements means a lot.

Yogita Tullisiani (2021), in her research work titled, “How sustainable is the hybrid work model in the post-pandemic era?” points out how various leading companies are adopting to hybrid work model in India. She points out that the covid-19 pandemic has led the companies and employees to recognize the benefits of remote working. But that does not mean that the traditional ways of working in the offices will disappear. So, in all likelihood that this model will become the new normal, knowing the viability is important but unlocking the ways to redesign roles and structure is the key. The study concludes that the mixed work paradigm benefits both companies and employees because employees feel more energized, productive, and engaged when they take advantage of job flexibility. Therefore, the concept of a hybrid work paradigm appears viable and sustainable for the future if properly applied.

Dr. M. Ravichandran and B. Vidhya (2000), in their research titled ‘A study on Hybrid work Model’, speak about the purpose of employee likelihoods on working nature. The study was conducted with due reference of certain theoretical background and pointed out that the hybrid work model is reshaping the way the organizations approach work, embracing flexibility and adaptability as fundamental components of the modern workplace. This research ensures that the employers should ensure on employee satisfaction, effective communication and fostering a sense of belonging which are the pivotal elements for the success of the hybrid work model.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive in its nature as it obtains information concerning the hybrid work model practices and reports the findings of it. Under the method of probability sampling the researcher has adopted simple random sampling method for data collection. The Primary data was collected from the respondents through the delivered structured questionnaires comprising of closed and open questions. The Secondary source of data collection was from literature, journals, e-journals, magazines, internet resources, and documents related to hybrid work model. The sample size was 53 derived from the target population of 101 over the identified workforce of 220 IT employees which is 10% of the total population. Likert’s 5-point scale was used for the study as scoring pattern. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS applying various tests such as Chi-square to find out the significant association between the variables, ‘t’ test to find out significant difference between the variables, Anova test to find out significant association among the variables and Karl Pearson’s correlation to find out the significant relationship between the variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Majority (60.4%) of the respondents were male and two fifth (39.6%) were female. More than three fourth (79.2%) of the respondents were unmarried and two tenth (20.8%) of the respondents were married. More than two fifth (45.3%) of the respondents come from Urban areas, one fourth (28.3%) were from rural areas and more than one fourth (26.4%) were from Town areas.

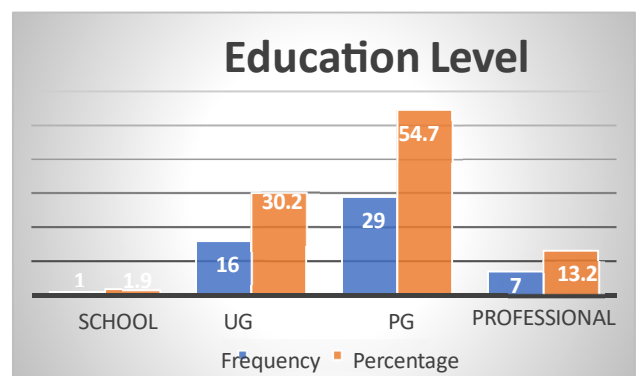
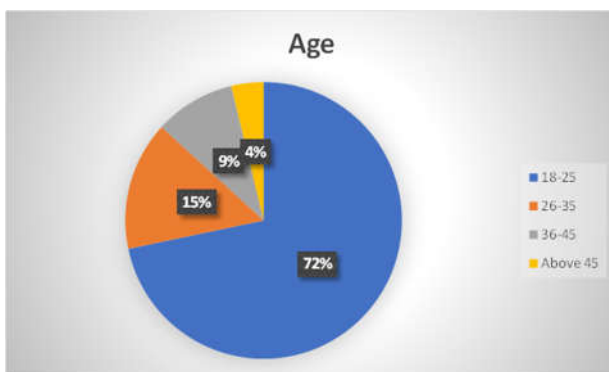


Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

Figure 2: Education Level of the Respondents

Table – 1: Respondents’ Years of Hybrid Work Experience

S. No	Years of Hybrid Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 1 Year	32	60.4
2	1-2 Years	14	26.4
3	2-3 Years	3	5.7

4	Above 3 Years	4	7.5
Total		53	100

The above table indicates that the majority (60.4%) of the respondents had below 1 year of hybrid work experience, more than one fourth (26.4%) of the respondents had between 1-2 years of hybrid work experience, a little more than very meager (7.5%) of the respondents had above 3 years of hybrid work experience, less than very meager (5.7%) of the respondents had between 2-3 years of work experience. So, it is inferred that majority of the respondents that took part in this survey had below 1 year of hybrid work experience.

Table – 2: Respondents’ Preference of Working

S. No	Preference of Working	Frequency	Percentage
1	Office	20	37.7
2	Home	19	35.8
3	Hybrid	8	15.1
4	Does not Matter	6	11.3
Total		53	100

From the above table it is found that more than one third (37.7%) of the respondents prefer to work from office, a little more than one third (35.8%) like to work from home, more than one tenth (15.1%) prefer hybrid mode and more than one tenth (11.3%) it does not matter to them. So, it’s clear that majority of the respondents prefer to work from office.

* 5 – Highly Satisfied, 4 – Satisfied, 3 – Neutral, 2 – Dissatisfied, 1 – Highly dissatisfied

* F – Frequency

Table – 3: Current Condition of Hybrid Work Practices

Particulars	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Employers Support during Hybrid Work	13	24.5	23	43.4	13	24.5	4	7.5	0	0
Level of Communication from the Employer	15	28.3	24	45.3	13	24.5	1	1.9	0	0
Collaboration with the Colleagues	11	20.8	30	56.6	12	22.6	0	0	0	0
Enough Support from the Family	15	28.3	27	50.9	9	17.0	2	3.8	0	0

Table – 4: Advantages of Working in Hybrid Work Model

* 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Neutral, 2 – Disagree, 1 – Strongly Disagree

* F – Frequency

Particulars	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Improves work performance	17	32.1	22	41.5	14	26.4	0	0	0	0
Increases Flexibility	14	26.4	23	43.4	15	28.3	1	1.9	0	0
Reduces commute time and expenses	14	26.4	25	47.2	12	22.6	1	1.9	1	1.9
Enhances Productivity and Concentration	9	17	23	43.4	16	30.2	5	9.4	0	0
Leads to cost Savings	15	28.3	25	47.2	10	18.9	2	3.8	1	1.9
Increases Autonomy and Independence	11	20.8	28	52.8	11	20.8	3	5.7	0	0
Improves Health and Well-being	15	28.3	16	30.2	13	24.5	8	15.1	1	1.9
Improves Work life Balance	8	15.1	25	47.2	16	30.2	4	7.5	0	0

Table – 5: Challenges of Hybrid Work Model

Particulars	5		4		3		2		1	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Unable to connect and communicate	4	9.4	20	37.7	13	24.5	11	20.8	5	7.5
Increases Social Isolation	6	11.3	24	45.3	16	30.2	7	13.2	0	0
Increases Blurred-Work Life Boundaries	5	9.4	16	30.2	20	37.7	10	18.9	2	3.8
Difficult to Maintaining Discipline and Motivation	8	15.1	16	30.2	17	32.1	10	18.9	10	18.9
Leads to Physical and Mental Stress	5	9.4	16	30.2	21	39.6	8	15.1	3	5.7

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Table – 6: Cross Tabulation on Gender and How Hybrid Work Model Improves Work Life Balance

Gender of the Respondents	Improves Work-life Balance				Total
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
Male	2 (6.3) (50.0)	9 (28.1) (56.3)	16 (50.0) (64.0)	5 (15.6) (62.5)	32 (100.0) (60.4)
Female	2 (9.5) (50.0)	7 (33.3) (43.8)	9 (42.9) (36.0)	3 (14.3) (37.5)	21 (100.0) (39.6)
Total	4 (7.5) (100.0)	16 (30.2) (100.0)	25 (47.2) (100.0)	8 (15.1) (100.0)	53 (100.0) (100.0)

The above cross table indicates that the majority (66.6) of the male employees said that the hybrid work model improves their work-life balance and more than half (57.2) of the female employees said that the hybrid work model improves their work-life balance. Therefore, it can be interpreted that both male and female employees have improvement in their work-life balance and in specific male employees have better work-life improvement.

Table – 7: ‘t’ test between Gender of the respondents with regard to various Dimensions of Hybrid Work Model

Sl. No.	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical Inference
1	Conditions Total Male (32) Female (21)	44.22 42.67	5.517 7.269	t= 0.883 p= 0.082 p>0.05 Not Significant
2	Advantages Total Male (32) Female (21)	46.84 45.38	7.049 8.237	t= 0.691 p= 0.226 p>0.05 Not Significant
3	Challenges Total Male (32) Female (21)	34.81 32.48	7.364 6.400	t= 1.188 p= 0.551 p>0.05 Not Significant
4	Solutions Total Male (32) Female (21)	37.97 37.05	5.916 7.138	t= 0.511 p= 0.084 p>0.05 Not Significant
5	Conclusion Total Male (32) Female (21)	21.56 21.81	2.639 3.250	t= 0.304 p= 0.228 p>0.05 Not Significant
6	Overall Total Male (32) Female (21)	185.4063 179.3810	16.75797 22.17764	t= 1.125 p= 0.177 p>0.05 Not Significant

The above table illustrates that, there is no significant difference between male and female respondents and organizational factors impacting hybrid work. It can be observed from the given table that there is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and the dimensions of the study which include conditions, advantages, challenges, conclusion and overall hybrid work dimensions.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents and organization factors impacting hybrid work model.

Research Hypothesis (H₁): There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents and organization factors impacting hybrid work model.

Result: Since $P = 0.177$ ($p > 0.05$) there is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents and organization factors impacting hybrid work model.

Table – 8: One Way Analysis of Variance among the Domicile of the Respondents with regard to various Dimensions of Hybrid Work Model

S. No	Sources	SS	DF	MS	Mean	Statistical Inference
1	Conditions Between Groups Within Groups	52.446 1978.233	2 50	26.223 39.565	G1= 44.42 G2= 42.00 G3= 43.80 G4= 43.60	F= 0.663 P= 0.520 P>0.05 Not Significant
2	Advantages Between Groups Within Groups	185.891 2738.411	2 50	61.964 55.886	G1= 46.92 G2= 44.93 G3= 46.47 G4= 46.26	F= 310 P= 0.735 P>0.05 Not Significant
3	Challenges Between Groups Within Groups	224.877 2344.443	2 50	33.574 50.043	G1= 33.63 G2= 35.64 G3= 32.67 G4= 33.89	F= 671 P= 0.516 P>0.05 Not Significant
4	Solutions Between Groups Within Groups	189.436 1925.243	2 50	38.578 40.750	G1= 38.67 G2= 35.71 G3= 37.67 G4= 37.60	F= 947 P= 0.395 P>0.05 Not Significant
5	Conclusion Between Groups Within Groups	4.518 423.368	2 50	7.970 8.239	G1= 21.92 G2= 22.14 G3= 20.80 G4= 21.66	F= 0.967 P= 0.387 P>0.05 Not Significant
6	Total of Computed Variables Between Groups Within Groups	1512.307 17490.674	2 50	142.997 374.340	G1= 185.5417 G2= 180.4286 G3= 181.4000 G4= 183.0189	F= 0.382 P= 0.684 P>0.05 Not Significant

The presented table illustrates that, there is no significant difference among the domicile of the respondents with regard to the dimensions of the hybrid work model which are conditions, advantages, challenges, solutions, conclusion and overall hybrid strategies. Irrespective of the difference in the domicile of the respondent, the perspective remains the same with no significance difference on the view of overall hybrid strategies and the domicile of the hybrid workers.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant association among the domicile of the respondents and various dimensions (strategies) of the hybrid work model.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is significant association among the domicile of the respondents and various dimensions (strategies) of the hybrid work model.

Result: Since $p > 0.382$ there is no significant association among the age category of the respondents and various dimensions (strategies) of the hybrid work model.

Table – 9: Karl Pearson’s Co-efficient of Correlation between the Domicile of the respondents with regard to the various Dimensions of the Hybrid Work Model.

S. No	Dimensions	Correlation Value	Statistical Inference
1	Conditions Total	0.060	$p > 0.060$ Not Significant
2	Advantages Total	0.038	$p > 0.038$ Not Significant
3	Challenges Total	0.039	$p > 0.039$ Not Significant
4	Solutions Total	0.087	$p > 0.087$ Not Significant
5	Conclusion Total	0.150	$p > 0.150$ Not Significant
6	Overall Hybrid Strategies Total	0.101	$p > 0.101$ Not Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The above table illustrates that there is not significant relationship between the domicile of the respondents and organizational factors impacting hybrid work model such as conditions, advantages, challenges, solutions and overall hybrid strategies.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between the domicile of the respondents and the factors impacting hybrid work model.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is significant relationship between the domicile of the respondents and the factors impacting hybrid work model.

Result: Since $p > 0.05$ there is no significant relationship between the domicile of the respondents and the factors impacting hybrid work model.

Table – 10: Chi-Square Test on Years of Work Experience and Hybrid Work Model Challenges

S. No	Years of Work Experience	Challenges		Total
		Less than 34	Above 35	
1	Below 3	22 (56.4)	17 (43.6)	39 (100.0)

		(78.6)	(68.0)	(73.6)
2	4 to 6	3 (42.9) (10.7)	4 (57.1) (16.0)	7 (100.0) (13.2)
3	7 to 9	1 (25.0) (3.6)	3 (75.0) (12.0)	4 (100.0) (7.5)
4	Above 10	2 (20.0) (7.1)	1 (80.0) (4.0)	3 (100.0) (5.7)
Total		28 (52.8) (100.0)	25 (47.2) (100.0)	53 (100.0) (100.0)

From the cross table above a little less than one third (73.6) of the respondents who have below 3 years of work experience had faced more challenges. A little more than one tenth (13.2) of the respondents who had between 4 - 6 years of work experience had faced some challenges and a little more than very meager (7.5) of the respondents who had between 7 to 9 years of work experience had also faced some challenges. It is also further understood that a little more than very futile (5.7) of the respondents who had above 10 years of work experience had faced very less challenges. So, it can be interpreted that while all those who had below 3 years to above 10 years of work experience, had all faced challenges, in specific those have above 10 years of work experience faced very less challenges comparing with others.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no association between the years of work experience of the respondents and challenges faced by the respondents in the hybrid work model.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is no association between the years of work experience of the respondents and challenges faced by the respondents in the hybrid work model.

Pearson Chi-Square Test: 0.582

Degree of Freedom: 3

Level of Significance: 0.594

6 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.42.

Result: Since level of significance is (0.582) > 0.05, null hypothesis is accepted and research hypothesis is rejected. So, there is no association between the years of work experience of the respondents and challenges faced by the respondents in the hybrid work model.

DISCUSSION

Based on the main findings, there are some suggestions for both to the employer as well as to the employees. These suggestions may aim to enhance the success and seamless integration of the hybrid work model within the IT sector. Even though the hybrid work model offers a lot of advantages to both the employers and the employees, still it comes with its own challenges and limitations.

- The management has to clearly define its expectations and goals. It can encourage the use of technology to bridge gaps and ensure effective collaboration.
- The Employers should promote inclusivity and equality to ensure that the hybrid work employees have the equal access to opportunities, information and decision-making processes in order to maintain a fair and inclusive work environment.
- Even though most of the employees said that they have dedicated workspace at home, there are a few who needs to create a dedicated workspace that will be free from distractions and conducive to focused work. It might be good if the workspace could resemble as much as office space, probably that might be more helpful.
- The employees need to find a way to manage workload effectively to ensure more productivity and less burnout.
- Self-care is one of the key components to stay sane in the insane world. It can be achieved only by prioritizing and maintaining a healthy work-life balance, exercising regularly and taking short breaks to refresh and rejuvenate during the work day.

CONCLUSION

Greek Philosopher Heraclitus would say that “there is nothing permanent except change”. Indeed, there is nothing is permanent except the change. We are all fully aware of the impact made by Covid-19. We could still feel its impact in our day-to- day lives. There is not a single aspect of our life which is not affected by covid. In a unique way, it has also affected work life of many, especially the working condition, style and pattern. As part of the effect, it has given rise to the ‘hybrid work’ model. Currently we are all witnessing a monumental shift in traditional workforce to hybrid work model. Since, the hybrid work model is going to be the future of the work model and it will survive the test of time as well as stay here for a longer haul, it is up to the organization to be ready to embrace it and master it. It is also up to the employees to upskill themselves and ride on it rather than being left behind.

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