



## **EMPIRICALLY EXAMINING THE ROLE OF COMPETENCY-BASED HR FUNCTIONS IN ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL TALENT**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** *This study examines the evolving role of competency-based human resource management (HRM) functions in enhancing organizational talent development. The research aims to analyse the importance of competencies and competency-based HR practices in fostering talent within organisations. It also evaluates different categories of competencies and explores their linkage with HR functions to strengthen talent development strategies.*

**Methodology:** *An empirical research design was adopted, and data were collected from 546 employees across selected manufacturing industries in Gujarat using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical tools such as correlation analysis, one-way ANOVA on ranks, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed to examine relationships among constructs and test hypotheses.*

**Findings:** *The findings indicate significant relationships between competencies, competency-based HR functions, and talent development practices. The study highlights that competency-based HR practices contribute positively to talent acquisition, development, and retention. It also establishes the mediating role of competency-based HR functions in linking competencies with talent management outcomes.*

**Implications:** *The research offers theoretical contributions to HRM and organizational behavior literature while providing practical implications for policymakers and organizational leaders. It emphasizes the need for integrating competency-based approaches into HR practices to develop sustainable talent management strategies.*

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**Originality:** *This study is among the limited number of research endeavours that reveal a clear correlation between Competency and Competency-based HR Functions & talent development practices in the organisation. It offers exclusive empirical proof of their link.*

**Keywords:** *Competency, Competency-based HR Functions, Organisation, Talent Development, talent Management*

## 1 INTRODUCTION:

Human resource management continues to evolve as organizations seek effective strategies to recruit, develop, and retain high-performing employees. One of the most significant approaches in this domain is competency-based HR management, which focuses on identifying and utilizing employee competencies to enhance performance and organizational outcomes.

Employee competencies, including knowledge, skills, and abilities, play a crucial role in shaping job performance and organizational effectiveness (Dubois & Rothwell, 2000). However, superior performance is not solely determined by technical expertise or intelligence; behavioral and contextual factors also contribute significantly. This understanding has led to the development of competency mapping, a systematic process used to identify and assess individual strengths and align them with organizational requirements.

Competency mapping provides several benefits, including improved job performance, enhanced productivity, and alignment of training with organizational objectives. It also enables employees to understand performance expectations and actively participate in their development (Saxena et al., 2021). As a result, competency-based HR functions have become a widely adopted approach in modern organizations. Competency management encompasses various HR activities, including recruitment, selection, performance evaluation, training, career planning, and succession planning. It serves as a flexible and integrative framework that aligns individual capabilities with organizational strategy. The increasing adoption of competency-based HR practices is driven by technological advancements, globalization, and the need for continuous improvement (Storey et al., 2019).

However, implementing competency-based HR systems requires careful alignment with organizational structure and strategic goals. It is not necessary for organizations to adopt competency-based approaches across all HR functions simultaneously. Instead, HR professionals should prioritize areas where competency-based practices can create the most strategic value (Pinapati & Vanka Sita, 2011). Competency management also plays a foundational role in talent management. By providing a common framework, competencies help integrate various talent management processes, including talent acquisition,

development, and retention (Andrews, 2011). This integration enhances organizational effectiveness and ensures consistency in HR practices.

India, with its large and youthful workforce, presents significant opportunities for talent development. However, the absence of competencies can lead to underutilization of human potential (Bhatt, 2015). The concept of talent management gained prominence in the late 1990s, emphasizing the importance of attracting, developing, and retaining talented individuals (Michaels et al., 1998; Axelrod, 2015).

Talent management involves strategic activities aimed at enhancing employee capabilities and aligning them with organizational goals. It recognizes that human capital is a key driver of organizational success (Kumari & Sita, 1998).

## 2. TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Talent development is a critical component of talent management and involves various practices such as training, career management, coaching, mentoring, and succession planning.

Training enables employees to acquire new skills, knowledge, and competencies that enhance their performance and effectiveness. It addresses immediate organizational needs and contributes to short-term performance improvement (Riklefs et al., 2018). Development, on the other hand, is a long-term process aimed at enhancing employees' capabilities and preparing them for future roles.

Career management plays a vital role in talent development by guiding employees in their professional growth. Organizations must actively support career development initiatives to ensure alignment between individual aspirations and organizational goals (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019). A structured approach to career management facilitates employee engagement and retention.

Coaching is another important tool for enhancing employee performance. It involves direct interaction between employees and professional coaches to improve skills and address performance gaps (Schutte et al., 2016). Research indicates that coaching reduces obstructive behaviors and enhances productivity (Bennett & Bush, 2009). Succession planning ensures the continuity of leadership by identifying and developing potential candidates for key positions (Lee, 2021). It is a strategic process that supports organizational sustainability and growth.

Overall, talent development practices contribute to building a skilled and adaptable workforce capable of meeting organizational challenges.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE



Johannessen and Olsen defined competence in 2003 as an organization's undeveloped or unused capacity. They stressed the need of knowledge and skills for sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Their theoretical approach included people management, including changing employee- employer interactions, human resources difficulties, and how competence development affects organizational performance (Johannessen & Olsen, 2003).McNerney studied "Competency Assessment," differentiating Competency and Task, in 1995. Task-focused training stresses particular tasks and behaviors, whereas competency-focused training identifies high-performing traits. Management competence, according to(McNerney, 1995) , focuses on the process used to complete tasks rather than the work itself. Another research showed that program designs and instructional methods must prioritize learning for successful managing and leadership abilities. Emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence were shown to predict professional, managerial, and leadership performance across sectors. Expertise, knowledge, and fundamental cognitive abilities were shown to distinguish extraordinary performance. Adult talent development required cultivable competencies (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012).ATD 2014 created a competence framework for organizational talent development with foundational/core and proficient levels. Essential skills, market knowledge, interpersonal skills, and more affect talent management professionals (Association of Talent Development, 2014).

A competence framework covering core principles, core competencies, and management competencies was also designed by UNESCO to achieve its goal. These competences guide all employees(Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016). SHL's products and services are based on the cutting- edge SHL Universal Competency Framework (UCF). It establishes the links between competence potential, requirements, and workplace skills. It provides a comprehensive and easy-to-use resource for generating and assessing competence models across sectors and geographies, supported by the UCF Database (UCFD).

The concept illuminates how individuals and their workplace interact and affects workplace performance management. Many consultants and organisations worldwide have used it to construct customized competence models to reduce reliance on individual knowledge and ensure high-quality results (Dave Bartram, 2016).Business organisations are increasingly using behavioral characteristics to influence HR management decisions. This research identifies construction management capabilities and develops a prediction model to guide major construction enterprises' human resource selection and development. Behavioral event interviews with construction managers remembered key management situations to discover fundamental abilities. The research indicated that "self-control" and "team leadership" best predicted project management success. This approach may be used in HRM decision-making for recruiting, performance management, succession planning, and resource allocation (Dainty et al., 2005)Jones et al. examined the importance of Competency Management in businesses, especially employee-oriented abilities in the management system. The research found that the Acceptance Strategy—involving motivated pilot groups, incorporating the

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workers' council, securing management support, and maintaining clarity about the system's goals—was key. The study stressed the necessity of workers' council participation and project staffing and resource allocation. Organizational development and performance depend on strategic competency management (Bjørndal & Ronglan, 2021). In "The Changing Face of People Management in India," Budhwar and Bhatnagar (2008) identified India as a major rising market and stressed the necessity of a competency-based culture in human resource management across multiple activities. Employee development, motivation, and retention are becoming more important in Indian companies (Pawan S Budhwar and Bhatnagar, 2008). Bhatt & Shah (2015) examined private insurance business talent management techniques. This research found that a talent management system helps retain intellectual assets and retains personnel (Bhatt, Kinjal & Shah, 2015). Development Dimensions International (DDI) has helped businesses worldwide recruit, develop, and retain elite talent for over 40 years, achieving extraordinary commercial results. From practical observations and significant study, DDI has established the best solutions for its people management system. Several firms have successfully adopted a comprehensive personnel management strategy using these best practices. Systematic talent management requires a complete set of actions, methods, and activities. Engagement scores, cost of recruitment, time to productivity, internal promotions, and leadership skills development evaluate workforce performance. Business impact measurements assess talent management system performance. Assessing talent capacity gaps requires assessing both amount and quality of organizational talent. Many companies use a "talent balance sheet" to track leaders' and important contributors' skills and growth (Wellins et al., 2008). "Talent management" usually means competency-based management. Organizational core competencies and position-specific capabilities influence personnel management decisions. A specified behavior shows these competencies: knowledge, skills, experience, and personal attributes.

Traditional competence models may incorporate criteria like education and years of work that have little predictive value for success and may be immoral or illegal to include in job performance assessments. To improve job descriptions, modern methods use a competence framework and dictionary in the organisation (Jeklin et al., 1998). Klett and Wang (2013) investigate new and systematic competency-based human capital management systems for career development, evaluation, and recruiting. The study emphasizes talent identification as a catalyst for innovation and ROI in human resources and technology for academia and businesses in the changing global employment market and the War for Talent (Klett & Wang, 2013). Competency-based HR techniques are recommended in organizational talent management research. Competence-based personnel management improves efficiency and performance by setting expectations via job descriptions and competence frameworks. The research identifies high-performing traits to establish core skills for a successful workforce. Competency mapping also affects internal personnel management training, development, motivation, incentive systems, and career planning (Mathews & Buchanan, 2008). Human



Resource Management and executive talent management are the emphasis of the article. It emphasizes the importance of hiring, attracting, and keeping qualified workers who support the company's goals. Competency profiling affects key operational areas and helps the organisation flourish (Madhavi & Mehrotra, 2019). Innovative tactics like personnel management have received little investigation in the oil and gas sector despite their socioeconomic importance. This research explores talent management, organizational innovativeness, and competence development in the Indian oil and gas business. Talent management affects human resources outcomes, specifically employee creativity, innovativeness, and competence, according to empirical study involving 598 managers from five Indian oil and gas enterprises (Chaturvedi et al., 2022).

**4. RESEARCH GAP:** The researcher has discovered many deficiencies in the current literature about Competency, Competency & Human Resource Management, and Talent development. Several important things are listed below: There is a substantial amount of literature on talent development, but the notion still faces many uncertainties because of the absence of actual evidence-based investigations.

- Talent development has been globalized, but there is still a lack of understanding on how to successfully use it to obtain desired results.
- A comprehensive List of Competencies is necessary to accomplish the organization's overall goals in talent development.
- Identifying the strategies that include appropriate Talent Development Practices is necessary.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. OBJECTIVES:

This research aimed to investigate Competency-Based HR Functions that contribute to Talent Development practices among employees in four key sectors of the manufacturing industry in Gujarat State: Agro & Food Processing, Oil & Gas, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology, and Chemical & Petrochemical.

Additional research study goals included the following.

Assessing the understanding of each employee about Competency-Based HR Function and its applicability in chosen organisations within the manufacturing sector of Gujarat State.

Identify multiple competencies that help firms establish Talent Development practices.

To examine the correlation between competencies and talent development strategies among chosen personnel in selected manufacturing enterprises in Gujarat State. Analyse the importance and performance of competencies, competency-based HR functions, and talent development techniques among chosen workers in the manufacturing sector of Gujarat State.

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## 5.2. Sampling Frame of the Research Study:

The distribution of operating factories by employment size for each state in absolute and percentage terms, specifically for selected manufacturing sectors in Gujarat, was derived from the summary results for the factory sector ASI-2019-2020 (INDIA, 2019). Estimates of employees other than workers (supervisory, managerial, and other employees) in the factory sector by their type for each 3- Digit Industry Group (NIC-2008) in Gujarat State were used to select representative sampling units employed in the manufacturing industry of four selected companies in Gujarat State (GOVERNMENT OF INDIA et al., 2019). Specifically, the sectors included in the study were Agro & Food Processing Industry, Oil & Gas, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology, and Chemical & Petrochemical Industry, which had a workforce of over 100 individuals at the time the original data were collected.

## 5.3. Sample Size Determination:

A sample of 548 people was selected from the manufacturing sector of four chosen companies in the state of Gujarat to collect primary data. Specifically, industries such as Agro & Food Processing, Oil & Gas, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology, and Chemical & Petrochemical that had over 100 workers at the time the main data were collected. A total of 161 were picked from the Agro & Food Processing Industry. Specifically, 147 employees were selected from the Oil & Gas sector, 145 from the Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology sector, and 95 from the Chemical & Petrochemical Industry.

The growing need for research has led to the development of a rapid method for determining the sample size required to reflect a specific demographic. Below is the formula for determining sample size. The sample size was calculated using G\*Power software version 3.1.9.7 to establish the minimum needed sample size (Erdfelder et al., 2009). The research achieved a statistical power of

0.95 and identified 7 top predictors with a sample size of 548 respondents, above the minimum need of 262 respondents. The estimates above are the stated minimal sample sizes.

## 5.4. HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

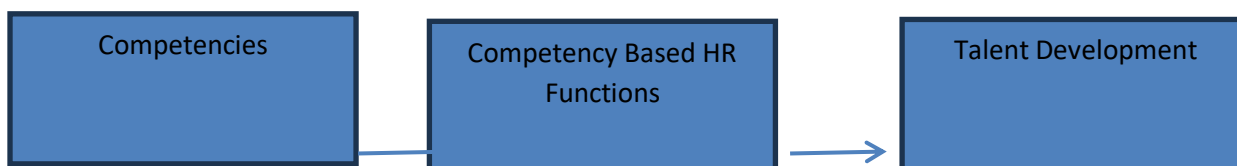
H1: The sophisticated competencies used in the chosen companies within Gujarat's manufacturing sector will NOT enhance talent development in the organisation.

H2: Implementing more advanced competency-based HR functions in the organisation will not enhance talent development.

## 5.5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPED AND USED IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY:

The researcher conducted a literature review to achieve the research study's goals. A theoretical structural model was subsequently created and is shown in Figure Number \_01. The model included principles from the Competencies topic area, focusing on Competency-Based HR Practices and Talent Management. The research study's conceptual model aims to create a correlation between competencies, competency-based HR services, and talent management inside the organization. Individuals will build technical, professional, managerial, and behavioral abilities to enhance their talent acquisition, performance, development, and retention, assuring their ongoing employability within the organization. (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008).

Figure Number \_01. The Conceptual model included principles from the Competencies topic area, focusing on Competency-Based HR Practices and Talent Management.



{Conceptual model based & modified from ANITHA KUMARI PINAPATI, „Competence Management as a Tool of Talent Management- A Study of Practices in Indian Organizations“, May, 2011 (Pinapati & Vanka Sita, 2011)}

## 6. FINDINGS & INTERPRETATIONS:

The empirical analysis of the study provides comprehensive insights into the relationship between competencies, competency-based HR functions, and talent development practices within organizations. The interpretations are structured around correlation analysis, competency-based HR practices, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) outcomes, offering a holistic understanding of how competencies influence talent management outcomes.

### 6.1. Interpretation of Competency Sets and Talent Development

The findings indicate a nuanced relationship between different competency sets and talent development practices. Not all competencies contribute equally; rather, their impact varies based on their nature—behavioral, interpersonal, or technical.

The analysis reveals that communication skills exhibit a **negative yet statistically significant relationship with talent development practices**. This is a critical and somewhat counterintuitive finding. While communication is traditionally considered a core competency, the negative association suggests that overemphasis on communication skills alone may not necessarily enhance talent development outcomes. This may be because communication, in

isolation, does not guarantee performance or innovation unless complemented by deeper competencies such as critical thinking, adaptability, and initiative. Thus, organizations should reconsider the weight assigned to communication during recruitment and development processes.

In contrast, **interpersonal skills and relationship-building competencies show a positive and statistically significant relationship** with talent development. This suggests that employees who are capable of building strong professional relationships and collaborating effectively contribute more meaningfully to talent development initiatives. Such competencies foster a supportive organizational climate, enhance teamwork, and facilitate knowledge sharing, all of which are essential for talent growth.

Similarly, the competencies related to **empathy, influence, and persuasion demonstrate strong positive relationships with talent development practices**. These competencies fall under emotional intelligence and are increasingly recognized as critical in modern organizations. Employees who exhibit empathy and influence are better able to motivate others, manage conflicts, and drive engagement, thereby contributing significantly to talent development processes.

The study further identifies that **organizational awareness and information-seeking behavior have a positive but relatively weaker relationship** with talent development. This indicates that while understanding organizational dynamics and actively seeking information are valuable, they may not be as influential as interpersonal or emotional competencies. However, these competencies still play a supporting role by enabling employees to align their actions with organizational goals.

Technical competencies, including **flexibility, learning ability, quality orientation, and initiative**, show strong positive relationships with talent development. These findings underscore the importance of adaptability and continuous learning in today's dynamic work environment. Employees who are flexible and proactive are more likely to embrace change, innovate, and contribute to organizational success. Initiative, in particular, emerges as a key driver, indicating that self-motivated employees significantly enhance talent development outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that **behavioral and technical competencies have a stronger influence on talent development than basic communication skills**. This highlights the need for organizations to adopt a balanced competency framework that prioritizes emotional intelligence and technical expertise alongside communication.

## 6.2. Interpretation of Competency-Based HR Functions



The second major area of analysis focuses on competency-based HR functions and their relationship with talent development. The findings reveal a **consistently positive and statistically significant relationship between all competency-based HR practices and talent development.**

Competency-based recruitment demonstrates a strong positive relationship with talent development. This indicates that hiring employees based on clearly defined competencies leads to better alignment between job requirements and employee capabilities. As a result, organizations are able to build a more capable workforce, which enhances overall talent development.

Similarly, competency-based selection processes are positively associated with talent development. This reinforces the importance of structured and competency-driven selection methods in identifying suitable candidates. By focusing on competencies rather than traditional metrics such as qualifications or experience alone, organizations can improve the quality of their talent pool.

Competency-based training and development also show a significant positive relationship with talent development. This suggests that training programs designed around specific competencies are more effective in enhancing employee performance. Such programs enable organizations to address skill gaps systematically and ensure continuous employee growth.

Performance appraisal and succession planning based on competencies exhibit a strong positive relationship with talent development. This finding highlights the importance of aligning performance evaluation systems with competency frameworks. When employees are assessed based on relevant competencies, it leads to more accurate evaluations and better identification of future leaders.

Competency-based compensation systems are also positively related to talent development. This indicates that linking rewards to competencies motivates employees to develop relevant skills and improve performance. Fair and transparent compensation structures based on competencies can enhance employee satisfaction and retention.

The relationship between competency-based HR policies and talent development is particularly strong, suggesting that organizational policies play a crucial role in embedding competencies across HR functions. When competencies are integrated into HR policies, they provide a consistent framework for managing talent across the organization.

Finally, competency-based career development shows the strongest relationship with talent development. This highlights the importance of providing employees with clear career paths based on their competencies. Such approaches not only enhance employee engagement but also help organizations retain high-performing talent.

Overall, the findings confirm that **competency-based HR functions are critical enablers of talent development**. Organizations that adopt competency-driven HR practices are more likely to achieve sustainable talent management outcomes.

### 6.3. Interpretation of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis provides deeper insights into the relationships among competencies, competency-based HR functions, and talent development. The results confirm the robustness and validity of the conceptual model developed in the study .

The SEM findings indicate a **strong and significant relationship between competencies and competency-based HR functions**. This suggests that competencies serve as the foundation for designing HR practices. Organizations that clearly define and measure competencies are better equipped to implement effective HR strategies.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals a **significant relationship between competency-based HR functions and talent development**. This confirms that HR practices act as a mechanism through which competencies influence talent outcomes. In other words, competencies alone do not directly enhance talent development; rather, their impact is mediated through HR functions.

One of the most important findings of the SEM analysis is the **mediating role of competency-based HR functions**. The results indicate that competency-based HR practices fully mediate the relationship between competencies and talent development. This means that competencies influence talent development indirectly by shaping HR processes such as recruitment, training, and performance management.

The measurement model assessment confirms the **reliability and validity of the constructs** used in the study. High values of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha indicate strong internal consistency, while satisfactory Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values confirm convergent validity. Additionally, discriminant validity is established, demonstrating that the constructs are distinct and measure different aspects of the model.

The structural model also demonstrates strong predictive power. The  $R^2$  values indicate that a significant proportion of variance in talent development is explained by the independent variables. This suggests that the model is effective in predicting talent management outcomes and can be applied in similar organizational contexts.

The absence of common method bias further strengthens the credibility of the findings. This ensures that the relationships observed in the study are genuine and not influenced by measurement errors.

## 6.4. Interpretation of Importance-Performance Analysis

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) provides additional insights into the relative importance and performance of different constructs. The findings indicate that **competency-based HR functions have the highest importance in driving talent development**, but their performance is moderate.

This gap between importance and performance suggests that organizations need to improve the implementation of competency-based HR practices. While these practices are recognized as critical, they may not be effectively executed in practice.

Talent development, although highly important, also shows relatively lower performance levels. This indicates that organizations may not be fully utilizing their potential in developing talent. There is a need for more structured and strategic approaches to talent development.

Competencies and competency-based applications show moderate importance and performance, suggesting that organizations are making some progress in this area but still have room for improvement.

## 7. OVERALL INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS:

The overall findings of the study highlight the **central role of competencies and competency-based HR functions in talent development**. The results suggest that organizations should adopt a holistic approach to talent management, integrating competencies across all HR functions.

One of the key implications is that **not all competencies contribute equally to talent development**. Behavioral and technical competencies have a stronger impact than communication skills. Therefore, organizations should focus on developing competencies such as empathy, flexibility, learning ability, and initiative.

Another important implication is the need to **institutionalize competency-based HR practices**. Organizations should align recruitment, training, performance management, and compensation systems with competency frameworks. This will ensure consistency and effectiveness in talent management.

The mediating role of competency-based HR functions highlights the importance of HR systems in translating competencies into tangible outcomes. Organizations should invest in developing robust HR processes that leverage competencies effectively.

Finally, the study emphasizes the need for **continuous improvement in talent development practices**. The gap identified in the IPMA analysis suggests that organizations must enhance the implementation of competency-based strategies to achieve better results.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings provide strong empirical evidence that competencies and competency-based HR functions are critical drivers of talent development. The study demonstrates that a strategic and integrated approach to competency management can significantly enhance organizational performance. By focusing on relevant competencies and aligning HR practices accordingly, organizations can build a sustainable talent pipeline and achieve long-term success.

Ultimately, this thorough analysis highlights the complex interactions of competency-based strategies in people management in businesses. The results show intricate connections between certain skill sets and talent management strategies, highlighting the need of a customized strategy for various phases of the talent lifecycle. Communication skills are important in general but may not be as impactful in competency-based HR and talent management. Organizations must integrate competences across HR departments, use competency-based selection, provide focused training, conduct transparent performance appraisals, provide fair remuneration, and establish comprehensive HR policies. Implementing these tactics may enhance talent recruitment, growth, and retention, leading to more successful personnel management processes. The findings of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) reveal the mediating influence of competency-based HR services in the link between competences and talent management. The model's high prediction accuracy and the Importance-Performance Map provide practical direction for firms to improve their talent management strategies, emphasizing the enhancement of communication skills and talent development.

This study provides useful insights to the domains of talent management and human resource management. It highlights the importance of competency-based methods and provides a theoretical basis for future study. Organizations may improve their talent management methods by incorporating these discoveries, which will help develop a competent and adaptable staff that is in line with the company's objectives and enhances overall achievement.

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