

Always On Call

Normandeau Communications Is All About Making Connections

By JOSEPH BEDNAR

It wasn't too long ago that business phone calls had to be made from a desk, and call management meant having a good secretary.

But there's more than a hint of gee-whiz in Kim Durand's voice when she describes some of the technology being installed by Normandeau Communications these days. Take the LG-Ericsson iPECS-LIK product, which manages all kinds of com-

munication — phone calls, e-mails, texts, faxes, etc. — across multiple sites, and even on the road.

"The system processes all calls and does the call management for you," said Durand, director of sales. "Not only can calls be sent to your cell phone, but voice mails left at your office can automatically appear on your smart phone with the .wav file attached, so you can listen to voice mail at any time. Any time people are on the road and not at their desks, like salespeople, it's really important for them to be able to do the things they need to do."

Normandeau has been selling, installing, and servicing telephone systems for 22 years, but voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology — which uses the Internet to exchange various forms of communication that have traditionally been carried over land lines — has added elements of conve-

nience unheard of in those early days.

The company's primary product line, Estech Systems Inc., gives business clients the option of a traditional digital business phone system, an Internet protocol telephony system, or a mix of the two.

But Normandeau is also touting a new partnership with LG-Ericsson, whose iPECS-LIK product further streamlines communication within any size business, from small offices to multi-site corporations with thousands of users, allowing calls to be forwarded between sites and even, as Durand mentioned, to mobile phones.

"We're also providing surveillance systems as well as loudspeaker paging systems," said Brett Normandeau, the company's president and Durand's brother. "All that ties in very well to your telephone system or your whole communication system. With Web access, I can log in and check the surveillance cameras, tie into the phone system, check e-mails" — all from a distance.

These are certainly exciting times in communications, and Normandeau has tried to stay ahead of the curve as it grows its presence in the Valley. Its visibility was boosted two years ago by a move from Florence to Riverdale Street in West Springfield.

"For us it's been a convenient spot because a lot of our customer base is located in the Hampden County area," Normandeau said, "and having access to Interstate 91 and the Mass Pike makes it more

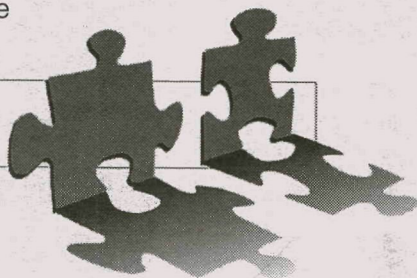


Kim Durand and Brett Normandeau say they strive to match clients with business technologies that, in many cases, they weren't even aware of.

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Aphasia

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\$1.75 million grant from the National Institute of Health to conduct a program titled "Overcoming Learned Non-use in Chronic Aphasia: Behavioral, FMRI, and Quality-of-life Outcome" over a five-year period at UMass.

It will allow therapists to study and provide ongoing speech therapy to people who have had a single left-sphere stroke more than six months ago, have moderate to severe aphasia, and whose insurance

benefits have run out. "This usually happens before people reach their maximum potential," he said.

The therapy sessions will run three hours a day, five days a week, for two weeks. At that point, the person will be sent home with an electronic device such as an iPad. Therapists will continue working with them, however, to make sure the device helps them maintain gains made during intense therapy and promote new learning. Anyone interested should call Polly Stoke at (413) 545-4008.

"Our brains are always capable of changing, but they need stimulation," Kurland said. "People are often given a

dire prognosis after a big stroke and a window of time in which they can expect to recover. But they should never, ever give up."

She noted that research has led to new ways to study the brain in a non-invasive manner, and that a number of things, including support groups, can help.

McCue concurs. "Support groups are a great way for people to meet others who are struggling with communication; they give them a place where they can practice conversation in a non-judgmental setting."

Optimism Prevails

Although aphasia is difficult to over-

come, hope is always on the horizon. "People with aphasia can continue to make gains in speech and language given the right conditions, and we are testing the limits of that right now," Kurland said, referring to the UMass study.

However, it is important for people with aphasia to have a neurological, physical, medical, and speech-therapy evaluation. "Treatment needs to be individualized," Armon said.

And conducted in a way that helps people communicate their thoughts and feelings so they can truly be understood. ■

Reform

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slowdown in the acceleration of health care costs, but that isn't expected to last once the outlook improves — unless radical changes are made.

"That's why we invest in medical homes and information technology," said Straley. "We've been investing in these things for four or five years, and we're just starting to show that they work."

He stressed, however, that any final mandates for payment reform must give providers the resources to succeed and make a good living.

"Most people believe, and I tend to be on this wavelength as well, that we can't just tell physicians how to do it; we have to link it to how they're paid," he said. "If I want a physician's office to take care of me, they should be paid whether I'm sick or not; they can't be paid only when I go in and get tests. They should get paid on a regular basis to be there when I need them."

In addition, he said, physicians need to practice differently by delegating routine matters to their assistants — as mentioned earlier, a component of both the House and Senate bills.

Straley said the Legislature's goal of lowering the rate of growth in health costs to around the gross state product is achievable over the long term, but could cause some pain in the short term.

"I do think this is a worthy goal to shoot for," he told *BusinessWest*, "but what we on the insurance side of the industry hope is that they'll think of this

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*"Nobody wants quality
 and access to slip. It's a bit
 of a balancing act."*

as a plane coming in for a landing. We want to come in on a nice, even glide and not act like we're on the ground when we're still 10,000 feet up.

"The goal is to land this puppy at the gross state product," he continued, "and we're going twice as fast right now. We have to slow it down, and in order for that to happen, we have to have teams of providers with aligned incentives, and that's where global payments come in. We're all

pointing toward the same landing right now, and we're getting there, but we're not there yet."

Taking the Plunge

The benefits of bringing down health care costs can be quantified in numerous ways — including the impact on individual pocketbooks.

For instance, a recent report commissioned by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation and conducted by MIT economist Jonathan Gruber determined that, if medical costs in the Commonwealth grow more slowly than projected, workers could pocket as much as an extra \$9,200 in take-home pay between 2011 and 2019. Over the same period, Massachusetts employers could save up to \$34.5 billion in premium payments.

In fact, lowering the premium growth rate by just one percentage point below current trends would save \$7.8 billion in employee take-home pay, or about \$2,000 per worker, over the next eight years, while reducing employer-sponsored insurance spending by \$10 billion.

On the other hand, the report notes, if action is not taken to lower costs, "health-insurance coverage will erode, workers' wages will stagnate, and employers will have fewer resources to invest in grow-

ing and strengthening the Massachusetts economy."

Moen expressed confidence that the Legislature's goals can be reached. "But it's not like you can turn the health care system on a dime," he noted. "There has to be a reasonable time frame for more and more people to be brought into these ACO types of organizations."

Although Massachusetts has been a national leader in the development of concepts like the patient-centered medical home, Straley said, reaching current cost goals remains a daunting task.

"If we think of it as an Olympic dive, with a difficulty between 1 and 5, this is a 5," he told *BusinessWest*. "But I feel we're not just reacting to it, but taking proactive steps to push us in the right direction. I think everyone is trying to get to the same place, so I think this [legislation] is all very well-intentioned. Where the rubber meets the road is what gets enacted and when."

After all, Moen said, "nobody wants quality and access to slip. It's a bit of a balancing act, and as we go forward, we need to make sure we get system change without adversely impacting health care across the state." ■

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Normandeau

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convenient."

In this issue, *BusinessWest* sits down with Normandeau and Durand to talk about how these siblings — and the company their father began — is making new connections every day.

New Menu

"Communications is not just talking anymore," Normandeau said at one point. "It's the integration of many different types of technology that allows you to communicate more effectively — be it Web sharing, desktop collaboration, instant messaging."

"We're taking these technologies," Durand quickly added, "and merging them into single platforms that are able to offer comprehensive solutions for the customer."

At its heart, Normandeau communications has been trading in phone systems since Ray Normandeau launched the enterprise in Florence in 1990, using

money from an early-retirement package offered by a streamlining AT&T.

As Ray built his business on word of mouth and a few loyal customers, Brett started working alongside his father from the start, having been licensed as an electrical journeyman shortly before Ray launched the company. He took over as president when his father retired about 10 years ago.

At the start, clients were mainly residential, but gradually, the emphasis turned to business customers, which today comprise more than 90% of the client base.

"We've been expanding slowly since we started with just me and my father," Normandeau said. "We're moving into different avenues now. We just opened up a training room to hold seminars."

That's an important development, he and Durand said, because technology is changing so rapidly that employers don't always understand what's available to help their teams do their jobs.

"It's technical training, training people on different technologies being brought to market," Durand said. "These are business customers and commercial clients

that might be looking for training on these technologies and how to apply them to their business. We're really trying to find the right applications to fit our customer base."

With the LG-Ericsson product, the focus is on consolidating different modes of communication. "It collects all technology — digital, analog, wi-fi, phones — and integrates them all with one solution," Durand said. "That's really important when you have multi-site networks with multiple locations, like bank branches or realtors. A lot of different types of businesses can benefit from this type of technology."

Take the Three County Fair in Northampton, for example, which is now using the iPECS-LIK system to manage communication among seven buildings and across the grounds, while incorporating staff mobile phones and providing options for exhibitors as well.

"Because it's an old fairgrounds, they have an antiquated communications infrastructure," Normandeau said. "But because of the technology, we were able to utilize all that infrastructure and bring it up to IP specifications, so they could link

it all together. It allows them to use old analog-type techniques and IP techniques in the same system."

But the technology links sites much more far-flung than across a fairgrounds.

"We've gone from very small home offices to large companies with multiple sites across the country," Normandeau said. "We're implementing a system to connect an East Longmeadow office with a San Jose, Calif. office. Two weeks ago, we finished one connecting Hartford to Orlando."

Such new products have allowed Normandeau to expand its reach from the smaller businesses that were long its bread and butter to bigger clients.

"The larger customers are definitely much more accessible to us now," Durand said. "We've been doing this for so long now that we know what the implications are for each business; even if they don't understand them, we can help them find what the right solution is, by making use of their existing infrastructure and minimizing the costs to the customer. That's the thing we've excelled the most at —

Continued on page 63

COURT DOCKETS

The following is a compilation of recent lawsuits involving area businesses and organizations. These are strictly allegations that have yet to be proven in a court of law. Readers are advised to contact the parties listed, or the court, for more information concerning the individual claims.

CHICOPEE DISTRICT COURT

Brandi Sabourin v. Stop & Shop Holdings Inc.
Allegation: Negligent maintenance of premises causing injury: \$4,667.23
 Filed: 4/25/12

HAMPDEN SUPERIOR COURT

Alves Fuel Inc. v. W & I Construction Inc.
Allegation: Non-payment of diesel fuel delivered: \$26,414.52
 Filed: 4/26/12

Delta Capital Group, LLC v. 66 Holyoke, LLC
Allegation: Failure to pay outstanding fees for services rendered: \$300,000
 Filed: 4/17/12

Falcetti and Clark Electrical Supply v. Classic Envelope Inc.
Allegation: Non-payment of electrical supply: \$45,903.19
 Filed: 4/18/12

James L. Hansmann v. Nationstar Mortgage, LLC
Allegation: Intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress: \$10,155
 Filed: 4/26/12

Kristine Morrison v. Wheely Fun Inc.
Allegation: Negligent maintenance of property: \$200,000
 Filed: 4/12/12

HAMPSHIRE SUPERIOR COURT

Credit Cash NJ, LLC v. University Motors, LLC
Allegation: Failure to pay on credit-card

agreement: \$105,024.16
 Filed: 3/29/12

Richard O'Riley v. Green Seal Environmental Inc., John Blaisdell, and Garrett Keegan
Allegation: Breach of contract: \$37,000
 Filed: 3/20/12

Roxanne H. Labonte, administratrix of the estate of Brian C. Labonte v. J.D. Rivet and Co. and New England Scaffolding Inc.
Allegation: Negligence on job site causing wrongful death of Brian C. Labonte: \$25,000+
 Filed: 3/22/12

NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT COURT

Reuben and Nicole Moore v. Lia Northampton Inc.
Allegation: Violation of Lemon Law: \$14,740.86
 Filed: 3/13/12

SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT COURT

ABC Supply Co. Inc. v. West Side Builders and Peter J. Lingley
Allegation: Non-payment on merchandise sold and delivered:

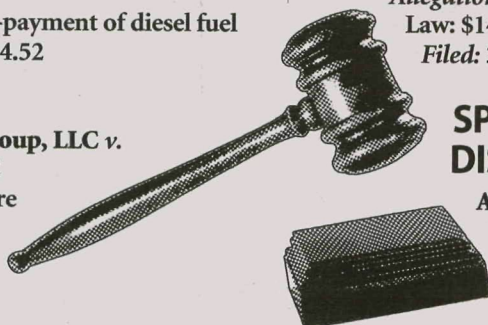
\$4,796.35
 Filed: 4/19/12

Bank of America v. Brothers Pizza, Nicholas and Catherine Markantoris
Allegation: Failure to pay small-business loan: \$89,779.90
 Filed: 4/24/12

Daniel Toniatti v. Weatherproofing Technologies Inc.
Allegation: Failure to pay wages: \$20,000
 Filed: 4/2/12

Sherrill A. Simpson v. Travelers of MA
Allegation: Breach of contract and failure to pay medical expenses and lost wages: \$3,850
 Filed: 4/4/12

Tamika Rivera v. Geico
Allegation: Failure to pay all PIP benefits due: \$1,076.53
 Filed: 4/19/12



Normandeau

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offering cost-effective solutions while still providing the technology to see them into the future."

Knowledge Is Power

On July 18, Normandeau will host a seminar with a representative from LG-Ericsson to talk about the how its communications technology can benefit businesses, especially those with multiple sites. It's just one of many such events aimed at educating clients — and poten-

tial clients.

"Customers in general are becoming more informed," Durand said. "They're looking at different technologies, and they do recognize what was not possible years ago is really feasible now.

"It's really about educating customers so they know what they're getting," she continued. "We want people to know what the differences are. We know it's a significant investment to update technology and phone systems. As a family business, this level of customer service has been really critical for us."

Added Normandeau, "telephone sys-

Continued on page 65



ROCK THE HOUSE

BANDS UNDER THE TENT

How does this sound? Checking out the area's biggest bands while enjoying your favorites from The Mick. Well that's exactly what we've got going every Wednesday and Thursday night all summer long. Have dinner and drinks under our tent on the terrace and hear the best local music around. We've got a great line-up for June and some big surprises for the rest of the summer. Check log-cabin-delaney.com for updates.

Wednesday, June 6

The Roadhouse Band
 6-10 p.m.

Wednesday, June 20

Cold Shock
 6-10 p.m.

Thursday, June 7

Floyd Patterson Band
 6-10 p.m.

Thursday, June 21

Floyd Patterson Band
 6-10 p.m.

Wednesday, June 13

The Rising
 6-10 p.m.

Wednesday, June 27

Union Jack
 6-10 p.m.

Thursday, June 14

Fred Marion's
 Dynamic Disco Review
 6-10 p.m.

Thursday, June 28

The Albino Tree
 6-10 p.m.

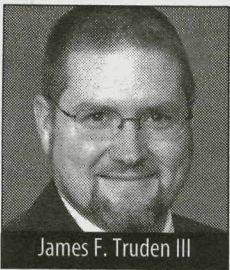


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PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



James F. Truden III

TD Bank has named **James F. Truden III** the Store Manager of the store located at 10 Center St. in Adams. An assistant vice president, he is responsible for

new-business development, consumer and business lending, managing personnel, and overseeing the day-to-day operations at the store serving customers throughout Berkshire County.

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Carol Cioe Klyman

In a third return engagement, **Carol Cioe Klyman** an attorney with Springfield-based **Shatz, Schwartz and Fentin, P.C.** recently acted as co-chair of the

13th annual New England Elder and Disability Law Conference in Boston. Klyman, who concentrates her practice in the areas of elder law, estate and special-needs planning, estate settlement, guardianship, and trust and estate litigation, co-presented a workshop titled "The Hidden MassHealth: What You Need to Know That's Not in the Rule

Book." Klyman covered the unwritten rules of MassHealth long-term care policies and procedures, including the use of caregiver agreements and private annuities, transfer of assets issues, and the application process.

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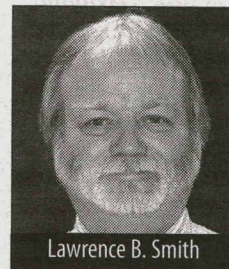
Berkshire Hills Bancorp Inc. has appointed **Geno Auriemma** as a Director of the company and of Berkshire Bank. Additionally, Berkshire Bank intends to enter into a marketing arrangement with Auriemma, subject to final approval, whereby he will serve as a spokesperson for the bank. Auriemma has been head coach of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team since 1986, is a seven-time national Coach of the Year and has won or shared the Big East Coach of the Year award eight times. He has served as president of the Women's Basketball Coaches Assoc., and is involved in the national V Foundation for Cancer Research.

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Brad Larsen was recently named head coach of the American Hockey League's **Springfield Falcons** by Columbus Blue Jackets Executive Vice President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Scott Howson. Larsen spent the past two seasons as an assistant coach with Columbus' AHL affiliate, and was an assistant coach for the Springfield Falcons prior to the start of the 2010-11

season after concluding a 13-year playing career in 2009-10 with the AHL's Portland Pirates.

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Lawrence B. Smith

Lawrence B. Smith recently joined the **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** as a senior planner. He holds a bachelor's degree from the UMass

Amherst Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning. Smith comes to PVPC with more than 30 years' experience in municipal planning and community development serving numerous Western Mass. communities.

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MassMutual recently named two individuals to senior vice president positions: • **Sri Dronamraju** is the new Senior Vice President for Enterprise Technology and serves as MassMutual's chief information risk officer, where he is responsible for developing and maintaining a multi-faceted approach for identifying and mitigating information risk, including strong policy, threat detection and deterrence, data-loss prevention, and employee education; and • **Scott Palmer** was named Senior Vice President of Retirement Services

Systems. He is responsible for managing information technology and systems for the corporate, union, nonprofit and governmental employers' defined-benefit, defined-contribution, and non-qualified deferred-compensation plans for MassMutual's Retirement Services division.

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Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office in Chicopee announced that **Linda Blackburn** has been added as a Sales Associate. Blackburn will provide residential real-estate services in Chicopee as well as Belchertown, Palmer, Monson, Ware, and Warren.

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John Henry has been named associate at the environmental firm of **O'Reilly, Talbot & Okun Associates** in Springfield. Henry is a Massachusetts- and Connecticut-licensed professional engineer with more than 20 years experience in the civil-engineering and environmental-consulting fields. Henry is very active in solar-power development projects as well as soil and groundwater remediation projects at airports, industrial and commercial facilities, schools, and religious institutions.

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PeoplesBank in South Hadley recently named **Jessica L. Wales** Branch Manager.

Agenda

Continued from page 64

the June 18 celebration are available by contacting Peggy Graveline, development assistant at the YMCA of Greater Springfield, at pgraveline@springfieldy.org, or by calling (413) 739-6951, ext. 179. Tickets are \$160 each or \$1,500 for a table of 10. All proceeds from the event will benefit the YMCA of Greater Springfield's 2012 Annual Scholarship Campaign.

Health Care Expo and Career Fair

June 19: The Greater Chicopee Chamber of Commerce has partnered with Health New England to produce a Health Care Expo and Career Fair to be held at the Castle of Knights on Memorial Drive in Chicopee from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. According to Gail Sherman, president of the Greater Chicopee Chamber of Commerce, the Healthcare Expo has a multi-level purpose. "It is an opportunity for companies in the health care industry to promote their products and services, but it will also include what we are calling the 'Corridor to Your Career' section, where companies that have job openings in the health care industry will be there to welcome and meet job seekers in that field." Companies that are in the health care industry can reserve a skirted-marketing table. If they are members of the Greater Chicopee Chamber

of Commerce, the cost is \$125. For non-members, the cost is \$175. Admission to the event is free. Health New England's Lynn Ostrowski, director of Brand and Corporate Relations, will launch the day's event by teaching attendees how to effectively manage their energy throughout the day. Complimentary coffee, herbal tea, and seasonal fresh fruit will be available until 9:30 a.m. To sign up or to learn more about this event, call Sherman at (413) 594-2101.

40 Under Forty

June 21: *BusinessWest* will present its sixth class of regional rising stars at its annual 40 Under Forty gala at the Log Cabin Banquet & Meeting House in Holyoke. The gala will feature music, lavish food stations, and introductions of the winners. Tickets are \$60 per person, with tables of 10 available. Early registration is advised, as seating is limited. For more information, call (413) 781-8600, ext. 100, or log onto www.businesswest.com.

WBOA 30th Anniversary

June 21: Chez Josef in Agawam will be the setting for the 30th anniversary celebration of the Women's Business Owners Alliance of the Pioneer Valley (WBOA) at 6 p.m. The WBOA will recognize its 2012 Business Woman of the Year, as well as its 2012 Outstanding New Member, and will name its Top Women in Business in the Pioneer Valley. Renate Oliver, WBOA founder, will also be a

featured speaker. The event will feature entertainment by Jeannie Pomeroy-Murphy, as well as a raffle fund-raiser. For more information or tickets, call (413) 525-7345 or visit www.wboa.org.

NYC Bus Trip

June 30: The Chicopee Chamber of Commerce will host a bus trip to New York City, leaving the chamber parking lot at 7 a.m. and returning around 9:30 p.m. Participants are on their own for the day in New York City. Tickets are \$45 per person. For more information, contact Lynn at (413) 594-2101.

Western Mass. Business Expo

Oct. 11: *BusinessWest* will again present the Western Mass. Business Expo. The event, which made its debut last fall at the MassMutual Center in downtown Springfield, will feature more than 180 exhibitors, seminars, special presentations, breakfast and lunch programs, and the year's most extensive networking opportunity. Comcast Business Class will again be the presenting sponsor of the event. Details, including breakfast and lunch agendas, seminar topics, and featured speakers, will be printed in the pages of *BusinessWest* over the coming months. For more information or to purchase a booth, call (413) 781-8600, e-mail marketing@businesswest.com, or visit www.wmbexpo.com.

Normandeau

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tems don't even have to be hardware-based on a customer's premises anymore. They can be hosted IP systems. We are improving that solution as well, so customers can have an IP phone, but all system connectivity and features are located off-site."

That option is especially important at a time when disaster recovery and business continuation are on the minds of Western Mass. businesses more than ever, following a year marked by tornadoes in June, tropical-storm flooding in August, and a freak snowstorm and widespread power outages in October.

"We moved a lot of clients, especially in the downtown Springfield area" following the tornado, he noted.

"As soon as it happened, Brett drove down there to try to reach out to our customers," Durand added. "So many were impacted, with physical damage to their buildings, and communications were lower on the priority list at the moment."

Still, she said, "it was a very busy year." And yet another teaching opportunity — and those are, after all, yet another chance to make connections. ■

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