Overcome the Technology Distraction that Costs You Organizational Productivity

HOW TO WAKE UP FROM THE NIGHTMARE OF WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY DISTRACTION

FEATURING RESEARCH FROM FORRESTER
Overcome the Technology Distraction that Costs You Organizational Productivity

At Citrix, we understand that engaging your workforce and eliminating distractions is hard to do. Technology got us here, and now it’s our mission to design intelligent technology that can solve the problem by supporting how employees work best. Our goal is to provide you with solutions that help employees stay focused on the work that really matters.

NIGHTMARES RULE THE NIGHT AND DISTRACTION RULES THE DAY

In today’s world, new devices, fancy apps, too many choices, too many problems to solve, too much data to consume and a plethora of technology-centric ways to interact have made work more challenging. This report explains how technology leaders can build workspace environments that reduce the IT complexity and distractions that keep users from being productive.

REST EASY: CITRIX CAN HELP YOU CHANGE WHAT RULES

This report presents the idea that focusing a technology strategy on four pillars is best: building a technology environment that encourages focus is crucial; ensuring that policies don’t introduce distraction into employees’ daily work lives is critically important; continuously assessing the impact of distraction in the workplace is essential; and working with business peers to drive awareness of distraction is key.

With the best in digital workspace technology and a fully-integrated solutions portfolio that spans everything from analytics to networking, Citrix is laser focused on the future of work, providing people-centric solutions that enable employees to concentrate on the kind of work that adds real value to the business.
Citrix wants to help you enable your new generation of workers to gain meaning and autonomy from the work that they deliver – to be engaged in contributing value to the company. To do this, we strive to anticipate workers’ needs and deliver technology that is powerful, intuitive, and most of all, non-disruptive. Ours is technology that enables workers to spend more time on their core competencies and less time on distractions. We want to help you meet workers and live up to their ever-changing expectations about where and how they want to work, whether it’s with new devices, cloud-based solutions, or innovation that keeps pace with a rapidly-changing world.

**CITRIX WORKSPACE: THE CORNERSTONE OF THE FUTURE OF WORK**

Your company’s most expensive asset – 60% of your overall operating expense – is your workforce. But today, workforce productivity suffers from IT complexity. As a result, workers are reduced to low value activities such as juggling more apps, remembering multiple logins, and searching aimlessly for information stored in different locations. At the same time, users are constantly interrupted with numerous notifications, switching between multiple devices and trying to adhere to corporate security guidelines.

Only Citrix provides a unified, secure and intelligent workspace that empowers people do their best work, saving them time, reducing frustration and delivering a great user experience. Citrix Workspace offers the industry’s only comprehensive set of workspace service offerings including single sign-on with multi-factor authentication, endpoint management, file sync and share, content collaboration, secure SaaS delivery, end-to-end analytics, intelligent guided feeds, web security and more. Not only does Citrix Workspace replace the complexity and rising cost of maintaining multi-vendor point solutions, but also its single management console increases business agility by reducing IT silos.
How To Wake Up From The Nightmare Of Workplace Technology Distraction

Build A Solid User Experience To Enable A More Focused Workforce

by Andrew Hewitt
April 26, 2019

Key Takeaways

Workplace Technology Distraction Is Bad And Getting Worse
As companies attempt to stay competitive, they inevitably introduce technologies that distract their workforces and set the precedent that employees should be always-on and always-connected. This creates an environment where employees spend most of their time on low-value activities and less on their actual job duties.

Four Pillars Support The Focused Worker
A more focused workforce starts with an exceptional end user experience. Effective policy governance, continuous experience monitoring, and working with business peers are also keys to driving a less distracted employee experience.

Why Read This Report
To remain competitive in a world of increasingly connected customers, businesses have turned to the latest digital technologies to improve employees’ productivity, collaboration, and connection to customers. While these investments are necessary, they often introduce a heavy price: rampant workplace distraction. This report lays the groundwork for infrastructure and operations (I&O) leaders to create the technology environment that addresses the crisis of workplace distraction and strikes a better balance between connectivity and focus.
How To Wake Up From The Nightmare Of Workplace Technology Distraction

Build A Solid User Experience To Enable A More Focused Workforce

by Andrew Hewitt
with Christopher Voce, Renee Taylor, and Kara Hartig
April 26, 2019

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Related Research Documents

Engineer Your Technology Environment To Improve Employee Productivity And Flow
Use Employee Journey Mapping To Improve Your Company’s Performance
Why EX? Why Now?

Supplemental Material

Share reports with colleagues. Enhance your membership with Research Share.
The Nightmare Of Workplace Distraction Is Getting Scarier

Whether you know it or not, technology distraction is a problem in your workplace. Very few companies recognize how pervasive technology distraction is in their working environment and how it hampers an employee’s ability to produce high-quality meaningful work that differentiates the brand and attracts customers (see Figure 1). Today, knowledge workers succumb to distraction every 10 minutes, and once they’re distracted, it takes them 23 minutes to regain their focus. At best, distraction inhibits access to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the renowned cognitive psychologist, refers to as flow — a heightened state of focus and productivity. Worse, it often disrupts productivity altogether and contributes to a negative employee experience — which in turn affects areas like employee retention and customer experience. I&O pros should know that it’s only getting worse because:

› **IT organizations make well-intentioned tech investments that ultimately distract us.** Technologies like email, team messaging apps, and smartphones are both necessary tools and common culprits of workplace distraction. For every email employees open, they spend 64 seconds trying to resume the task that the email interrupted. Considering that the average employee receives 84 emails a day, that’s 1.5 hours of lost productivity each day. The mere presence of a smartphone lying dormant on an employee’s desk introduces a distracting cognitive load that can weaken problem solving skills and working memory.

› **Customers increasingly demand constant availability.** Consumers expect businesses to serve them at any moment, and employees must be ready to drop whatever they’re doing at any time to do so. It’s no surprise then that employees open 70% of all emails within 6 seconds of receipt. According to Cal Newport, a professor at Georgetown University, the problem with this hyperconnectivity is that it encourages employees to adhere to a principle of least resistance in which they default to what’s easiest while foregoing more complex and valuable work. This makes it acceptable for you to run your day out of your inbox while maintaining the guise of productivity. And this bias toward connection is one of the main reasons why employees only spend 44% of their time fulfilling their primary job duties.

› **Digital addiction seeps into the workplace.** Ninety percent of Americans have their phones within reach 24x7, and 36% say they never turn them off. This excessive behavior has two effects on workplace focus. First, the constant stream of notifications rewires the brain’s dopamine response pathways, making it more difficult for employees to curb distraction at work. Secondly, because humans only have finite cognitive resources, employees who use their smartphones after work unwittingly deplete their stores of mental energy for the next day by neglecting to rest the night before.
“How does each of the following statements describe the conditions that you experience daily?”
(On a scale of 1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical workspace distractions</th>
<th>Productive employees</th>
<th>Percentage-point increase in distraction</th>
<th>Unproductive employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers stopping by my office or desk interrupt me</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers talking on their telephones make it difficult for me to concentrate on my work</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The motion and activity of people around me distract me from my work</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues distract me from my work</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital workspace distractions</th>
<th>Productive employees</th>
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<th>Unproductive employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I receive a text or instant message from a friend or family member that distracts me from my work</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive a text or instant message from a colleague that distracts me from my work</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity on social media sites or apps distracts me</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A technology problem disrupts me</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get distracted shopping online or browsing non-work-related websites/apps</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work gets interrupted because I can’t find or get access to information I need to complete my tasks</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tech Leaders Play A Decisive Role In Taming Workplace Distraction

Reducing technology distraction is an opportunity for I&O pros to improve company performance by designing technology environments that enable focus, limit distraction, and enhance productivity. I&O professionals are well positioned to fulfill this business need because they:

› **Purchase and maintain the vast majority of employee technology.** Only 12% of all technology purchasing decisions happen outside of IT, which means I&O pros are some of the primary designers of a focused technology experience. If I&O doesn’t select and/or support the devices, apps, and management software that enable focus, who will?

› **Set and enforce IT policies that shape employee technology experience.** Forty percent of global information workers who circumnavigate an IT policy do so to maintain their productivity. It’s up to I&O pros to ensure that when employees need access to a file to get their work done, they can do so with as little interruption as possible.

› **Monitor and remediate events that impact end user experience.** Devices break, applications crash, and networks slow; that’s the reality of technology, and end users bear the brunt of these distractions from time to time. But I&O professionals are responsible for monitoring the performance of the technology environment, notifying users of issues, and remediating these issues whenever possible.
Can influence business leaders to address cultural inhibitors to focus. Sometimes the culture surrounding technology (e.g., the requirement to always have an instant message app open) contributes more to distraction than the technology itself. Because I&O pros are responsible for understanding the pros and cons of each technology they purchase, they’re a critical voice in ensuring that HR and other business leaders set a cultural expectation around technology that encourages an equal balance of connectivity and focus.

Construct A Focused Technology Strategy Atop Four Pillars

Individual employees, business leaders, HR, facilities, and I&O professionals all play a role in reducing the impact of workplace distractions. In the case of I&O, building a technology strategy that enables focus means addressing four key areas: technology selection, policy enforcement, ongoing monitoring, and business influence. Focusing on these four key areas will enable I&O to design an exceptional end user experience that helps employees reap the benefits of modern technology while reducing the negative side effects of distraction.

PILLAR NO. 1: BUILD A TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES FOCUS

Every technology that makes up the digital workspace is a potential funnel for distraction, whether it’s latency, crashes, freezes, or unwanted notifications. This ranges from the devices that employees handle to the networking technology that connects them together. That means I&O pros must take a comprehensive approach to limiting distraction in the digital workspace and intimately understand the potential distractions that each technology introduces (see Figure 2). I&O pros should prioritize and select technology that:

- Limits context switching and multitasking. Nothing saps the brain’s ability to complete complex knowledge work more than multitasking, according to Sophie Leroy, an organizational behavior expert. Tackle this by reducing the number of hops between apps for a worker to access information. Team messaging technologies like Microsoft Teams and Slack provide API hooks to back-end applications to consolidate information in persistent channels. Citrix Workspace organizes an employee’s work by unifying access to software-as-a-service (SaaS) and other apps, cloud and network drives, and virtual desktops in a single workspace. Citrix also recently acquired the microapp platform company Sapho, which allows employees to take quick actions like approving an expense report or submitting paid time off without having to leave Sapho and log in to a full-blown HR app. Bluescape’s software enables employees to create collections of content on an infinite, zoomable digital workspace, consolidating relevant work information in one place.

- Is fast and reliable. In 2016, 32% of global information workers said that their computers slowed down or had problems that distracted them from their work. Vaudoise Assurances invested in 1,500 Surface Pros to improve system performance for its highly mobile workforce. Square moved client-side storage off the endpoint into Google Drive using Pixelbooks to ensure reliable file access despite device failure.
Encourages switching off. Employees will find it difficult to regulate their attention if they can’t disconnect — both at work and at home. At work, employees need tools to help tune out the influx of notifications entering their workspace. Microsoft’s Focus Assist feature is native to Windows 10 and allows employees to block notifications from entering their view at specific times or customize which notifications they want to receive. Some users have reported saving 2.5 hours of productivity time each day using an app called Freedom, which blocks digital distraction across all devices they use. Google’s new Work Profile on Android has a toggle switch to enable employees to completely turn off their workspace outside of work hours and regenerate their ability to focus.

FIGURE 2 Distraction Is Relevant In Every Category Of The Digital Workspace
PILLAR NO. 2: ENSURE POLICIES DON’T INTRODUCE DISTRACTION INTO EMPLOYEES’ DAILY JOURNEYS

Distractions happen in seconds, requiring I&O teams to study the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, and minute-to-minute experience of employees to help them focus. Enforcing an IT policy at the wrong time can be a roadblock to their success and an employee experience (EX) disaster from employees’ perspective. I&O teams need to not only enforce policies but also ensure they don’t affect productivity.

As you consider your technology policy rollout:

› **Limit the impact of OS and app updates.** Fifty-nine percent of infrastructure decision makers globally say they’re concerned about Windows 10’s frequent in-place upgrade program, and they should be. Updating any OS has the potential to significantly disrupt employees’ productivity, but you can take steps to limit the impact. For example, Windows enables customers to schedule active hours to deploy updates overnight, delay quality and feature updates up to 30 days and 16 months, respectively, or utilize peer-to-peer distribution methods to limit bandwidth consumption for OS upgrades.

› **Ensure frictionless access to company resources.** Only 34% of global information workers say it’s easy for them to authenticate or log in to the apps and devices they need. Many companies are investing in IDaaS solutions to enable single sign-on to SaaS apps (and soon on-premises apps), and some are starting to use conditional access policies to reduce the risk of false-positives as employees attempt to authenticate to back-end systems. Companies like Truce (formerly Cellcontrol) are using contextual mobile device management to give access to applications only when necessary and restrict access in other scenarios, like when an employee is driving or trying to accomplish focus work.

› **Assess the impact of security policies on productivity.** Preventing interaction between business and personal apps, requiring separate logins for individual apps, or requiring password changes every three months are significant inconveniences for employees (see Figure 3). Some of these issues, like separate logins and password changes, have legitimate solutions. For example, the financial institution Jefferies uses risk-based authentication to eliminate passwords when employees are in the office. Others, like restricting copy/paste, require a more nuanced approach that involves classifying the toxicity of the data in question. An employee who doesn’t handle any sensitive information might not be subject to these policies, whereas an employee in a highly regulated industry might.
“How do you or would you feel about the following security policies that your company might require of you?”

(4 or 5 on a scale of 1 [should be required] to 5 [would be an inconvenience])

Preventing interaction between business and personal applications (e.g., copying and pasting) 25%
Restricting which websites or services I can access (e.g., banning Facebook or YouTube) 23%
Requiring biometric security (e.g., fingerprint or eye scanning) 21%
Requiring that I log in to each individual mobile application that I use 20%
Requiring two-factor authentication for app access 20%
Requiring that I change my password every three months 17%

Base 3,286 global information workers at enterprises (1,000+ employees)
Source: Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics® Workforce Benchmark Recontact Survey, 2018

PILLAR NO. 3: CONTINUOUSLY ASSESS THE IMPACT OF DISTRACTION IN YOUR WORKPLACE
Monitoring end user experience should be a vital part of your quest to limit workplace distraction. Why? Technology experience will degrade over time if I&O teams don’t monitor it, culminating in even worse distractions such as broken devices and slow apps. And monitoring can help reveal non-technology-related factors contributing to distraction, such as meeting overload. Two new types of monitoring technologies have emerged to help I&O leaders:

1. Digital experience monitoring tools optimize employees’ tech experience. Digital experience monitoring solutions from vendors such as Aternity, Lakeside, and Nexthink monitor the health and performance of devices, apps, and services that employees use, ensuring that I&O pros can quickly identify and remediate disruptions to the end user experience. Some vendors, like Nexthink, pair hard metrics like network and app performance with users’ sentiment, enabling I&O leaders to understand how users perceive the overall experience of their working environment (see Figure 4). Nexthink recently released a Digital Experience Score that enables I&O teams to track experience over time.
2. **Workforce analytics solutions address cultural barriers to focus.** Workforce analytics solutions like Microsoft’s Workplace Analytics and Sapience Analytics collect, measure, characterize, and organize the digital exhaust of employees. These solutions identify system issues, like death-by-meeting cultures, and can gently nudge employees to block focus time when their calendars begin filling up. Some companies, like Macy’s, are already seeing benefits. The company’s Time Is Money campaign leverages Microsoft’s Workplace Analytics software to increase focus time for employees by 4 hours per week.²⁸

![Figure 4: Nexthink’s Digital Experience Management System Addresses Technology-Specific Distractions](source: Nexthink website)
FIGURE 4 Nexthink’s Digital Experience Management System Addresses Technology-Specific Distractions (Cont.)

Source: Nexthink website

PILLAR NO. 4: WORK WITH BUSINESS PEERS TO DRIVE AWARENESS OF WORKPLACE DISTRACTION

Distractions that stem from the culture or the working environment are equally important. While they aren’t exclusively under the purview of the I&O team, IT leaders must work with business leaders to create a holistic workplace distraction strategy. Working together, I&O, business leaders, HR, and facilities teams should ensure that:

› **Working expectations don’t derail employees’ quest for flow.** Allow space for employees to disconnect, recharge their mental capacity, and/or focus on cognitively demanding work. Some companies, like HelloWorld, have made flow a part of their culture. The company has instituted a practice called Flow Time every Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in which employees simply concentrate on their most important tasks — no meetings or calls allowed. HelloWorld found that employees were on average 20% to 50% more productive, worked less overtime, and were generally happier. This type of permission comes straight from the C-suite or HR leaders, but I&O teams should help enable these types of cultural changes with technology.
The physical workspace provides quiet and collaborative space. Seventy percent of all offices have open-office plans today. While companies implement them to drive collaboration, this setup carries negative side effects. For example, several studies have linked noisy environments to reduced cognitive capacity and productivity. Companies need to strike a balance by providing the choice to use areas for focus work. For example, Citrix has a dedicated floor called the “the library” at its main headquarters where employees can go when they need to focus. No phone calls, no cell phones, and no talking allowed. The company has also invested in noise-proof rooms to eliminate distracting background noise. I&O plays a role in working with facilities teams to make sure these areas have the technology employees need.

Recommendations

Get Started On Your Workplace Focus Initiative

I&O teams play a vital role in ensuring employees can regulate their attention and bring differentiated value to their companies, but where should they begin? As you embark down the path of a less-distracted workplace, start with the following actions:

- **Inventory all technology that affects employees’ daily productivity.** What are all the end-user-facing technologies that employees interact with daily? This list includes devices and applications, collaboration, management tools, and dependent infrastructure items such as networking and storage.

- **Conduct research to determine sources of workplace distraction.** Forrester has long advocated for the use of employee journey mapping and surveys to uncover daily challenges that impede employees from accomplishing their work, whether it’s technology, culture, or something else. This can surface sources of distraction. The Forrester report “Assess Your Impact On Employee Performance And Flow” can serve as a baseline for the types of questions you’ll need to ask to find them.

- **Pilot a digital declutter.** If you want to find out which technologies are the best bang for the buck, leverage a small enthusiastic focus group, and encourage members to forego usage of all but the most important business tools for a set period (e.g., a week or so). Allow them to only use the tools that enable them to accomplish their most important work and jettison the rest. A typical employee might only have email, a device, and Excel, for example. Then systematically reintroduce technology one by one to their working environment. Be observant. Which ones provide the most value? Are some purely a distraction? Do you have duplicate technologies in place that you could cull? These types of exercises can help illuminate how to construct your technology environment going forward.
What It Means

Technology Vendors Control The Future Of Workplace Distraction

Today the onus is on individual employees and organizations to address distraction. In the future, hardware manufacturers and software vendors will also play a significant role. For example, Apple investors recently called on the company to make iPhones less addicting, which led to the new screen-time features in iOS 12. Google now has a dedicated Digital Wellbeing team that’s researching how to design Android apps that deliver value in context without introducing distractions. Intel’s Project Athena aims to create next-generation experiences by improving systems in a number of ways — including inspiring technology to help employees focus. As Lawrence Ampofo, CEO of Digital Mindfulness, told us in an interview, “If someone has a psychologically good experience with an app, it correlates with really important things like brand loyalty. But if they feel they’re constantly drawn to an app and it makes them feel bad, they’re going to uninstall that application in order to feel better.”

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY
The Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics® Workforce Benchmark Recontact Survey, 2018, was fielded from July to September 2018. This online survey included 6,508 respondents in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, the UK, and the US from companies with two or more employees.

Forrester Analytics’ Business Technographics ensures that the final survey population includes only information workers who use a connected device for work at least 1 hour per day. Research Now fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

Please note that the brand questions included in this survey should not be used to measure market share. The purpose of Forrester Analytics’ Business Technographics brand questions is to show usage of a brand by a specific target audience at one point in time.

The Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics Workforce Benchmark Survey, 2017, was fielded between June and July 2017. This online survey included 16,594 respondents in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the UK, and the US from companies with two or more employees.

Forrester Analytics’ Business Technographics ensures that the final survey population includes only information workers who use a connected device for work at least 1 hour per day. Research Now fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

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COMPANIES INTERVIEWED FOR THIS REPORT
We would like to thank the individuals from the following companies who generously gave their time during the research for this report.

Bluescape
Citrix
Digital Mindfulness

Nexthink
Truce
Endnotes


3 See the Forrester report “The Employee Experience Imperative.”

4 This is due to what academics call “the any benefit” mentality, in which any small perceived benefit accrued through the usage of a technology justifies its usage, regardless of the potential negative impacts. Source: Cal Newport, Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World, Portfolio, 2019.


12 This could be accessing social media, checking text messages, or browsing the internet. Source: Hilary Brueck, “This is what your smartphone is doing to your brain — and it isn’t good,” Business Insider, March 1, 2019 (https://www.businessinsider.com/what-your-smartphone-is-doing-to-your-brain-and-it-isnt-good-2018-3).


17 See the Forrester report “The Forrester Tech Tide™: Enterprise Collaboration, Q1 2018.”

19 See the Forrester report “The Future Of Enterprise Computing.”
Source: Abner Li, “Square offering Pixelbooks to employees, trialing with designers as MacBook alternative,” 9to5Google, January 30, 2019 (https://9to5google.com/2019/01/30/square-employees-pixelbook-macbook-alternative/).


21 Source: Freedom (https://freedom.to/).

22 Source: “‘Turn your work profile on or off,” Android Enterprise Help (https://support.google.com/work/android/answer/7029561?hl=en).

23 See the Forrester report “Focus On Employees’ Daily Journeys To Improve Employee Experience.”


25 Source: Freedom (https://freedom.to/).

26 Source: “Industry Spotlight: Improving Employee Mobility In Financial Services.”
Source: Interview with lawrence Ampofo, CEO at Digital Mindfulness, January 25, 2019.

27 See the Forrester report “Predictions 2019: Employee Experience.”
Source: Interview with Citrix, January 24, 2019.

28 Source: Interview with Citrix, January 24, 2019.

29 See the Forrester report “Use Employee Journey Mapping To Improve Your Company’s Performance.”
Source: Interview with Citrix, January 24, 2019.


32 Source: Interview with Citrix, January 24, 2019.

33 Source: Interview with Citrix, January 24, 2019.

34 See the Forrester report “Use Employee Journey Mapping To Improve Your Company’s Performance.”


36 Source: Interview with Lawrence Ampofo, CEO at Digital Mindfulness, January 25, 2019.
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