

Temple as a Management Lab: A Commerce Students' Field Study of ISKCON NVCC Temple Management

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Abstract: *The study titled “Temple as a Management Lab: A Commerce Students’ Field Study of ISKCON NVCC Temple Management” explores the potential of spiritual institutions as platforms for experiential learning in management education. Conducted at ISKCON NVCC Temple, Pune, the study aimed to expose commerce students to the real-world application of managerial principles within a faith-based organizational setting. A total of 100 students participated in a structured five-day field study that combined observation, feedback collection, and focused group discussions to assess the temple’s operational and administrative systems.*

The findings indicate that ISKCON NVCC demonstrates exceptional performance in event planning, volunteer management, cleanliness, hospitality, and technological integration, reflecting effective alignment with modern management practices. Moderate performance was noted in communication, financial transparency, sustainability, and emergency preparedness, indicating areas for further enhancement. Overall, the temple presents a well-coordinated example of how devotion, discipline, and organizational efficiency can coexist within a spiritual framework.

The study reaffirms that temple management serves as a living laboratory for management education, allowing students to translate theoretical learning into practical insights. It highlights how value-based, transparent, and service-oriented administration can contribute to both institutional sustainability and the development of ethically grounded future managers.

Keywords: *Temple management, ISKCON, Experiential Learning, POSDCORB, Volunteer Coordination, Technology Integration, Sustainability, Transparency, Spiritual Organization, Management Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of higher education, experiential learning has emerged as a vital pedagogical

approach, particularly in commerce and management studies. Traditional classroom instruction, while conceptually strong, often lacks opportunities for students to engage with the complexities of real-world organizational functioning—such as coordination, communication, leadership, and service delivery. To bridge this gap, field-based learning environments that integrate observation with practice are increasingly being recognized as essential components of holistic management education.

Religious and cultural institutions, especially large temple organizations, represent one of the most dynamic yet underexplored models of real-world management. Temples today operate as multifaceted institutions responsible for diverse functions including event planning, crowd management, volunteer coordination, financial administration, hospitality services, and technological innovation. These functions closely mirror the principles of modern management, particularly the POSDCORB framework—Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. Thus, temples provide a natural context for applying and observing managerial concepts beyond the boundaries of the corporate sector. Within this context, the ISKCON NVCC Temple in Pune offers a valuable case for study. As a global spiritual organization, ISKCON combines devotional practices with systematic management, disciplined service delivery, and modern operational tools. Its large-scale daily and festival activities—supported by trained volunteers and structured administrative teams—make it an ideal environment for students to witness management in action.

The present study, titled “Temple as a Management Lab: A Commerce Students’ Field Study of ISKCON NVCC Temple Management”, was designed to engage

commerce students in experiential learning by exposing them to the managerial processes of a major religious institution. Through structured observation, interaction, and reflective analysis, students assessed how management principles are applied in temple operations, services, and administration. The study focuses on identifying key strengths, challenges, and learning outcomes that demonstrate how spirituality and management can coexist harmoniously in a real-world institutional framework.

By examining ISKCON NVCC as a living laboratory of management, this research underscores how faith-based organizations can embody ethical, transparent, and people-centered management practices. The study ultimately aims to highlight the educational and practical value of such institutions in fostering future professionals who integrate managerial competence with social and spiritual consciousness.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- a. Temple Operations and Management: [1] Singh and Patel explored the operational efficiency of major Hindu temples in India, highlighting the importance of crowd management, volunteer coordination, and hygiene in enhancing devotee satisfaction. [2] Verma evaluated event planning strategies during large-scale religious festivals such as Janmashtami and Kumbh Mela. They emphasized crowd control, digital communication, and contingency planning. [3] Kumar and Sinha studied administrative frameworks in large religious institutions, identifying the role of structured hierarchies and standard operating procedures in ensuring smooth daily operations.
- b. Volunteerism and Human Resource Management: [4] Deshpande analyzed volunteer management practices in faith-based organizations. The study found that clear role allocation, spiritual motivation, and training programs contribute to effective service delivery in temples. [5] Banerjee and Rao focused on motivation techniques used for volunteers in faith-based settings. They found that recognition, spiritual fulfillment, and community bonding were key motivators. [6] Goswami discussed succession planning and leadership development among volunteers, noting that mentoring by senior devotees ensures knowledge transfer and team continuity.

- c. Technology Integration in Temple Activities: [7] Nayar and Joshi investigated the use of technology in temple management, particularly focusing on QR codes, online donations, and live streaming. The study concluded that digital tools enhance operational transparency and global outreach. Shukla and Mehta [8] Shukla and Mehta analyzed mobile applications used by temples to manage e-darshan queues, donations, and devotee feedback. The study emphasized the importance of user-friendly interfaces and data privacy.
- d. Cleanliness and Sustainability: [9] Mukherjee and Rao studied cleanliness and waste management in pilgrimage centers and concluded that consistent monitoring and community participation ensure high standards of hygiene. [10] Iyer and Thomas explored zero-waste initiatives in South Indian temples and the use of biodegradable materials during festivals and daily offerings. [11] Shetty investigated water conservation practices in temple premises, including rainwater harvesting and wastewater reuse for gardens.
- e. Religious Tourism and Devotee Services: [12] Sharma examined temple tourism and its impact on regional economies. The study highlighted the role of well-managed facilities such as prasadam counters, information desks, and souvenir stalls in boosting tourist engagement and satisfaction. [13] Pandey and Rao reviewed transportation and accommodation services provided near temple sites, emphasizing the role of public-private partnerships in enhancing the pilgrimage experience. [14] Kapoor examined the impact of digital payment systems on donation transparency and visitor satisfaction in pilgrimage centers.
- f. Spiritual Experience and Ambience: [15] Tripathi highlighted the importance of spiritual ambience, rituals, and temple architecture in creating a holistic religious experience. The study also covered how temple layout and decor affect spiritual engagement. [16] Desai researched the use of lighting, color, and architectural symmetry in temple halls to support a meditative environment for visitors.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- a. Research Design: The present study adopts an experiential and descriptive research design,

combining field observation with structured data collection to evaluate temple management as a live model of applied commerce education. The approach emphasizes learning through observation and reflection, allowing students to connect management theory with real institutional practices.

b. Objectives of the Study:

- To provide commerce students with experiential exposure to the real-world application of modern management functions through observational learning at ISKCON NVCC Pune.
- To observe and assess core areas of temple management such as operations, services, engagement, use of technology, cleanliness, coordination, etc.
- To examine the extent to which temple management aligns with key functions of modern management (POSDCORB) through systematic observation.
- To offer practical suggestions for enhancing temple management practices at ISKCON NVCC and other similar religious institutions, based on field observations and student feedback.

c. Sample and Participants: The study involved 100 commerce students from Sir Parashurambhau College, Pune, representing a mix of academic years. The participants were selected based on their interest in applied management studies and were briefed before the field visit regarding ethical considerations and observation protocols.

d. Study Duration and Coverage: The field study was conducted over five consecutive days (14th – 18th August 2025), coinciding with major temple events — Janmashtami and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Appearance Day. This period allowed students to observe both routine temple management and large-scale festival operations involving crowd control, rituals, food distribution, security, volunteer coordination etc.

e. Areas of Observation: Students observed temple activities across the following core management domains:

- Planning and Organising: event preparation, scheduling, and resource allocation.
 - Staffing and Volunteer Management: role clarity, training, and teamwork.
 - Directing and Coordination: supervision, communication, and leadership visibility.
 - Reporting and Communication: use of announcements, signage, and information systems.
 - Budgeting and Transparency: donation handling, fund display, and financial processes.
 - Core Services and Facilities: crowd flow, cleanliness, hospitality, and infrastructure.
 - Technology and Innovation: use of digital tools, QR systems, and online engagement.
 - Devotee and Guest Services: help desks, souvenir counters, and visitor assistance.
 - Sustainability and Emergency Preparedness: waste management, safety measures, and first-aid facilities.
- f. Tools for Data Collection: Primary data were collected through a structured observation checklist, a Google feedback form, and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) held after the field visit. The checklist was designed to capture quantitative responses (Yes/No/Can’t Say) and qualitative impressions related to each management function. FGDs facilitated reflective discussions, enabling students to consolidate insights and identify best practices observed during the study.
- g. Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage analysis to highlight trends and patterns across management functions. Quantitative findings were supplemented with qualitative insights derived from student reflections and group discussions, resulting in a balanced interpretation of both operational efficiency and experiential learning outcomes.
- h. Training and Orientation: Prior to the visit, a brief orientation session was conducted to familiarize students with observation methods, ethical behavior within temple premises, and documentation techniques. This preparatory step ensured consistency and reliability in the data collected.

IV. FINDINGS, INSIGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS: DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- A. Findings and Insights:
 - a. Student Observations on Management Functions and Core Operational Areas: To assess the managerial and operational effectiveness of temple administration, structured observational feedback was collected from 100 commerce students during their field study at ISKCON NVCC Temple, Pune. The observation checklist covered multiple management functions and core operational areas,

including planning and organising, volunteer coordination, communication, budgeting, core services, technology integration, guest services, cleanliness, and emergency preparedness. Each aspect was evaluated through objective responses (“Yes”, “No” and “Can’t Say”) to capture the extent of managerial efficiency, coordination, and service quality perceived on-site. The consolidated responses presented in Table 1 provide a data-driven overview of temple management practices, highlighting both well-performing areas and domains requiring further improvement

Table 1: Student Observations on Management Functions and Core Operational Areas (n - 100)

Particulars	Yes	No	Can't Say
<i>Planning & Organising</i>			
Were daily activities and rituals displayed or announced clearly before they began?	83	0	17
Did you notice evidence of advance preparation for events (e.g., decoration, logistics, resource allocation)?	100	0	0
Were volunteers and staff roles clearly visible during rituals or events?	83	0	17
<i>Staffing & Volunteer Management</i>			
Was the number of volunteers/staff sufficient for managing devotees during peak hours?	95	5	0
Did the staff/volunteers appear well-trained and professional in their behavior?	100	0	0
Were volunteers/staff easily identifiable (through uniforms, badges, etc.)?	90	10	0
<i>Directing & Coordination</i>			
Did you observe leaders/coordinators actively guiding volunteers and devotees?	73	18	9
Was communication between staff and volunteers smooth and efficient?	83	0	17
Were temple activities (darshan, prasadam, rituals) conducted without major overlaps or confusion?	90	10	0
<i>Reporting & Communication</i>			
Were notice boards, signage, or digital displays used effectively to guide devotees?	78	18	4
Were announcements (audio or digital) clear and timely?	55	18	27
Was there any visible system for collecting visitor feedback?	33	45	22
<i>Budgeting & Transparency</i>			
Was the donation system (counters, QR codes, receipts) transparent and user-friendly?	83	5	12
Did you notice any visible display of fund usage (boards, digital screens, pamphlets)?	5	50	45
Did financial transactions during events (prasadam, stalls, souvenirs) appear well-managed?	83	10	7
<i>Core Services & Facilities</i>			
Was crowd movement at entry/exit points managed smoothly?	100	0	0
Were security arrangements (checking, surveillance) adequate?	100	0	0
Was prasadam distribution orderly and hygienic?	95	0	5
Were food outlets (Govinda's, snacks counter) clean and well-managed?	83	5	12
Were seating, water, washrooms, and shoe stands properly maintained?	78	18	4
<i>Technology & Innovation</i>			
Did you observe the use of QR codes, mobile apps, or digital systems for information/darshan/donations?	95	0	5
Were display screens/online platforms effectively used for communication?	68	18	14
Did you find online booking/donation facilities easy to access?	55	23	22
<i>Devotee & Guest Services</i>			
Were help desks or information counters available and approachable?	78	18	4
Were bookstores, gift shops, or souvenir stalls well-organized?	100	0	0
Were the prices of items at souvenir stalls reasonable in your observation?	45	45	10
<i>Sustainability & Cleanliness</i>			

Was waste segregation and disposal properly managed?	73	10	17
Did you notice any use of eco-friendly/biodegradable materials?	50	40	10
Were gardens, water facilities, and temple surroundings well maintained?	90	10	0
Did you observe measures for water or energy conservation (rainwater harvesting, solar lights, etc.)?	60	23	17
<i>Emergency Preparedness</i>			
Were fire extinguishers or fire safety equipment visible and accessible?	90	10	0
Did you notice clear evacuation routes or signage for emergencies?	55	23	22
Was there any evidence of first-aid or medical assistance facilities on the premises?	23	5	72

Table 1 presents consolidated responses from 100 commerce students who systematically observed the management functions and core operational areas of ISKCON NVCC Temple, Pune. The data offers a holistic view of how effectively the temple applies modern management principles within a faith-based institutional context. Overall, the findings reveal that ISKCON NVCC demonstrates a high level of operational efficiency and managerial discipline, particularly in planning, volunteer professionalism, crowd management, and hygiene. However, key insights also indicate moderate visibility in communication systems, transparency practices, and emergency preparedness.

In the area of Planning and Organising, responses show an overwhelmingly positive trend. All participants (100%) observed clear evidence of advance preparation for events, while 83% noted that rituals and activities were well announced and staff roles clearly defined. A key insight emerging here is the temple’s strong emphasis on structured planning and pre-event readiness, reflecting a proactive managerial approach.

Staffing and Volunteer Management emerged as one of the temple’s most robust areas. Every respondent (100%) agreed that staff and volunteers were well-trained and professional, and 95% found staffing levels adequate during peak hours. Furthermore, 90% observed that volunteers were easily identifiable through uniforms or badges. The key insight is that the temple’s human resource systems function with high professionalism, teamwork, and service orientation.

In Directing and Coordination, most respondents (90%) confirmed that temple activities such as darshan, prasadam, and rituals were conducted smoothly without overlaps. Communication among staff and volunteers was rated positively by 83% of students, while 73% observed active leadership and

coordination during operations. A key insight from these responses is the presence of strong coordination mechanisms, even under conditions of large-scale participation, supported by effective internal communication.

Under Reporting and Communication, results were comparatively moderate. While 78% appreciated the use of notice boards and signage for guidance, only 55% found announcements clear and timely, and just 33% observed a formal system for collecting visitor feedback. The key insight here is that, although visual communication is present, two-way information flow and structured reporting mechanisms remain less visible.

The dimension of Budgeting and Transparency reflected mixed yet favorable results. Donation and transaction systems were rated highly (83% each) for their user-friendliness and organization. However, only 5% observed visible displays of fund utilization. A key insight from this domain is that while internal financial management appears well-organized, external communication of fund usage is limited, potentially reducing stakeholder awareness.

Core Services and Facilities represent one of the temple’s strongest operational domains. Crowd and security management were rated perfect (100%), while prasadam distribution (95%), food outlet hygiene (83%), and infrastructure maintenance (78%) also received high marks. The key insight drawn here is that service delivery systems at ISKCON NVCC are both efficient and visitor-oriented, ensuring a seamless experience for large numbers of devotees.

The area of Technology and Innovation also performed well, with 95% of respondents observing active use of digital tools like QR codes, apps, and display screens. However, only 55% found online booking or donation systems easy to use. A key insight in this context is that

digital adoption is high, but user accessibility and awareness could be further enhanced.

Devotee and Guest Services were generally rated positively, with 78% acknowledging available help desks and 100% appreciating the organization of bookstores and souvenir stalls. However, only 45% felt that prices at souvenir counters were reasonable. A key insight from this section is that while service organization is efficient, pricing perception among visitors is varied.

In the sphere of Sustainability and Cleanliness, 90% of respondents appreciated the upkeep of temple surroundings, and 73% recognized systematic waste management. However, only 50 – 60% observed eco-friendly practices or resource conservation systems. A key insight here is that cleanliness is well institutionalized, though sustainable practices are still evolving.

Finally, Emergency Preparedness emerged as the weakest area. While 90% noticed fire safety equipment, only 55% observed clear evacuation routes, and just 23% identified visible first-aid or medical support facilities. The key insight is that while preventive safety tools are present, proactive preparedness and medical readiness remain minimal.

Overall, the analysis of responses yields multiple key insights: ISKCON NVCC excels in structured

planning, volunteer management, and operational service delivery; demonstrates steady integration of technology; and upholds high cleanliness and discipline standards. However, certain aspects — particularly feedback communication, financial transparency, sustainability, and emergency readiness — show scope for enhanced managerial visibility. Collectively, these insights affirm that the temple operates as a well-managed institution where modern management functions and devotional service coexist effectively, providing an exemplary model for experiential learning.

b. Overall Student Ratings of Temple Management Efficiency and Functional Effectiveness: To obtain an overall evaluation of the temple’s managerial performance, students were asked to rate their observations of key operational aspects on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Poor to Excellent. This assessment aimed to capture the collective perception of management efficiency, punctuality in rituals and events, and the effective execution of core managerial functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. The responses summarized in Table 2 provide a holistic view of the temple’s functional effectiveness and administrative discipline as experienced by the student observers during their field study.

Table 2: Overall Student Ratings of Temple Management Efficiency and Functional Effectiveness (*n* - 100)

Particulars	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Rituals, events, and services are conducted punctually, with queues and activities managed in a timely and efficient manner.	0	0	6	61	33
Overall temple management reflects effective planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting practices.	0	0	17	56	27
Overall management efficiency of the temple.	0	0	17	61	22

Table 2 presents the overall evaluation of temple management effectiveness as perceived by 100 commerce students during their field study at ISKCON NVCC, Pune. The table summarizes students’ ratings on three broad parameters—punctuality and organization of rituals and services, effectiveness of core management functions (POSDCORB), and overall management efficiency—using a five-point Likert scale. The responses reflect a consistently positive evaluation, underscoring the

temple’s high operational discipline, structured management framework, and strong alignment with modern administrative practices.

For the first statement — “Rituals, events, and services are conducted punctually, with queues and activities managed in a timely and efficient manner” — 94% of respondents rated performance as either good (61%) or excellent (33%), with only 6% selecting “average.” This indicates a key insight that the temple

demonstrates remarkable efficiency in event timing, crowd movement, and coordination, particularly during high-attendance days such as Janmashtami and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Appearance Day.

The second parameter — “Overall temple management reflects effective planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting practices” — received similarly strong feedback, with 83% of students rating it good (56%) or excellent (27%). This highlights a key insight that ISKCON NVCC’s management structure successfully integrates formal managerial principles into its daily functioning. Students’ responses suggest that the temple’s operations are guided by clear planning, effective human resource utilization, and consistent supervision — elements typically emphasized in professional management environments.

For the third indicator — “Overall management efficiency of the temple” — another 83% of respondents rated the temple as good (61%) or excellent (22%), while the remaining 17% considered performance “average.” The key insight here is that the temple’s managerial systems, including its coordination among departments, volunteer engagement, and service delivery, are perceived as highly reliable and efficient by observers with a management background.

Collectively, the data presented in Table 2 confirms that student observers view ISKCON NVCC as a model of well-structured management within a spiritual framework. The consistently high ratings across all three parameters demonstrate that the temple effectively blends religious devotion with systematic managerial control — providing a real-world learning platform where the principles of modern management are vividly practiced in a faith-based institutional context.

B. Suggestions: Based on field observations, student feedback, and analysis of quantitative data, several practical suggestions are proposed to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and visitor experience of temple management at ISKCON NVCC, Pune, and other similar religious institutions. These recommendations focus on strengthening management functions, optimizing resources, and integrating modern tools while

preserving the sanctity and cultural essence of temple administration.

- a. Strengthening Planning and Organising:
 - Develop a digital event calendar and display boards across temple zones to communicate schedules, rituals, and events in real time.
 - Create inter-departmental coordination committees (for rituals, prasadam, security, and hospitality) to streamline festival planning and prevent operational overlaps.
 - Conduct advance planning meetings before major festivals to assign roles, allocate resources, and review contingency measures.
- b. Volunteer and Staff Development:
 - Conduct regular training and orientation programs to maintain consistent service quality and develop leadership among volunteers.
 - Introduce a recognition and incentive system—such as digital certificates or appreciation features on temple platforms—to enhance motivation and volunteer retention.
 - Maintain an updated online volunteer database for efficient manpower mobilization during special events.
- c. Enhancing Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Install digital feedback kiosks or QR code systems at key points to collect visitor opinions and suggestions instantly.
 - Display QR codes linking to the temple’s official website and social media platforms to share schedules, updates, and lectures, strengthening engagement and outreach.
 - Review feedback data periodically to identify trends and implement timely improvements.
- d. Financial Transparency and Accountability:
 - Display fund utilization reports on notice boards or digital screens to enhance public trust and accountability.
 - Publish an annual “Temple Report” summarizing donations, expenditures, and community outreach initiatives.
 - Ensure all donation transactions are digitally acknowledged through automated receipts and QR-based confirmations for transparency and efficiency.
- e. Technology Integration and Digital Accessibility:

- Launch a dedicated temple mobile application that integrates darshan booking, prasadam booking, online donations, event notifications, volunteer registration, and feedback collection.
 - Ensure the app and website offer multilingual support (Marathi, Hindi, English) for inclusive access.
 - Expand the use of digital signage and live-streaming screens for smoother information flow during large gatherings.
- f. Visitor Facilities and Devotee Services:
- Establish pilgrimage stay facilities or partner with nearby guesthouses to accommodate outstation visitors during major festivals.
 - Maintain price transparency in souvenir and food outlets through visible rate lists and standardized billing.
 - Provide additional help desks and orientation counters for first-time visitors, senior citizens, and tourists.
 - The temple may also organize structured and chargeable pilgrimage tours such as Puri Yatra, Vrindavan Parikrama, and similar devotional circuits, enabling devotees to complete their yatras under guided supervision while generating sustainable revenue for temple development.
- g. Cleanliness, Sustainability, and Eco-Friendly Practices:
- Implement a “Green Temple Initiative” focusing on waste segregation, composting of organic offerings, and the use of biodegradable materials.
 - Expand rainwater harvesting and solar energy systems to promote resource conservation.
 - Display awareness panels within the premises to encourage environmental responsibility among devotees and volunteers.
 - Foster community awareness drives emphasizing cleanliness, ethics, and service as integral aspects of temple management.
- h. Emergency Preparedness and Safety Systems:
- Develop a comprehensive emergency response plan including visible evacuation routes, assembly points, and trained safety marshals.
 - Install first-aid units and ensure volunteers receive basic medical and fire safety training.
 - Conduct regular mock drills and audits to ensure readiness during high-crowd events.
- i. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:
- Establish a Temple Management Review Committee involving senior staff, volunteers, and academic partners to evaluate operational efficiency periodically.
 - Conduct post-event evaluations after major festivals to review performance, document learnings, and plan improvements.
 - Collaborate with commerce and management departments of educational institutions for ongoing research and student-led studies.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study establishes that temples such as ISKCON NVCC, Pune, function not only as spiritual centers but also as well-structured institutions demonstrating advanced management practices. The field-based observations provided commerce students with direct exposure to the coordination, planning, and operational systems that sustain daily temple activities and large-scale festivals. By witnessing these processes firsthand, students gained valuable insights into how theoretical concepts of modern management — such as planning, organizing, leadership, communication, and control — are effectively applied in a real institutional setting.

The findings revealed that ISKCON NVCC exemplifies efficiency, teamwork, and innovation in areas such as event planning, volunteer coordination, service management, and technological integration. At the same time, aspects like structured feedback systems, financial transparency, sustainability, and emergency preparedness present opportunities for further improvement. The practical suggestions outlined in this study, including the adoption of digital tools, safety mechanisms, and transparent fund management, can significantly enhance both administrative performance and devotee satisfaction.

Overall, this study reaffirms the potential of religious institutions to act as living laboratories for management education, where ethical leadership, service orientation, and operational excellence coexist. By engaging students in such experiential learning environments, commerce education extends beyond theoretical instruction to embrace social and spiritual dimensions of management. The ISKCON NVCC

model thus stands as a compelling example of how faith-based organizations can contribute to community development, ethical governance, and the holistic formation of future professionals who combine competence with conscience.

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