

## THE STUDY OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN A CHINESE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

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**Abstract:** *With the development of Chinese economy, private enterprises have gradually become the backbone of the competitive market. At the same time, with the rapid development of private enterprises, the incentive of internal employees has been paid more and more attention. Then, the establishment of an effective incentive mechanism is a necessary condition to maintain and increase the value of Chinese private enterprises and to achieve sustainable development. However, due to the improper motivation of employees in private enterprises, the loss of employees is widespread. Therefore, private enterprises should overcome their own operational drawbacks and attach importance to the role of high-quality talents and employee motivation. The purpose of this paper is to test whether the employee incentive measures provided by the private enterprise can meet the needs of employees and find out the specific incentive factors that need to be improved. Subsequently, the analysis results of SPSS software show that there are great differences in employees' demand and satisfaction. The research results of this paper can provide data reference for the private enterprise to help them find out the incentive factors of employee dissatisfaction to take corresponding measures to gradually narrow the gap between employee demand and satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *Employee Motivation; Chinese Private Enterprise; Incentive needs; Incentive satisfaction.*

### 1. Introduction

The study involved employees of a private company that makes solar panels and collected a total of 207 valid questionnaires. The main aim of this paper is to test whether there is a great difference between employees' demand for three types of incentives and the satisfaction of motivations provided by the private enterprise, so as to judge whether the employees are satisfied with incentives adopted by the company or not. By using the Paired-Samples T-Test in SPSS I obtained the data results which show that there are significant differences in employees' incentive demand and satisfaction among the three types of incentive methods provided by the private enterprise. Furthermore, the gap between demand and satisfaction of economic rewards is the largest, followed by training development and social

relationships. After the difference analysis, this paper puts forward specific operational measures for these three types of incentives, hoping to be helpful to the improvement of employee incentives in this enterprise.

The research results of this paper will provide the private enterprise with data reference to let them understand the shortcomings of employee incentive measures and thus take targeted remedial measures and increase employee' satisfaction. Only in this way can the enterprise attract talents, motivate employees and enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of private enterprises.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Basic Concept of Motivation**

According to Zhang&Li (2002), motivation is the psychological process of stimulating, promoting and strengthening human behavior to promote the individual to achieve the goal effectively. Therefore, the so-called employee motivation is in the process of human resources management, managers use incentive theory and methods to meet or limit the various needs of employees in varying degrees, thus causing the change of employees' psychological state to achieve motivation. Moreover, through the positive and negative strengthening, give people some internal motivation, people can continue to strive to achieve the desired goals of the organization to control and regulate their behavior.

Farooq (2015) states that the process of motivation begins with a need, which is a person's perception of his defects. These needs affect the thinking process of the employee and guide him to meet the needs by taking specific action patterns. The return on the action, as a feedback mechanism, supports employees to consider the criteria for future action by assessing its consequences. The process of motivation is mainly divided into the following aspects:

- Unsatisfied Need: When employees feel that their needs have not been met, the incentive process begins (Francis 2012).
- Tension: The unmet needs of the staff made him tension (Francis 2012).
- Drive: Through this tension, employees with unmet needs drive themselves to find specific goals. This tension is the driving force to achieve the goals set (Farooq 2015).
- Search Behavior: After looking for options based on their needs, employees begin to act on the options they choose (Francis 2012).
- Satisfaction of Need: After a long period of performance, the employee assesses whether the return meets his or her needs (Francis 2012).
- Reduction of Tension: When an employee feels that the desired needs have been met through the return of action, his nervousness is alleviated. Afterwards, he will reassess any further unmet needs and repeat the process (Farooq 2015).

### **2.2 Relationship between Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the emotional response of individuals to the current working conditions, while motivation is the driving force to pursue and meet their own needs (Wang & Lee, 2013). Luthans & Sommer (2005) state that different

types of satisfaction can lead to different types of intentions and behaviors under different incentives, resulting in different types of rewards. From the study of Ali & Ahmed (2009), they confirm that there is a statistically significant relationship between reward and recognition as well as between motivation and satisfaction. Research shows that employees' job motivation and satisfaction vary according to changes in rewards or recognition offered to them. Lane (2010) argues that there are many different factors in the work environment, such as salary, working hours, the autonomy is given to employees, organizational structure and communication between employees and leaders may affect employees' job satisfaction. In addition, Robbins (2003) states that there are four main factors that determine job satisfaction.

The first is rewards, the salaries and promotions that are considered most relevant to job satisfaction because when employees feel they are getting a fair return, their satisfaction experience increases. Then, the second factor is the supportive work environment, and the next determining factor is that the organization provides challenging jobs. The final determinant is in harmony with colleagues. Milkovich & Gerhart (2011) claim that motivation theory involves personal needs, rewards and employee behavior, and that these factors motivate employees' job satisfaction through the impact of rewards. Taylor & Westover (2011) found that employees with high job satisfaction and motivation experience higher levels of intrinsic workplace attribute, especially interesting and autonomous work, as well as external workplace attributes, such as higher wages, more promotion prospects, better job security and harmony with their managers and colleagues. Nderitu (2013) believes that dissatisfied employees cannot complete the task in the best way, so the enterprise must motivate them to complete the task effectively and efficiently to help the organization to achieve its goals.

Lam et al. (2001) found that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and financial reward and that it is a key factor in determining employee job satisfaction. Different types of satisfaction lead to different goals and behaviors, which come from different types of motivations for different types of rewards (Luthans et al. 2005). Thomas (2011) states that we recognize the importance of reward and recognition in order to become motivated individuals, and these values are also important factors in determining employee satisfaction. Moreover, Vandenberghe & Trembley (2008) conclude that employees with high job satisfaction are motivated by rewards that support job engagement. According to Malhotra et al. (2007), rewards must be best strategically adjusted to achieve organizational goals, improve employees' motivation to better perform their work, and improve job satisfaction.

The study of Sell & Cleal (2011) shows that different psychosocial and work environment variables, such as workplace and social support, have a direct impact on job satisfaction, while the increase of reward does not improve the degree of dissatisfaction of employees. Another study by Catillo & Cano (2004) on job satisfaction of university teachers shows that the level of job satisfaction increases if employees give appropriate attention to interpersonal relationships, recognition

and supervision. Lachowski et al. (2018) state that an important factor in overall job satisfaction is harmonious interpersonal relationships in the workplace, not only between colleagues in similar positions but most importantly with superiors. Ghenghesh (2013) found that the most important reason for the intrinsic motivation of teachers is to maintain a good relationship with colleagues and superiors. Then, the external factor of the working environment is a motivation for teachers to work harder. However, Rafiq et al. (2012) believe that there is a negative correlation between work environment and job satisfaction, and external reward is the best incentive factor leading to job satisfaction.

The results of Ali et al. (2015) on health and safety policies and their effects on employee satisfaction show that occupational health and safety policies in organizations have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction. Therefore, this shows that with occupational health and safety policies, employees are motivated and able to better perform their responsibilities.

Dartey-Baah& Amoako (2011) describe motivational factors, such as the nature of the job, the sense of achievement of the job, recognition by leaders, responsibilities entrusted to them, and opportunities for personal growth and promotion, which help employees to discover their value in the organization. This can improve the level of motivation of employees, and ultimately improve the internal well-being of employees and promote job satisfaction. The researchers conclude that employee training has a positive impact on job satisfaction, such as employees being able to contribute their performance and share training benefits through training, thereby improving productivity. Training here includes management development, education, traditional training and vocational training (Batool&Batool,2012). Yew (2011) believes that training and development help provide career development opportunities for employees and is also considered to be an important aspect of human resources management practice and integration of work experience.

The results of Chaudhary & Bhaskar (2016) show that staff of the department demonstrate that receiving training and development project can strengthen their functional areas and expertise. This helps them gain recognition from colleagues and leaders because they can act as resource personnel by sharing their knowledge and experience, as well as increased career promotion opportunities and benefits such as salary increases and bonuses.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to study the specific motivation that employees need and the satisfaction with the specific motivation provided by the private enterprise. Then through the data analysis to evaluate whether the needs of employees are met, that is, whether the needs and satisfaction match or not.



**Figure 1:** The Model of Theoretical Framework

From the above model, it shows that employee motivation is divided into three categories, namely, economic rewards, social relationships and training development.

The classification of these three types of motivations is mainly based on the three major needs of the ERG theory of Alderfer (1969) that is, the economic rewards correspond to the existing needs of the people, the social relationships correspond to the relatedness needs of the people and training development correspond to the needs of human growth. Therefore, we think that these three types of incentives can basically meet the incentive needs of employees. The following table shows the specific factors of these three types of incentives:

**Table 1:** Specific factors of three types of incentives

<b>Economic Rewards</b>	<b>Social Relationships</b>	<b>Training Development</b>
High Salary High welfare Paid Holiday Hold shares in a company Good commercial insurance Wages increase relatively fast with the number of years	Good working environment Harmonious relationship with colleagues The harmonious relationship between superior and subordinate Receive recognition and respect from leaders Have a sense of job achievement Democratic participation in corporate management	Good chance of promotion Provide good training and learning opportunities Develop a variety of skills A challenging job Good career development space

Moreover, the incentive needs of different employees are measured according to the degree of importance. The incentives provided by the private enterprise are measured according to the satisfaction of employees. In this paper, I use a five-point scale, the higher the score, the items are more approved by the testers.

### **3.1 Hypotheses**

H1: There is a significant difference between the incentive needs of employees and the satisfaction of motivations provided by the private enterprise for Economic Rewards.

H2: There is a significant difference between the incentive needs of employees and the satisfaction of motivations provided by the private enterprise for Social Relationships.

H3: There is a significant difference between the incentive needs of employees and the satisfaction of motivations provided by the private enterprise for Training Development.

### **3.2 Sample and Data Collection**

The data for the study were collected from a large private company in China that specializes in solar cell modules. The company has about 300 employees, and my target is 250 questionnaires. As a result, I received a total of 231 responses, of which 207 were valid and could be analyzed in detail. Therefore, the effective response rate of the questionnaire is 82.8%. In addition, these data are mainly through the help of my friend who works in the company, inviting colleagues from different departments around him to fill out questionnaires on the Internet.

This study designed a questionnaire based on the research literature of many scholars at home and abroad and combined with the hypothesis and purpose of this paper. The questionnaire is divided into three parts, that is, the first part is the basic information of employees in the private enterprise, including gender, age, position level, working years and so on. Then, the second part is the three types of motivations needed by employees in the private enterprise. This part of the questions is asked according to all the motivational factors and set five options, which are divided into not important at all, unimportant, moderate, important and highly important. The corresponding scales are 1 to 5.

The last part is a survey of employees' satisfaction with the three types of incentives currently provided by the enterprise. This part of the questions is asked according to all the motivational factors as well, and there are also five options. According to the degree of satisfaction, it is divided into not satisfied at all, dissatisfied, moderate, satisfied and highly satisfied. Then, the corresponding scales are 1 to 5.

### **3.3 Analytical Methods**

This paper used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to analyze the data. The first part was a descriptive analysis of basic information of employees, so I used the descriptive statistics tool in SPSS. Then I used Paired-Samples T-Test to analyze whether there is a significant difference between the incentive needs of employees and the motivations provided by the enterprise. After obtaining the above analysis results, I compared the mean of the two groups to



analyze the degree of their gap. According to the differences, we got the matching degree between the incentives needs of employees and the incentives currently provided by the enterprise. Therefore, this study could provide a data basis for the private enterprise to provide matching incentives according to the needs of employees and enhance the motivation effects of employees.

#### **4. Results**

Through the descriptive analysis of SPSS, the following figures reflect the basic information about the respondents' gender, age, marital status, education qualification, position level and so on.

##### **4.1 Introduction of Respondents**

•**Gender of Respondents:** About 66.7 per cent of the respondents were men, while 33.3 per cent of the respondents were women, almost twice as many men as women.

•**Age of Respondents:** Most of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40 (35.8%), followed by those under the age of 30 (28.5%). The number of respondents aged 41 to 50 (21.7%) and over (14.0%) was relatively small, but the overall difference in the number of people of different ages was not significant.

•**Marital Status of Respondents:** In terms of marital status, most of the respondents were married, accounting for 78.3 per cent, while the proportion of single respondents was 19.8 per cent. Besides, the proportion of divorce and widow was the smallest, 1.9 per cent.

•**Education Qualification of Respondents:** The overall educational level of the participants was not high, most of the participants were lower than junior college (61.8%), followed by the junior college (28.5%). The proportion of bachelor's and master's degrees is very small, 9.2 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively.

•**Position Level of Respondents:** 76.3 per cent of the participants were workers, and the proportion of workers accounted for 3/4 of the total. For management, there is 11.6 per cent for junior managers, 9.2 per cent for middle managers and 2.9 per cent for senior managers.

•**Working Years of Respondents:** In terms of length of service, the difference between participants of different years was not significant. As shown above, about 25.6 per cent of employees have less than 1 year of work experience, 30.4 per cent of employees have 2-5 years of work experience, 34.3 per cent of employees have 5-10 years of work experience, and then relatively few people have more than 11 years of work experience, which is 9.7 per cent.

•**Department of Respondents:** There are about half of the participants come from the production sector, with is 53.6 per cent. While the rest of the participants account for similar and smaller proportions.

#### 4.2 The Difference between Demand and Satisfaction of Employee Motivation Variables for Economic Rewards

Based on the results presented by paired-samples t-test, Table 2 shows that the p values of all factors are less than 0.05, indicating that there is a significant difference between the incentive needs for economic rewards and the incentive satisfaction provided by the enterprise.

By comparing the mean values of incentive demand and satisfaction in economic rewards, the results show that the average demand of all factors is greater than the average of satisfaction. What's more, the biggest gap between demand and satisfaction is high welfare (1.589), followed by paid holiday (1.415) and wage growth (1.333), and then the smallest pair is holding shares (0.749).

**Table 2:** Paired Samples T-Test for Demand and Satisfaction of Economic Rewards

	Economic Rewards	Mean	Paired Difference Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-sided)
Pair 1	Motivation Demand of Employees--high salary Level of satisfaction at the workplace--high salary	4.29 3.03	1.256	.914 1.092	.000
Pair 2	Motivational Demand of employees--high welfare Level of satisfaction at the workplace--high welfare	4.48 2.89	1.589	.775 1.123	.000
Pair 3	Motivational Demand of employees--paid holiday Level of satisfaction at the workplace--paid holiday	4.52 3.11	1.415	.768 1.161	.000
Pair 4	Motivational Demand of Employees--holding shares Level of satisfaction at the workplace--holding shares	3.35 2.60	.749	1.349 1.169	.000
Pair 5	Motivational Demand of employees--good commercial insurance Level of satisfaction at the workplace--good commercial insurance	4.26 3.24	1.014	.984 1.097	.000
Pair 6	Motivational Demand of employees--wages increase relatively fast with the number of years Level of satisfaction at the workplace--wages increase relatively fast with the number of years	4.32 2.99	1.333	.827 1.086	.000
Total Mean			1.226		



### 4.3 The Difference between Demand and Satisfaction of Employee Motivation Variables for Social Relationships

It is clear from Table 3 that the p values of all the motivational factors that compare demand and satisfaction are less than 0.05, so there is a significant difference between employees' demand and employees' satisfaction for all factors in social relationships.

The mean values of paired differences show that the difference in a good working environment is the largest, which is 0.990. This is followed by receiving recognition and respect by leaders (0.899) and having a sense of job achievement (0.831). In addition, the difference between a harmonious relationship with colleagues and democratic participation in business management is the smallest, 0.430 and 0.541, respectively.

**Table 3:** Paired Samples T-Test for Demand and Satisfaction of Social Relationships

	Social Relationships	Mean	Paired Differences Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-sided)
Pair 1	Motivational Demand of employees--good working environment Level of satisfaction at the workplace--goodworking environment	4.43 3.44	.990	.797 1.022	.000
Pair 2	Motivational Demand of Employees--harmonious relationship with colleagues Level of satisfaction at the workplace--harmonious relationship with colleagues	4.19 3.76	.430	.898 .885	.000
Pair 3	Motivational Demand of Employees--a harmonious relationship between superior and subordinate Level of satisfaction at the workplace--a harmonious relationship between superior and subordinate	4.33 3.63	.705	.813 .936	.000
Pair 4	Motivational Demand of Employees--receive recognition and respect from leaders Level of satisfaction at the workplace--receive recognition and respect from leaders	4.41 3.51	.899	.757 .944	.000
Pair 5	Motivational Demand of employees--have a sense of job achievement Level of satisfaction at the workplace--have a sense of job achievement	4.16 3.33	.831	.899 .985	.000
Pair 6	Motivational Demand of Employees--democratic participation in corporate management Level of satisfaction at the workplace--democratic participation in corporate management	3.62 3.08	.541	1.155 1.065	.000
Total Mean			.7328		

#### 4.4 The Difference between Demand and Satisfaction of Employee Motivation Variables for Training Development

As shown in Table 4, the comparison of p values among all the incentive factors of training development is less than 0.05. This shows that there is a great difference between incentive demands and satisfaction in training development.

From the mean value of the paired difference, the difference of each factor is very similar, basically fluctuating between 0.6 and 1. Furthermore, the two groups of incentives with the largest gap are good opportunities for promotion (0.923) and opportunities for training and learning (0.870), while the group with the smallest gap is a challenging job, with paired difference mean of 0.633.

**Table 4:** Paired Samples T-Test for Demand and Satisfaction of Training Development

	Training Development	Mean	Paired Differences Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-sided)
	Motivational Demand of Employees-- a good chance of promotion	4.07	.923	1.012	.000
	Level of satisfaction at the workplace--a good chance of promotion	3.14		1.023	
Pair 2	Motivational Demand of Employees--provide good training and learning opportunities	4.17	.870	.963	.000
	Level of satisfaction at the workplace--provide good training and learning opportunities	3.30		1.023	
Pair 3	Motivational Demand of Employees--develop a variety of skills	4.11	.855	.954	.000
	Level of satisfaction at the workplace--develop a variety of skills	3.25		1.007	
Pair 4	Motivational Demand of Employees--a challenging job	3.87	.633	1.042	.000
	Level of satisfaction at the workplace--a challenging job	3.24		.974	
Pair 5	Motivational Demand of employees--good career development space	4.06	.783	.964	.000
	Level of satisfaction at the workplace--good career development space	3.28		.993	
Total Mean			.8128		

#### 4.5 Discussion

The main purpose of the data analysis of this paper is to verify the three hypotheses proposed above. Through the results of difference analysis, it is found that the demand for incentive factors of employees in economic rewards does not match the satisfaction of motivations provided by the private enterprise, so H1 is accepted. For social relationships, employees' incentive demand is higher than employees' incentive satisfaction, so we think H2 is acceptable. Then, similarly, the

P values of the Paired Differences in training development are all less than 0.05, so H3 is acceptable.

Comparing the total mean values of these three types of incentives, the total mean of economic rewards is the largest, which is 1.226, followed by training development (0.8128), and then the smallest is social relationships, with 0.7328. These show that the employees of the enterprise have the lowest satisfaction with the economic rewards, while the satisfaction of training development and social relationships is similar.

For economic rewards, the gap between employees' demand and satisfaction is the biggest. Although economic rewards are no longer the most effective incentive method, but Lam et al. (2001) think that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and economic reward, and they are the key factors to determine employees' job satisfaction. Malhotra et al. (2007) put forward the similar point of view. Rewards must be best strategically adjusted to achieve organizational goals, improve employees' motivation to better perform their work, and improve job satisfaction.

Employees' needs for training development and social relationships also exceed the satisfaction of the incentives provided by the enterprise. Although many scholars believe that financial reward is the most effective way to motivate employees, however, the study of Sell & Cleal (2011) shows that different psychosocial and work environment variables, such as workplace and social support, have a direct impact on job satisfaction, while the increase in pay does not improve employees' dissatisfaction. Similarly, Lachowski et al. (2018) also pointed out that an important factor in overall job satisfaction is harmonious interpersonal relationships in the workplace, not only between colleagues in similar positions, but most importantly with superiors.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Through the above analysis results, employees are not satisfied with the incentive methods of economic rewards, social relationships and training development, which shows that the enterprise still has a lot of space for development in employee motivation. Further, this paper compares the different incentive needs of employees with the incentive satisfaction provided by the private enterprise to understand the specific values of gap between the two. Then, the private enterprise could follow the result to prescribe the right remedy to the case, gradually narrow the gap between demand and satisfaction, and improve employee job satisfaction.

As we all know, employee motivation is an indispensable part of a company, good incentives can not only greatly improve work efficiency but also optimize the work environment (Samiksha, n.d.). Thereby, it has become one of the important tasks of enterprise growth. Here, in order to improve employee satisfaction, I put forward specific measures for these three types of incentives.

### **5.1 Advice on Economic Rewards**

#### **•Set Reasonable Salary Standards**

According to the difference analysis, the employees are not satisfied with the salary level provided by the company. Here, the human resources department of the enterprise should fully consider the market competition factors and cost of living factors, thus formulate reasonable salary standards. For example, according to the annual price rise in China, the basic guaranteed wages of employees should be raised accordingly to offset some living stress brought by the rise in prices.

#### **•Implement Different Economic Incentives**

We know that the incentive needs of employees with different attributes are different. Because of this situation, the human resources managers should timely and deeply understand the actual needs of the employees and carry on the differential economic incentives to the employees, such as paid holiday and different types of welfare. Here, the human resources department could regularly issue questionnaires to employees in various departments to understand the needs of employees in different periods or creates an email account to encourage employees to send their needs to them.

#### **•Improvement of Wage Assessment Methods**

In China, the level of salary and welfare is often determined by the level of the position and the number of working years, but young and less experienced employees are also eager for higher wages. In order to improve the satisfaction of this group of people, working years and position levels should not be the only criteria for salary and bonus growth. The company can increase the role of job performance and adopt the standards recognized by most employees. At the same time, the score gap of performance appraisal should be enlarged properly and the proportion of performance appraisal salary to the total salary of employees should be increased. In this way, employees can feel that their work is equal to the financial return, which further improves the enthusiasm for the work.

### **5.2 Advice on Social Relationships**

#### **•Strengthen the Role of Honor and Praise**

From the above analysis results, employees need to be recognized and respected by the leadership, as well as a sense of job achievement, but they are not satisfied with the incentives provided by the company.

Here, the company can express recognition of the work of employees by awarding honors and public praise for their contributions to increase their satisfaction. For example, publicly praise contributors at internal company meetings or bulletin boards and regularly select role models recognized by employees. These methods can not only enhance the sense of pride and achievement of young employees but also create a good working atmosphere to fully mobilize their enthusiasm and better complete their future work.

#### **•Create a Positive Working Environment**

An important measure to enhance the positive attitude of employees is to allow employees to participate in the management of the company. For example,

leaders of the various department can guide and support employees to participate in varying degrees of company decision-making and company management seminars and adopt the good suggestions put forward by employees. These can not only meet the needs of employees to be respected and self-fulfilling but also enhance their sense of identity and sense of belonging. In addition, the elimination of unfair and discriminatory policies will strengthen the employees' sense of positivity at work and help build harmonious relationships with leaders and colleagues.

### **5.3 Advice on Training Development**

#### **•Design Comprehensive Training Plans**

Through the above analysis, it is found that employees' satisfaction with training and learning opportunities is low as well. In order to enhance employees' satisfaction, the specific operational measures are as follows:

Firstly, the company's human resources department needs to understand the needs of trained employees. They can collect the training intention of the staff through the questionnaire survey and determine the training content according to the specific situation of the employees.

Secondly, the human resources sector can use different types of training methods so that training is not limited to classroom-style learning, but also through the network. This allows employees to watch training videos anytime and anywhere.

Finally, the training results need to be evaluated and linked to the employees' salary in order to strengthen the attention of the staff to the enterprise training.

#### **•Optimize the Career Development of Employees**

In the training and development, employees are the most dissatisfied with the promotion space provided. In order to improve their satisfaction, the human resources sector should clarify the job system and the way of job development to form a career growth ladder. For example, develop promotion policies for employees and set up assessment programs for different promotion positions. Each employee can participate in the assessment project equally, and employees who have passed the evaluation can be qualified for the position.

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