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GOAL SETTING 101

Written by Justin Savoy
Designed by Benny Garden

The promise of a new beginning... This saying has forever been associated with the start of a new calendar year. This uplifting message can inspire people to change their lives in a positive and meaningful way. However, these changes can only occur if the individual is truly invested in them. Goals can not be achieved without hard work and some sacrifice. Oftentimes, people refuse to set goals because they are scared of potentially not meeting them. Other times, people set goals that are ridiculously easy to ensure that they meet them, while some people set goals that they eventually give up on, for any number of reasons. These are the three main opponents of change, particularly during the first few months of any calendar year. So, how does one overcome these barriers in order to instill worthwhile life changes that are permanent? There really isn't a bullet-proof answer to this question, since everybody is different, and everybody's goals will be different as well. Nevertheless, here is a five-step plan that can serve as a starting point for change.



1

Write a list of things that you want to achieve.

=> Understanding the things that you want to achieve is the brainstorming process of goal setting. The achievements on this list will probably be vastly different, and that's ok! Goals come in all shapes and sizes, so naturally, the things that we want to achieve will as well. Take some time and just make a quick list of goals. If you want, set a timer for 5-10 minutes. This will ensure that the things you write down are important, as they are the first things you think of.

2

Narrow your list down to 5-10 achievements.

=> Of course, you don't have to fit these parameters exactly. If you only believe that three of your achievements are important to your life, go with that. If you find a dozen or more, that's ok too! The only crucial part of this step is reading through your list. Combining multiple achievements into one and getting rid of some achievements that aren't as important should be your main priorities.

3

Sort your list of achievements into three different categories: Easy, Moderate, and Difficult.

=> The easy category should be any achievements that you feel are completely manageable. Moderate is reserved for those that will require a little bit of work to achieve. Finally, difficult is for the ones that seem nearly impossible to achieve compared to the other two categories. Try to make sure that you have at least one achievement in each category. If not, take some time to come up with one, or rethink your achievements in the other categories.

4

Set a (reasonable) deadline for your achievements.

=> Setting a deadline for your achievements will place you on a path to success. Sometimes, it is hard to find the motivation to work towards these achievements. Setting a deadline will turn your prospective achievements into goals. The deadlines can be whatever you deem to be acceptable. Just try to make them relatively reasonable. For example, wanting to lose 10 pounds in a day may not be the most reasonable deadline.

5

Check back on your goals at least once a week.

=> Keeping track of the goals that you have set is vital to ensuring that you stay on track to achieve them. Keeping a list of all of your goals in a place that you frequently come in contact with (bedroom door, fridge, car) will keep them fresh in your mind. Try to remember any positive and negative progress on your goals and journal them at least once a week. Once you achieve a goal, cross it off your list.

Goal setting is a very positive and rewarding experience. The biggest reason that people avoid goal setting is the fear of failure. However, it is impossible to fail when you set goals for yourself. Sure, you may not achieve all of your goals, and that's ok! Any progress made on a goal is an achievement, and should not be taken lightly. Aiming high and missing is much better than aiming low and hitting. When you are setting goals, it is nice to have a contrast between easier goals and ones that are more difficult. Setting a difficult goal for yourself will give you a challenge and while challenges may seem annoying and unnecessary, the benefits from taking one on and succeeding can be monumental. Here are some final tips before you start on your path to change...

1
2

Goal setting can occur anytime.

=> Most people wait until the start of a new calendar year to set goals for themselves. Although the start of a new year can serve as motivation, you shouldn't feel required to wait until January to start setting goals.

Don't give up!

=> Keep working toward your goal(s), no matter what. If you need to take a break from a goal, that is perfectly acceptable. Being conscious that you are really putting forth your best effort will be vital for your success.

That's it! These tips are everything that you need to know before you start setting your own goals for yourself. So, what are you waiting for? Take out a piece of paper, get a timer ready, and make your own list. Change won't happen unless you allow it to happen.



AI and the Cloud

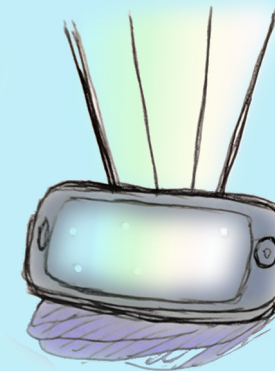
Written by C. L. B. De Soto

Designed by Benny Garden

Though it's possible our readers haven't heard much about artificial intelligence, you'd have to be living under a rock if you've never heard of 'the cloud,' let alone how rare it would be if you had never interacted with one. Both of these concepts can be so far removed from the average user's daily life. Yet some of the more modern telephones carry technology inside them that enables some of the most basic artificial intelligence. Almost all Android and Apple powered phones, by comparison, keep our settings, backups, photos, and all sorts of information synchronized to one or multiple cloud services. When I write about artificial intelligence, I have to acknowledge the major players at the moment are Intel, IBM, and Google. Likewise, when bringing up cloud service providers, Google comes up again, along with Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon Web Services.

For the moment, I'd like to address Google's intersection in both of these growing areas of technology. Inside my Pixel 3, running on the Google Fi network, there's a processor specifically designed by Google to take advantage of an instruction set called TensorFlow. On the Pixel 2 and 3, speech data is processed partially by the on-board TensorFlow chip and partially by the geographically closest Google data center, which requires a fairly robust Internet connection. TensorFlow helps process machine learning algorithms that enable speech and visual processing.

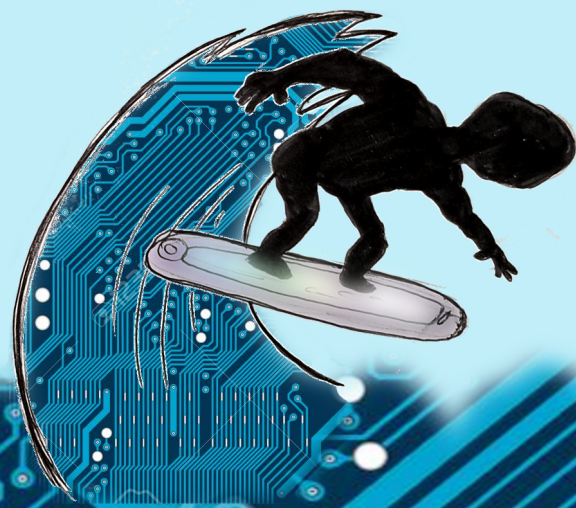
After all, isn't that what we need artificial intelligence for, so a computer can process visual and audio input into meaningful digital instructions? Speaking of visual processing, since the Pixel 2, a specialized chip known as the Pixel Visual Core has also been a part of the overall design, enabling new algorithms such as that used by Night Shot, where the processor interpolates primary color information and extrapolates beautiful color photos out of extremely low light scenes. The algorithm itself is available for free as an open source library, but the Pixel Visual Core greatly enhances the speed at which the data is able to be processed.



Pixel 4 phones have a successor to the Visual Core chip that Google calls Pixel Neural Core. This upgraded chip can process both audio and visual information. With the Pixel Neural Core, Google has concentrated more AI learning functions into the handset, relying less on the traditional high-speed connectivity with its cloud based TensorFlow data processing infrastructure. That's not to say Google Assistant will always work without an Internet connection, but it certainly helps for processing the most basic instructions in less-than-optimum coverage areas.

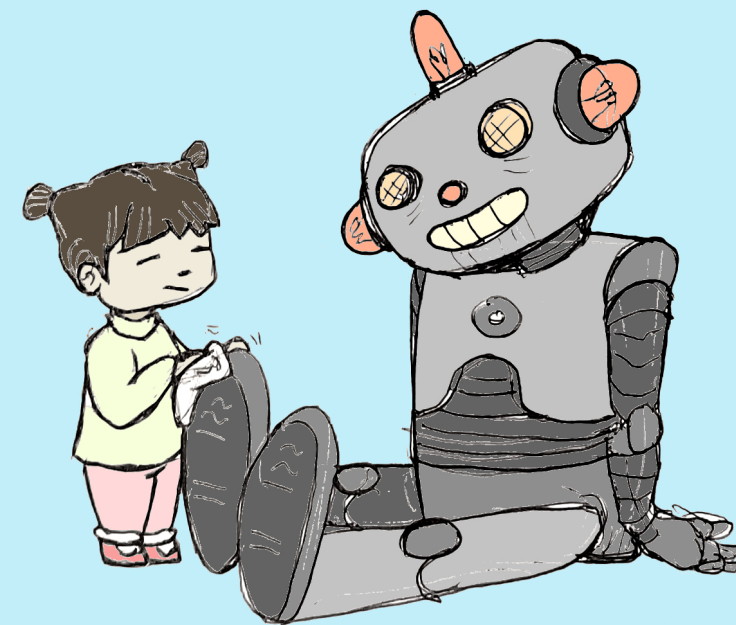
Believe it or not, AI helps decide what files stay on your phone or get offloaded onto cloud storage accounts, as any user of the Google Photos application could tell you. Regular backups of photos and videos into Google's Cloud give me some assurance that even if I break my phone, my photos and settings will be downloaded into the replacement. My phone doesn't delete the local copies without asking me. It also asks me if I'd like to delete memes that I have saved to its local storage, even though I have a huge amount of storage left.

In addition to Google Photos, I take full advantage of Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Slides on their consumer platform, all of which is cloud based. As a student at the SUNY Polytechnic Institute, I also enjoy two academically centered cloud experiences, delivered by Google and Microsoft. These cloud services let me work and study from almost any computer or mobile phone. They even go so far as to host my weekly articles and allow me to share them with my editor, who then accesses the now cloud based document to add comments. Comments synchronize, through the magic of the cloud, to all my PCs and every local copy of my article, where I address any typos and resubmit.



The cloud allows us to create, share, edit, and publish while artificial intelligence is still just trying to learn what all of it means. We force-feed our phones all sorts of data from the real world, hoping somewhere inside an algorithm or chip design, that the data will suddenly become meaningful to the system built around it. For now, we are an integral part of that system because of how poorly we've managed to coax computers into processing that data. But the better these chips get at processing audio and visual information; the less involved humans will be in the interpretation of meaningful data.

So, with that, I'm afraid I have no good news! Robots are officially on their way to stealing human jobs in fields such as security because of these AI and cloud advances. The need for humans to monitor both physical security and cyber security is just the first to be optimized, read downsized, by modern cloud and AI efficiency. The only way to stay afloat is to get ahead of the technological curve and learn how to service and maintain our future robotic overlords.



SIMON

Everyone Deserves a Great Love Story

Becky Albertalli's "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda" written in 2015, has become THE coming out story of 2019 after the movies anticipated release in 2018. The book is a great representation of high school romance and all of the ups and downs that come along with one. The storyline is enticing, the characters are unique, and the commentary can shift from downright hilarious to super deep in just one paragraph. This book is definitely worth reading, and you won't be able to put it down after the first page!

Written By: Justin Savoy
Designed By: Kyle Frenette



The book details the life of Simon Spier. Simon is a high school junior who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Simon enjoys eating Oreos, participating in his school drama club, and hanging out with his group of close-knit friends. His obsession with the snack that is feared by dentists, Oreos, hides his even bigger obsession with boys. Simon is gay and extremely closeted for that matter. However, in the book Simon has a sort of internet "boyfriend", who goes by the pen name of 'Blue', while Simon goes by the pen name of 'Jacques'. Simon (Jacques) doesn't know who Blue is, and Blue doesn't know who Simon (Jacques) is. It is a lot less confusing in the book, which is told from the point of view of Simon, followed by brief snippets of emails sent from both Simon and Blue.

One thing that really stands out in "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda" is that there is never a lack of suspense. The book is laid out perfectly in the first few paragraphs of the first page and really becomes a page-turner very early on. Part of what appeals to the reader is the empathy they feel for Simon. Whether you have a child, friend, or you yourself are a member of the LGBT community, this story is easy to relate to. The relatability of Simon's struggles makes this book perfect for people just like Simon. It can be used as a safety net for gay and lesbian children, and create a sense of awareness for these minorities.

Becky Albertalli does a fantastic job of making this book a must-read for the LGBT+ community. The book's meaningful take on LGBT+ issues is what makes this story so inspirational. It truly feels like the author invested a lot of time to make readers feel comfortable with the idea of not being straight. Simon is very easy to relate to, which is why he could very well be a role model for LGBT+ youth that are still struggling with their identity.

This book is also full of powerful and original language. One of the quotes in the book, "White shouldn't be the default any more than straight should be the default. There shouldn't even be a default", was a saving grace for the bad generalization of the LGBT+ community. Albertalli is able to write in a way that makes readers feel safe and comfortable. This sense of protection is so vital for readers who may feel lost and hopeless as they struggle with their identity.

"Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda" was a great book overall. Everyone should give this book a chance, regardless of whether or not you are a member of the LGBT+ community. Partly because this book is not just a coming-out story. It takes on several other big issues head-on, such as bullying, jealousy, and a snippet of underage drinking, but also has a humorous undertone that keeps readers invested. Overall, "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda" is an excellent and meaningful book that will identify with any reader.



THE MCAS: SYSTEM ISSUES ABOARD BOEING 737 MAX PLANES

***Written By : Linda Paredes
Designed By: Kyle Frenette***

The Boeing 737 Max is a narrow-body plane series manufactured by the Boeing Commercial Airplanes as the fourth generation of Boeing 737. It has efficient engines, aerodynamic changes, and airframe changes. It made its first flight at the end of January and became the fastest-selling airplane in Boeing history with about 5,000 orders for more than 100 customers worldwide. This year, Boeing had to suspend all Boeing 737 Max Series because of two fatal crash accident, the recent being the Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302.

In October of 2018, Lion Air Flight 670 plunged into the Java Sea after taking off from Indonesian capital, Jakarta, killing the eight crew members and 181 passengers. The cause was found by the Indonesian investigator, was that the plane kept pitching down, like a tidal wave. When the Black boxes were reviewed for flight data and cockpit conversation before impact, it described a fight for life or death by both pilots. Both pilots struggled to pitch the nose up, which was caused by the MCAS system.

MCAS (maneuvering characteristics augmentation system) is a new system in the Boeing 737 Max series that uses sensors to give flight data to pilots that automatically helps the plane level in flight without pilot response. Engineers added the system in order to help keep the plane from stalling (not enough airspeed to create lift) from the engines. The Max series had new engines, but they were three times bigger than Boeing 737 engines, so they attached the engines to the wings. This change made the engines go a bit farther up into the wings of the plane.

However, onboard the Lion Air Flight 670, MCAS was completely out of control and started giving false data to the pilots saying that the plane was stalling even though it wasn't. MCAS made the nose of the plane tip downward, which caused the crash. There was much controversy and debate over the MCAS, but Boeing reassured the public that the planes were safe to fly.

Then, in March of this year, Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 crashed near the town of Bishoftu minutes after takeoff from Nairobi, Kenya. Investigators looked at Black Boxes to investigate what had happened. They realized that the plane kept putting down the nose as well and pilots were clueless as to what was happening. However, when investigators reviewed other cases, they realized the simulation that Lion Air Flight 670 made was like the Ethiopian Airline Flight 302 crash, caused by MCAS System.



The FAA created strict regulations because of the crashes and demanded that all the Boeing Max Series are grounded until they are safe to fly. Many customers had their flights cancel due to it and Boeing lost billions of dollars. Currently, they are working to make changes to the MCAS and the FAA wants to initiate more training on the MCAS system so that pilots are prepared. Boeing has stated that they didn't want pilots to know the system because of how automated it is, and pilots don't need training for it.

Pilots spoke out against this statement, saying that the MCAS system could be hiding other things that would be useful for them to know. Boeing has said in regard to the two crash accidents, they feel deeply sorry for the victims and their families. They manufactured the Max series to compete with the Airbus A330-900 neo, but they forgot what was most important, their passengers. Passengers should feel safe to fly and not fear that their life might be in danger.

Mosquito Madness: The Six-Legged Apoclypse

Written by: Justin Savoy
Designed by: Ariana Emad



The following were from Vladimir's notes...

24 hours after Trial 296 started: The subject (cow) had a 105° fever. The cow was able to move its head and look around but was incapable of standing up.

60 hours after Trial 296 started: Small cysts started to form on the subject's underbelly. The cysts matched the size and color of the cow's nipples.

74 hours after Trial 296 started: The subject's cysts expanded in size and turned dark green in color. The cysts had spread to nearly every area of the body.

80 hours after Trial 296 started: The cysts on the subject started to explode, killing the cow. A few minutes after the explosion, mosquitoes were seen flying out of the cysts, hovering above the carcass of the subject.

After Trial 296 was successful, the mosquitoes were kept in Moscow for a few weeks. Dr. Ivanov had informed Russian President, Sachar Smirnov III, that his experiments had been a success. After witnessing the full capability of the mosquitoes, President Smirnov told Dr. Ivanov to shut down operations. Smirnov said that the mosquitoes should all be killed and that granting Ivanov permission to create such a deadly disease was a huge mistake. Fearing that his forty years of work would go to waste, Dr. Ivanov decided to release the mosquitoes. The mosquitoes spread out across the globe and started mating with normal mosquitoes which passed down their deadly genetic traits to the next generation of mosquitoes. Soon enough, the entire globe was filled with Ivanov's genetically modified mosquitoes. The cow was the first recorded statistic of the disease, but it definitely wasn't the last. The mosquitos were able to spread an illness that was capable of a global pandemic. Dr. Ivanov's Mili-Mos-Trials completely changed the genome of mosquitoes. This change was unwelcomed, catastrophic, and apocalyptic.

The sickness that was spread by Ivanov's mosquitos, which was known as the Mos-Flu, was detrimental to Earth's population. After a month, the population of Earth was reduced to 1 billion. This number decreased to 500 million a month later and reached its minimum, 250 million, three months after Dr. Ivanov released the mosquitos. However, this number slowly but surely started to increase. A small team of doctors scattered across the globe found a cure for the Mos-Flu. Deaths that were associated with the Mos-Flu ceased to exist. Humans have adapted and found solutions to problems for hundreds of years. Civil War? No problem. Mosquito Pandemic? No problem. Society has always survived and always will, no matter what. Motivation would be replaced with the creation of a new life. A life that would have a whole lot of mosquito repellent.

SPLAT... and fly swatters.



An UnFROGettable Night

I look down at my watch to check what time it is. 8:52:17. "T-minus 7 minutes and 43 seconds", I think to myself as I bend down to tie my shoes. They are Under Armor sneakers, brand new. The coloration on them is similar to a crow, and they are nearly impossible to see in the pitch dark. The rest of my attire matches my shoes perfectly. Black Under Armor jogging pants, a black Under Armor sweatshirt, and a black Under Armor undershirt. What? There is no such thing as having too much Under Armor. Anyway, my outfit has not been conveniently color-coded on accident. Black was my color of choice when I was at the cemetery, and tonight was no different.

My watch lets out a little beep, and when I look down at it a new time is displayed. 8:54:00. "T-minus 6 minutes", the thought is echoed throughout my mind as I place my left hand into the pocket of my pants. My fingers grip around a leather strap and I lift it up towards my shoulder. My flashlight is a must for these kinds of nights. Without it, I would be incapable of the swift movements needed to be efficient at this unique activity. Sure, I've been going to this cemetery for more than a decade, but I haven't quite established a mental map of every single bump, stump, or clump on the ground. If I had a dollar for every time I've fallen in this cemetery, I'd be a very rich man. However, I made up for my lack of direction with my ability to move as fast as a cheetah chasing after its prey. Running on my treadmill nearly every single day helped me to establish a sense of stamina I needed to run for long periods of time. Which was very useful when I had to chase after the leaping movements of a particular baseball-sized amphibian.

Written by Justin Savoy
Designed by Benny Garden

I still remember the very first time that I saw a frog. I was four years old, and around a fourth of the size that I am today. It was a warm summer day in mid-July, and I was running around our local graveyard while my mom planted some flowers in front of a large rectangular stone that was sticking out of the ground. All of a sudden, I spotted a small spherical green blob hopping near me. Being the curious four-year-old that I was with no regard for my safety, I reached down and grabbed the mysterious object with no hesitation. I brought the blob up to my face and started examining it, bringing it closer to my eyes when I wanted to increase the "zoom factor." The green blob had four legs, skin as slick as tanning oil, and eyes that swelled up like the balloons from my fourth birthday party. It was love at first sight. That was the first frog that I caught, but it definitely wouldn't be the last. My obsession with this amazing amphibian started 13 years ago and is still going strong today.

My watch let out another little alarm (this one sounded like a bunch of frogs croaking). I once again look down to view the current time. 8:59:00. The last full minute before my hunt begins always seems to go by so slowly. Nonetheless, it will come momentarily. You can't stop time. It is inevitable. So is the victory that I will claim tonight. I can taste it now... the celebratory banana split that I will indulge in after tonight's festivities. My mouth begins to drool, and I can feel my heart beating out of my chest as the time clicks closer and closer. I turn my flashlight on and wrap the strap around my right hand, so as to have maximum control of my limited amount of light. I take in a deep breath and just before I am about to exhale, my watch lets out another alarm. This one is much louder than the other ones, so as to overemphasize the importance of this time. 9:00:00.

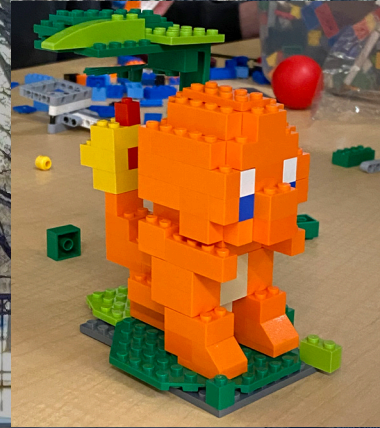
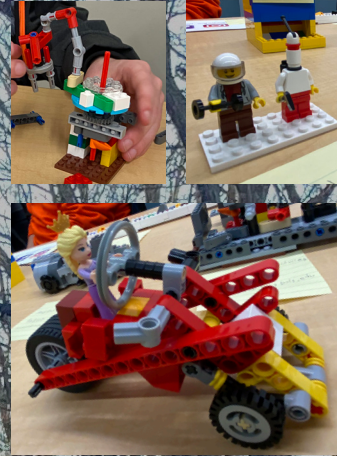
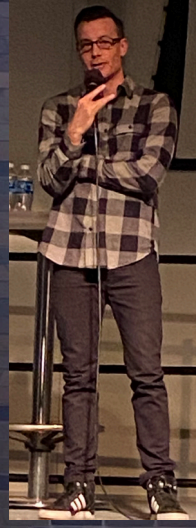
I quickly let out the breath and begin to run. I run and I run until my flashlight finds a target. I am usually able to find a frog within 5 minutes of 9:00 PM, and tonight is no different. I first saw the frog in front of a gravestone that had 'Smith' engraved on the front of it. The animal was absolutely gigantic, and it seemed as if the frog had been enlarged by some sort of radioactive material! My eyes focused on the frog and I pounced towards the gravestone to collect my trophy. Unfortunately, the frog was able to leap out of the way just in time, and my left hand ended up scraping against the tombstone. I focus my flashlight down on my left hand and see a minor cut on the back of my hand. A little blood won't stop me from catching this frog. I redirect my flashlight towards the direction the frog jumped and was quickly able to relocate it.

I start to run towards the frog, quickly navigating through the graveyard mimicking its movements. The frog was running in the direction of the woods, and I knew that I would never be able to catch it in there. I increase my speed and am able to catch up to the frog. I lower my hand and prepare to scoop the frog up, but my legs catch the edge of a tombstone and my face meets the ground. So close, yet so far. I have never failed to catch a frog during a hunt. My body remains sprawled across the ground as I think about what I could have done differently. Eventually, I push myself up off the ground and head back to my house, accepting defeat.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see something moving. I point my flashlight towards the movement and see a frog sitting right in front of me. It is a fraction of the size the other frog was, but it is a frog nonetheless! With no hesitation, I grab the frog around its slimy body before it is able to jump away. I bring the frog right in front of my face and plant a kiss on the top of its head. "I love frogs," I think to myself as I lower my hand to allow the frog to return to its normal nightly activities. I start to head towards the entrance of the graveyard satisfied with the results of tonight's hunt. There is only one thing left to do. I turn around and scream at the top of my lungs, "I am the king of catching frogs!" I leave the graveyard and the hundreds of frogs that call it home, excited to eat my banana split that is calling my name.



SCENES FROM POLY



The Story of FaZe Jarvis

Written By: Nicholas Byard

Designed By: Ariana Emad

Login Failed

You are currently banned from Fortnite

Retry

On November 3rd, 2019, seventeen-year-old competitive Fortnite player FaZe Jarvis posted a video to his YouTube channel, "Jarvis", titled: "I've Been Banned from Fortnite (I'm Sorry)." In the video, Jarvis, whose real name is Jarvis Kaye, reveals that he's been banned for life from Fortnite Battle Royale for using the cheat/hack commonly known as an "aimbot" within public matches. In layman's terms, an aimbot is a bit of software frequently used within shooter games that improves a player's aim to the extent that they cannot miss a shot, and are often capable of seemingly impossible shots. Throughout the video, Jarvis discusses his use of the cheat in public matches and in the playground mode for no other reason than producing content. He makes sure to mention that, throughout his six-month-long status as part of the famous FaZe clan, he has never used cheats of any kind during competitions. As the video goes on, Jarvis breaks into tears, saying that he'd not considered the consequences of using the software, and that, though he respects Epic Games' authority, the lifetime ban caught him by great surprise. The video, which has since amassed over 10.5 million views, took the coveted number one spot on YouTube's trending page, and garnered attention from fellow streamers, media outlets, and the YouTube community alike.

Over the course of the week since the video's release, there's been a great deal of chatter about the harshness of the ban, and whether or not it was an appropriate response on Epic's part. The internet has been split in two by Jarvis's actions. Some people, such as the popular Fortnite streamers Tyler "Ninja" Blevins, Turner "Tfue" Tenney, and Herschel Beahm (also known as "Dr.DisRespect") have all voiced their opposition to Epic's permaban on stream, suggesting that Epic shorten Jarvis's ban down to something more reasonable like six months or a year. Others, meanwhile, have countered that argument, saying that the rules which Epic have laid out for the game are clear: no hacking, modification, or additional software can be used to enhance the game for any purposes. Epic has yet to reverse its ban on Kaye, and the potential for that to happen in the future looks bleak. In the past, Epic has been adamant on its anti-hacking, anti-modding stance, though there have been some questionable instances where players who have cheated during competitive play were allowed to continue playing the game after a short ban (If you're interested to learn more, look up "Damion XXiF Cook Fortnite competitive cheating"). On November 10th, Jarvis posted a follow-up video to his YouTube channel entitled: "The Future of FaZe Jarvis," which has topped out at number seventeen on trending. This time, Jarvis has adopted a new tone for the video, one which seems more mature; more composed. In the video, Kaye gives a short recount of his experience with video games, reflects on the events which led to his ban, and discusses his plans to leave the FaZe clan mansion in Los Angeles to go back and live with his family, and take a short, much-needed reprieve from YouTube.

"These past years have been a huge learning process, having to grow up so fast and having to try and act like an adult at such a young age. Like, I know how important it is to set a good example for everyone that watches my videos, and I've just been taking a lot of time to reflect on everything. One thing I've been thinking about the most is how to move forward. I want to let you all know that you're going to make mistakes in life but the most important thing is how you learn from those mistakes and become a better person." -Jarvis Kaye

That brings us to today, November 12th, Jarvis's 18th birthday. As of now, it seems that Jarvis is going through with his break. With no end in sight for his ban from Fortnite, he'll have to shift to other content on YouTube if he has any hopes of maintaining the following that he's accrued over his time as a content creator. I feel sorry for him, really, to be so young and be thrust into the national spotlight after having his main source of wealth stripped of him...it's got to be humiliating, that's not to say that Jarvis was right or wrong in what he's done, but it seems as though taking a break from it all - from YouTube, and Fortnite - might be the way to go.

Six Days in Fallujah and the Depiction of War in Video Games

It's no secret that video gaming, like most media in its infancy, has had its fair share of controversy over the years. Whether it be the supposed glorification of violence, portrayal of religious idols, harmful and addictive microtransactions, or the hyper-sexualization of female characters, it seems that no matter what, there will always be some sort of discourse surrounding video gaming. No video game genre, though, has been the subject of so much criticism, scrutiny, and heated debate as military shooters. For over a decade, franchises such as *Call of Duty*, *Battlefield*, and *Medal of Honor* have been hammered by the media for their hyperbolic portrayal and 'romanticization' of war. While there is a larger discussion to be had about the larger-than-life, almost blockbuster-like depiction of war and violent acts, I'd like to turn the tables and look into a controversial story from the distant year of 2009 which has long since been forgotten; a story about what happens not when war is overly-dramatized or embellished, but when it is presented in its purest, most realistic form. This is the story of *Six Days in Fallujah*.



Six Days in Fallujah (screenshot shown) was supposed to be the first video game ever to be based on the Iraq War, a conflict which was highly controversial in its own right. Though the real battle had combatants from the UK, U.S., and Iraq, the game focused in on the 3rd Battalion, First Marines (3/1) who fought in the Second Battle of Fallujah in 2004, which is now considered to be the bloodiest battle of the war. The game, which began development in 2009 under studio Atomic Games, was touted as having a “meticulously recreated in-game version of Fallujah,” as well as names and likenesses based on the U.S. Marines who fought in the battle. Additionally, the game was originally pitched not as a shooter, but as a survival-horror game which put emphasis on portraying the real-life conflict as terrifying and vulnerable, just as it was for the soldiers who experienced it first-hand. In fact, it was a U.S. marine who fought in the battle who had pitched the idea for the game to Atomic Games as a sort of realistic simulation of Fallujah, which would, in theory, open the public’s eyes to the horrors and tragedies of modern warfare. Unfortunately, most people didn’t see it that way. Some saw it as insensitive, or hyper-violent. Others believed it to be in poor taste to release a game detailing the brutal events that took place less than five years prior. Interestingly, however, it wasn’t the American mainstream media which had the greatest impact on the game’s public perception, but the British war veterans who had also took part in the battle (as well as the British “Stop the War Coalition”) that cited the game as disrespectful to those who lost their lives in the Iraq War.

“Considering the enormous loss of life in the Iraq War (now estimated to be around 460,000 people), glorifying it in a video game demonstrates very poor judgement and bad taste... These horrific events should be confined to the annals of history, not trivialized and rendered for thrill-seekers to play out... It's entirely possible that Muslim families will buy the game, and for them it may prove particularly harrowing. Even worse, it could end up in the hands of a fanatical young Muslim and incite him to consider some form of retaliation or retribution.” – Reg Keys, father of Lance Corporal Thomas Keys, who passed away in the Iraq War.



Despite the developers’ honest intentions, the game was eventually shelved, its publisher having backed out, to be released at a later date. After a decade in development Hell, the game still has yet to be released. Looking back to *Six Days in Fallujah*, perhaps it was best that the game never see the light of day. But, then, who’s to say otherwise? Furthermore, given the success of games retelling the events of World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, I would ask: When can a war be made into a fully realized, playable experience? How soon is too soon?

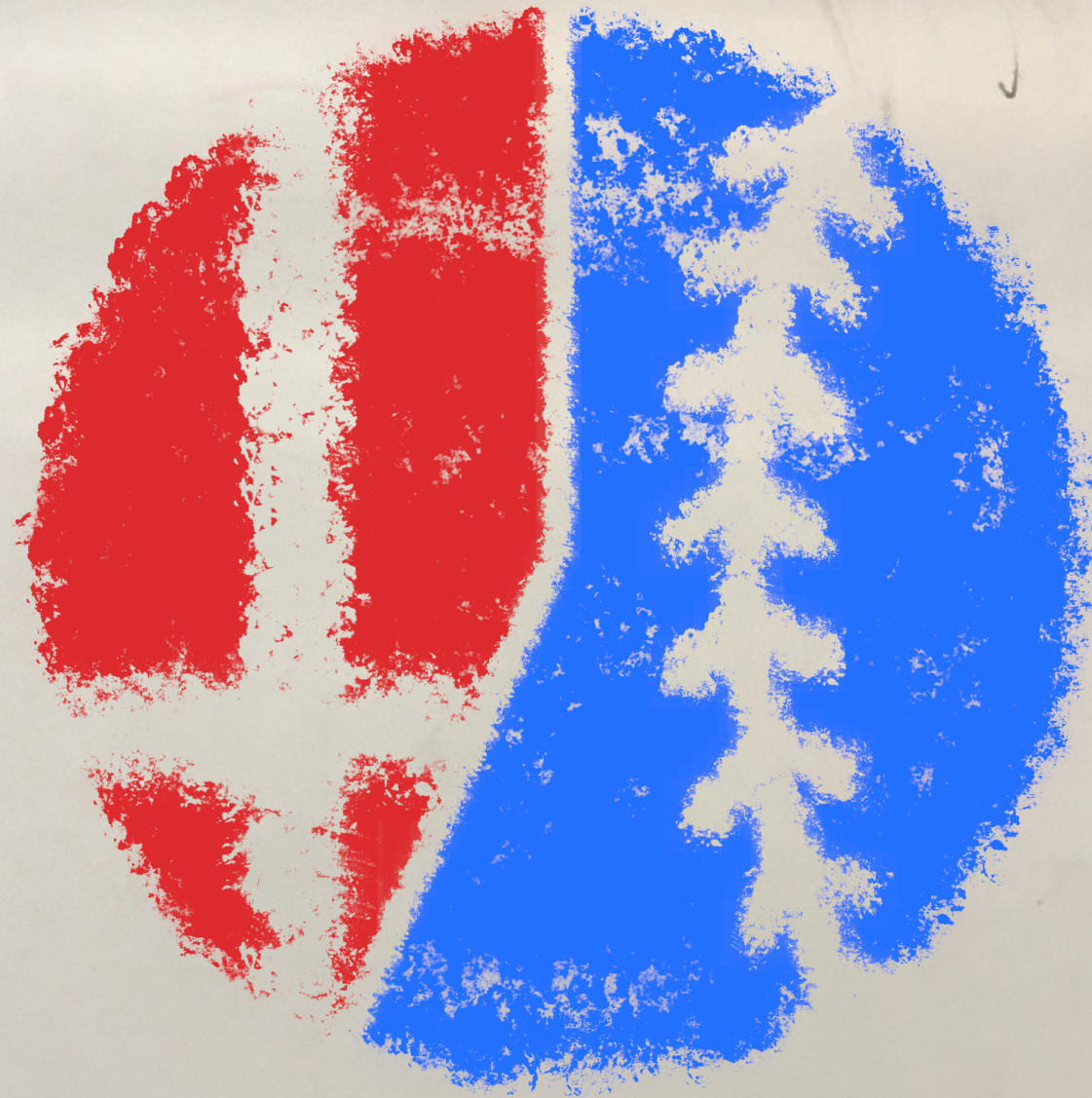
Speaking from the perspective of a military child, I am of the mindset that, if done *properly* and *respectfully*, any given battle, war, or bout can be translated to media, including video games. I must emphasize, it must be done properly and respectfully; that means staying as faithful to first-hand accounts and source material as possible, and, more importantly, taking into consideration the feelings and input of those affected by the conflict in question. I realize, though, that this is a very difficult balance to get right; one which, if not done carefully, opens up the possibility for lawsuits and public outcry. This is why, I believe, companies don’t develop games based on conflicts which have highly controversial themes, or have a large percentage of their veterans still alive. Take World War II for example, the World Wars have been romanticized to death, over and over again by books and cinema and video games, and that is because, quite simply, it has a definitive ‘good’ and ‘bad’ side. How glorious a tale it is to pit the patriotic Allies, defenders of all that is true and free, against the evil Axis powers, who gave rise to Fascism, Nazism, racism and hatred. Not to mention, unlike the modern wars in the middle east, which has tens of thousands of living veterans, only about 3% of the U.S. soldiers who fought in WWII are alive today. This means that there’s far fewer people who would disagree with the portrayal of the war in the media, and thus less chance of public scrutiny.

Six Days in Fallujah is a cautionary tale for anyone who intends to make video games in the future. Almost anything can be made into a game, but the key is to go about it at the right time and in the right way. If you want to make a game based on a tragic event which is still fresh in the public eye, consider the lives that were affected; the men who lost their lives, the wives who lost husbands, the children who lost fathers. Consider, too, the lives of those who survived: those who risked life and limb for what they believed in. What would they think?

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DESIGNED BY BOBBY ZUCH

BLIZZCON & #FREEHONGKONG

Written By: Nicholas Byard
Designed By: Ariana Emad

When it comes to digital media and content, there's a large disparity between what's available and permissible from country to country, and state to state. Some countries, such as Germany, have troubling pasts with extreme ideologies, and thus have equally troubling relations with the content that they allow within their respective territories. As such, it's not uncommon for American companies to edit their content (sometimes in quite severe ways) to fall in line with these restrictions with the hopes of infiltrating these international markets and China is no exception.

With a population of 1.386 billion people - a figure that's growing exponentially every year - it's no secret that China is a literal goldmine when it comes to demographics. If, for example, a film were to tap even a small percentage of the Chinese population, it'd be almost guaranteed to make back its budget and then some. Infiltrating this market, though, is no easy task. Being a communist country, China is notorious for having strict control over the content that its citizens are allowed to interact with, as well as for punishing any citizen who contradicts the views of the state. As one would expect, numerous companies have seemingly bent over backwards to meet these standards, ranging from the tech giant Apple, to Disney, to TikTok, and even Google, whose motto is, ironically, "Do the right thing; Don't be evil." The morality behind the sort of self-censorship that companies undergo in this process is...debatable to say the least, but it's generally been accepted that, so long as these practices were limited to corporate exposure and public relations, corporations could do what they wanted in the pursuit of growth. In recent months, though, some American companies have taken it upon themselves to censor their user-base on behalf of Chinese interests, proving that their loyalty lies not with the country within which they were founded but with that which brings it the most revenue. Activision Blizzard is one such company.



Activision Blizzard is no stranger when it comes to controversy. In 2019 alone, it's come under fire for implementing egregious microtransactions into Crash Team Racing, making a gamemode within Call of Duty: Modern Warfare exclusive to the PlayStation 4 version until October of next year, and a host of other malpractices. Most recently, and perhaps most heinous of all, Activision Blizzard has mishandled the situation involving a professional Hearthstone player. Chung Ng Wai, better known by his alias, "Blitzchung," is a Hearthstone Grandmaster and, notably, a native of Hong Kong. Wai, who has played in a vast number of competitions over the past two years of his esports career, managed to secure several thousands of dollars in winnings over the course of this year's Grandmasters Season 2 tournament. However, Wai has come into the public-eye not because of his victories in the Grandmasters, but because of an interaction he had with two broadcasters during a livestreamed post-game interview. When Blitzchung was shown on screen, it was revealed that he was wearing a gas mask and goggles, similar to those worn by the many protesters in Hong Kong. When given the chance to speak, Blitzchung lifted the mask from his face to proudly shout the words "Liberate Hong Kong! Revolution of our times!" With that, the stream promptly cut to commercial break.



(Image of Ng Wai via Blizzard Entertainment)

Normally, companies don't tend to push their political agenda on their users, especially when they are widely known competitive players, but Blizzard decided to be different. Rather than wait for the Chinese media to issue some sort of statement regarding Blitzchung's exclamation, Blizzard publicly announced that he would have his winnings revoked, and he would be banned from tournament play for an entire year. Blizzard would later go on to backtrack; awarding Blitzchung his earnings and shortening his punishment down to six months. This was too little, too late, though, as Blizzard had made it clear to the gaming community and to the rest of the world that it would stand with another country rather than its own players. The public was furious, and not just the gaming community, either, but people of all makes and occupations. Even U.S. senators were giving their two cents, from both sides of the political spectrum. For weeks, Blizzard bounced back and forth, trying to appease both the American public and the Chinese media, not truly satisfying either. It seemed as though an apology was in order, one which properly addressed Blizzard's shortcomings and reaffirmed its core values: "Think Globally" and "Every Voice Matters."

This issue needed to be addressed at a greater scale, one which paralleled/matched the scale of such a controversy. Enter BlizzCon, Blizzard's annual convention where it hosts events, contests, and announces new games for the upcoming year. For many present, though, this year's convention wasn't so much about the celebration of Blizzard's many beloved games and their respective characters, but about its response to the almost-universal backlash they received from players around the world. Sure enough, during the opening ceremony for BlizzCon 2019, the CEO of Blizzard, J. Allen Brack, took to the stage to say:

"Blizzard had the opportunity to bring the world together in a tough Hearthstone esports moment a month ago, and we did not. We moved too quickly in our decision-making, and, to make matters worse, we were too slow to talk with all of you. When I think about what I'm most unhappy about, there's really two things. The first one is, we didn't live up to the high standards that we, really, set for ourselves. And the second is, we failed in our purpose. And for that, I am sorry, and I accept accountability."

For most of the audience present, this seemed like a reasonable apology. If you examine the wording more closely, however, Blizzard's true intentions shine through: Brack didn't apologize for banning a player for fear of offending another country, but for "moving too quickly" and being "too slow" to address the community's concerns, neither of which were areas of contention. What everyone really wanted was for the massive company which has scorned its customers so frequently in the past to stand up and say, "Hey! We stand by our players and their right to free speech." But that didn't happen. And the internet is furious.

The Evolution of Video Game Controllers

Written By: Nicholas Byard
Designed By: Ariana Emad

Controllers are an essential part of playing video games. They serve as an intermediary between the player and the game. Since the conception of video games, companies have experimented with various types and form factors to best suit the games they aim to offer. Over the years there have been an incredible number of paddles, remotes, and controllers, each with their own unique assortment of dials, buttons, sticks, triggers, knobs, switches and even keypads. As is the nature of the free market, some of the better-designed controllers had their features stripped and improved upon in subsequent versions, while others were seen as poorly designed or gimmicky and thus faded into obscurity. Here's a closer look at some of the most innovative, creative, and interesting controllers in gaming history:

Tennis For Two (1958)



Contrary to popular belief, Pong wasn't the first video game ever made; that title belongs to a science experiment conducted over a decade prior called Tennis for Two. Being that this was the first ever video game, it would have the first ever video game controller. In this case, though, the term "controller" is quite generous, as it wasn't so much a "controller" as it was a large metal box with a dial, small red button, and four screws holding it together. Regardless of its crude construction, though, Tennis for Two was an important landmark for video games and deserves an honorable mention.

Atari 2600 (1977)

Easily one of the most recognizable controllers to date. The Atari 2600 controller has become an icon synonymous with classic video games. The controller featured a single bright, red button and a stiff, hexagonal joystick. The controls are so tried and true that almost every modern video game controller has some sort of variation of this combination, albeit with some changes.



Nintendo Entertainment System (1985)

Also considered to be a classic controller, the NES gamepad was rectangular and featured the now-standard directional-pad (commonly called the D-Pad), as well as two face buttons and a start and select button. Although quite simple in its design, the NES controller was relatively comfortable and versatile, capable of playing a wide variety of games.



NES Zapper (1985)

Coinciding with the North American release of the NES, the NES Zapper (also known as the "Light Gun") was a light-sensing controller shaped to resemble a pistol. When the trigger was pressed, the game being played would turn black for a frame, and the enemies and/or targets within the game would be replaced with white boxes. Using the sensor in its tip, the Zapper would then determine if the player had hit something and send a signal back to the console. While only a handful of games supported the Zapper, it was nothing short of revolutionary at the time.



SEGA Genesis (1989)

Like the NES, the Sega Genesis saw a number of console and controller revisions. The standard Genesis controller sported an eight-directional D-Pad as well as a start button. Later iterations would feature 3 additional face buttons, which made the Genesis controller ideal for fighting games like Mortal Kombat or Street Fighter.

Super Nintendo Entertainment System (1991)

Once again, Nintendo innovates on basic controller design by adding a set of bumpers and two more face buttons to the original NES' controller design, both of which have become essential parts of any decent controller.



PlayStation (1994)

The original PlayStation controller was very reminiscent of the SNES controller in its design, with some minor changes for comfort and improved control, such as elongated arms, a separated D-Pad, and two additional bumpers.



Nintendo 64 (1996)

The N64 controller has been widely considered to be one of the most awkward controllers ever released. Despite this, the N64 controller was one of the first ever to feature an analog stick, which was oddly positioned in the middle. The N64 controller was also the first to feature rumble functionality, through the use of an additional RumblePak accessory. Though it hasn't aged very well, the N64 controller was a crucial stepping stone in the controller lineage.



DualShock (1997)

The DualShock controller improved on the original PlayStation controller's design by adding rumble and two clickable analog sticks (hence, "Dual-Shock"). The rear-most bumpers were also widened to form proper triggers, which made the PlayStation ideal for playing first person shooters.



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What's With all the SPAM Lately? Spam x

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Why is this article spam? The designer reported it as spam.

Have you noticed more spam in your Inbox and Junk Mail folders lately? Luckily, my Inbox isn't plagued with unsolicited commercial emails, but if I showed you my Spam folder I might get reported to human resources for sexual harassment. I rarely check the Spam folder itself unless someone says; "I sent you an email, didn't you get it?" For now, I won't ask the expected question, "What is Spam?" I think we all know what spam is, and we have all at one email address or another gotten spam messages. Rather, I invite you to ask; "Where does all this spam come from?" and "Why do we get so much of it?"

Your email addresses are valuable, so are mine. I have a few, and I'm sure you do too. They're not worth much, cents really, but to spammers a valid email address is valuable as a destination for advertisements. When gathered together in the hundreds of thousands of emails, and made into lists of known-live addresses, the list can cost from hundreds into thousands of dollars. Spam advertisers, or spamvertisers, will pay for and then feed the target lists into a specialized command-and-control program. This special program is basically a website on the Dark Web where the list gets uploaded to, and from there the bots receive their instructions.

Bots, what bots? Ah yes! When referring to bots, they are the thousands, maybe millions of zombie computers connected to the Internet that their owners don't update. Regularly updating computers is important to keep them working right, as well as to keep them safe from vulnerabilities that are discovered almost daily. There are thousands of common vulnerabilities and exploits (CVE) when discussing Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 8.1, 10, and even Microsoft's versions of Windows Server. Just visit <https://cve.mitre.org/cgi-bin/cvekey.cgi?keyword=Windows> and browse the 7,228 results, as of the writing of this article.

Some of those CVE notices, when left unpatched by end-users, take advantage of vulnerabilities to turn unpatched computers into rogue email servers, also known as bots. Even when the computer may appear to be working normally, it's secretly sending spam out in waves and in concert with other zombified computers to avoid being detected and blacklisted by major providers like Google or Microsoft. These bots, when networked together, are collectively known as a bot-net. By distributing their spamvertisements over hundreds or thousands of bots in a bot-net, the recipient email providers are less likely to catch the messages in their spam filters. The more effective the spammers that handle the bot-net are at this tactic, the more likely their spamvertisers' emails will end up in your Inbox instead of your Junk Mail. The more effective the spammer, the more money spamvertisers pay them for their services.

One of the largest, if not the largest network of bots that has been employed as a spamming source is known as Emotet. It was first discovered as a maligned application in 2014. The bot-net's spammers were always expanding it to rent it out to more spamvertisers or even use it for their own spam campaigns, and it kept growing until the beginning of 2019. For months the Emotet was silent, until it came roaring back in September. A researcher, and self-proclaimed "botnet mercenary" named Rasheed Bhat broke the news that the bot-net was back, on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/raashidbhatt> at the end of August.

Now, some of my email addresses are publicly known, whether through website ownership records, or having given it out freely in the past. I expect spammers to easily get a hold of most of my email addresses, which is why I use spam filters. I get so much spam, because my email has been used so many times on so many websites, that all I could do is change emails and wait for the situation to grow out of control again eventually. Why we get so much spam has almost the same answer as where does all this spam come from? Money. Someone, somewhere, paid a spamvertiser, who bought your email address on a list with others', and paid a spammer to rent their bot-net, in an attempt to get you to click on something or to spend your money.

What's worse is, some people believe the emails are real and try to buy their products. In a few clicks, not only can the user's computer be infected and turned into a bot, but most of the products are scams. If they don't just steal your credit card numbers for use in financial crimes, then the products ordered are garbage. In closing, I urge you to take a look at your email's spam filters. If it's at work, ask your email administrator how they work. There are online video tutorials that can show you how to work them and tune them to your needs. As a rule of thumb to avoid getting turned into a bot, never click on links or open any attachments from sketchy senders. Beyond that, always keep your computer up-to-date and use a free antivirus program, as there are several to choose from.



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