

telemarketing channel marketing
channel marketing search engines
media direct mail B-to-B

Maximizing Your Demand Generation Investments

by Choosing the Best
Media Channels

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Essential Direct™



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Executive Summary

The types of media you select for your B-to-B demand generation campaign can have a dramatic impact on ROI. Company size, length of purchase cycle, and number of touches all affect media selection.

Events, direct mail, and email are the most frequently used media today. But because of its low cost and flexibility, with the right offer, your company Web site can be one of your most efficient lead generation tools. Using search engine marketing (SEM) can improve your Web site performance even more.

Although more expensive than some other tactics, direct mail remains a proven lead generation performer. And when combined with other communications, outbound telemarketing is a great way to improve direct mail response.

Costly trade shows are being replaced by more affordable virtual trade shows and Webinars. But for highly qualified audiences, traditional trade shows still deliver.

The best approach today is a multi-touch, multi-media campaign that addresses the target's needs at every stage of the buy-cycle.

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Introduction

When you plan a demand generation program, media selection is a key decision. Not all media are equally effective in B-to-B markets, especially when it comes to a critical revenue-driver like lead generation. So understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each media channel—and knowing how and when to apply them—is essential.

Most B-to-B sales cycles are long and complex, often involving multiple parties, all of whom need to be favorably influenced. One-off campaigns rarely succeed at lead generation. Instead, success is assured through a series of communications delivered via a variety of media channels.

Company size and the level of titles you are targeting also influence media selection. The higher your target is in the company hierarchy, the more challenging it will be to reach them. It's relatively easy to reach the CEO of a 20-person firm, but the CEO of a Fortune 500 company will have gatekeepers who filter their messages.

Success is assured through a series of communications delivered via a variety of media channels.

FACTORS AFFECTING MEDIA SELECTION

- Complexity of your product or service
- Job title of your target
- Target's level in the company hierarchy
- Company size
- Depth and breadth of media coverage of your market
- Number and sequence of touches needed to be effective
- Cost per touch
- Cost per response
- Media availability
- Campaign time horizon

Keep in mind that choosing which media you'll use is just one of the decisions you face when planning a lead generation program. Offer development, response management, and lead nurturing are also essential.

I. The Most Effective Lead Generation Media Right Now

There are many ways to reach business buyers, but only a handful have proven effective over the long haul. Thanks to years of testing and experimentation, we're able to identify the top-performing media and the contexts in which they work best.

THE MEDIA THAT YIELD THE BEST RESULTS TODAY

Effective medium for lead generation	Why it works
Your Web site, with an offer	Visitors to your site already have some interest in your product or service. The key to turning your Web site into a lead generation machine is to capture the contact information of your visitors. Once you know how to reach them, you can continue marketing to them.
Search engine marketing (SEM)	Keyword bidding and search engine optimization can help drive traffic to your Web site, where you can gather additional leads.
Outbound telemarketing	When you have well-qualified lists, the phone is an effective way to penetrate relatively small universes.
Direct mail	Due to its flexibility and the wide availability of targeted lists, direct mail is still the lead generation workhorse.
Dimensional mail	Three-dimensional mail is often effective at getting past gatekeepers, like assistants and mailrooms, and into the hands of C-level executives.
Web events and Webinars	A Web-based event that delivers rich and practical product information can attract a highly qualified audience that's willing to provide contact information.
Trade shows, if the audience is highly qualified	Although expensive, trade shows can attract highly qualified prospects in later stages of the buying cycle.

The 2007 Direct Marketing Association (DMA) study *B-to-B Direct Marketing Benchmarks* reports the percentage of marketers using key media for communicating with prospects as follows:

Medium	% of companies using medium for lead generation
Events	58.7%
Direct mail	54.1%
Email	47.7%
Web site	43.7%
Telephone	42.2%
DRTV/radio/print	26.4%
In person	11.9%

II. Best Practices: How to Get the Most Value from Each Medium

- Your Web site, with an offer
- Search engine marketing
- Outbound telemarketing
- Direct mail, including dimensional mail
- Web events and Webinars
- Trade shows, if the audience is highly qualified

YOUR WEB SITE, WITH AN OFFER

Using your Web site to generate leads is a fairly simple process. The secret lies in persuading visitors to leave their contact information so you can start an ongoing relationship.

The essential elements of a Web-based lead generation program are:

1 An offer, such as a free case study, white paper, or research report that visitors can download. If you have existing materials that can be repurposed for lead generation, great. The description of the offer should include a key benefit that's of real value to the target. For example, "Learn how data management can reduce your acquisition costs" or "Find out how to reduce your company's legal risks."

2 A prominent call-to-action. Visitors respond best if you "ask for the order" by telling them how to respond. For example, "Click here to get your free white paper now." This is not the time to be subtle. Instead, be clear and direct and make it easy to respond.

3 A registration form for capturing contact information. Typical elements to capture include:

- Name
- Title
- Company name
- Email address
- Phone number
- One to three essential qualification questions, such as role in the decision-making process, approximate purchase time frame, or purchase intention

The image shows a screenshot of the Dice website. The top section features a red banner with the Dice logo and the tagline "The leading career site for quality technology and engineering candidates". Below the banner, there is a call-to-action: "To get your FREE, no-obligation tour of our tech talent database, please enter your PIN below." A woman in a black blazer is pointing to a PIN card that says "PIN: XXXXXX". Below this, there is a form with a "SUBMIT" button and a link for users who don't have a PIN. The bottom section of the screenshot shows a registration form titled "Your Contact Information" with fields for First Name, Last Name, Title, Company, Address 1, Address 2, City, State, and ZIP Code. To the right of the form, there is a section titled "Best-in-class technology talent is at your fingertips." with statistics about Dice candidates.

Dice
The leading career site for quality technology and engineering candidates

To get your FREE, no-obligation tour of our tech talent database, please enter your PIN below.

Please enter your PIN below and click SUBMIT.
You'll find your PIN above your address on the Dice letter you received, as indicated on the picture below.

PIN: XXXXXX
PIN: XXXXXX
First Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip
PIN: XXXXXX

SubMIT
If you don't have a PIN, click here.

DICE—YOUR SINGLE SOURCE FOR TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING PROFESSIONALS.

Tell us about your ideal candidate, and we'll give you a FREE, no obligation tour of our tech talent database—complete with search results.

Your Contact Information
* Fields are required.

First Name: * Virginia
Last Name: * Saunders
Title: * Programmer
Company: * The Kern Organization
Address 1: * 20955 Warner Center Ln
Address 2:
City: * Woodland Hills
State: * CA
ZIP Code: * 91367-4651

Best-in-class technology talent is at your fingertips.
Talented IT and engineering professionals are hard to find. Dice makes it easy:

- 71% of our candidates have more than five years of experience in their field. 47% have more than 10 years.
- The average Dice candidate earns more than \$74,600 a year.
- 73% have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- More than 70% of candidates are employed. Dice provides access to harder-to-find, passive candidates.

Keep in mind that the more questions you ask, the more people you'll lose. To maximize response, consider asking for a name and email address only. Once you begin a relationship, you'll be able to ask additional questions later on.

Make the lead generation offer as prominent on your Web site as you can without undermining your brand image. If you have materials you could use to create different offers, vary the offer within the site according to page content. Offer readers what's relevant to their interests.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)

There are two types of SEM, both of which are highly relevant to lead generation:

- 1 **Optimizing your site** so it receives higher search engine rankings
- 2 **Advertising on a pay-per-click basis** by purchasing certain keywords that your target may be searching for

Search engine optimization (SEO)

SEO is about fine-tuning your Web site to increase its search engine rankings, which in turn will boost your Web site traffic. It's a fairly straightforward process that you can do yourself or hire an agency to do. Once it's done, review your site quarterly to make sure it's still fresh and correct.

Seven steps to SEO success:

- 1 **Index your site** by creating an HTML and an XML site map and submitting them to the most popular search engines.
- 2 **Identify the keywords that people are likely to use** when searching for products and services like yours. First, put yourself in your customers' shoes and brainstorm the words they probably would search for. Then, use a free keyword-suggestion tool like Wordtracker or Google AdWords to find the most-used keywords in your category.
- 3 **Revise your Web copy to include these keywords** as often as possible without impacting the clarity, tone, or readability of your copy.
- 4 **Use the keywords to create titles** for each page, heading tags, meta tags, and tags for any images, including your logo. The page title is the copy that appears at the very top bar on a browser window and is the first thing that search engines look for. It's also what appears when someone bookmarks the page.
- 5 **Make sure that your home page links to all the important pages on your site** and that all the links work properly. If your navigation bar is in JavaScript, add text links at the bottom of the page.
- 6 **Use Google Analytics** to find out where your visitors are coming from, where they're going on your site, and how long they're staying. You can use this information to fine-tune your site for even better results.
- 7 **Link your site to high-traffic sites** to instantly improve your own ranking.

SEO is about fine-tuning your Web site to increase its search engine rankings, which in turn will boost your Web site traffic.

Search engine advertising

The other side of search engine marketing is placing paid ads that appear when users search for terms related to your products or services. Most search engine advertising today is sold on a pay-per-click basis, meaning that you bid on certain keywords and only pay when someone clicks on your ad.

The market leader—with 65% of search engine advertising—is Google AdWords, so you should begin there. But also test industry-vertical search engines, like GlobalSpec (for engineers) and ThomasNet (for industrial buyers).

Five steps to search engine advertising success:

- 1 Write a compelling search engine ad.** This is a creative challenge because you only have about 95 characters of ad copy to play with. Google AdWords allows 25 characters in the title and 35 characters in each of your two descriptive lines. Take advantage of the following copywriting best practices:
 - a. Use as many keywords as possible and pare your copy down to the essentials.
 - b. Tailor your copy to the searcher's query. If the search is for "cheap servers," for example, stress your low prices. On the other hand, if they are looking for "fast servers," stress your quality and performance.
 - c. Make the URL work harder by adding keywords as an extender. For example: www.yourcompany.com/savingsoffer.
- 2 Go for quality over quantity.** Since you are paying for each click, your ROI depends on attracting actual potential buyers. Try self-qualifying offers like free information or a free trial.
- 3 Make a strong call-to-action,** such as "Call now for a quote" or "Find out how to save."
- 4 Manage your ad program aggressively,** analyzing results daily and testing keywords, copy, and offers frequently.
- 5 Correlate your ad copy to your landing page.** When a prospect clicks through, it's the landing page where you will continue the job of persuasion and closing. Make sure the two contact points provide continuity.

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OUTBOUND TELEMARKETING

Business marketers spend more on the telephone as a communications channel than on any other medium. The beauty of the telephone is that it's quick to deploy, personal, and cost-effective. For lead generation, the phone is most effective when it's used as part of an integrated, multi-touch communications stream.

Here are some pointers on using the telephone to generate leads:

- Calls that are follow-ups to previous contacts are more meaningful—and welcome—than cold calls.
- Link in to the marketing database. With a live link, phone reps can take advantage of useful background information about prospects and update the database record with information gathered via phone.
- Outbound contact rates for business calls generally are half of those for consumer telemarketing, since business prospects often are screened by gatekeepers and voice mail. Instead of leaving voice mail or talking to an assistant, wait until the actual prospect is on the phone to present your offer.
- Use the very best phone reps you can afford. The telephone is a highly personal medium. If you are represented by someone with poor grammar, a bad attitude, or an incomprehensible accent, your business reputation will suffer.
- Use one of many industry-specific outbound telemarketing firms. Many are staffed with retired professionals who have solid industry knowledge, plus the skills and presence to conduct high-quality conversations with decision-makers.

DIRECT MAIL

Addressable, personal, intrusive, flexible—direct mail has been the lead generation workhorse for decades. According to the DMA, B-to-B direct mail investment grew 8.2% to \$13.2 billion between 2002 and 2007.

Business marketers generally use letter packages and, occasionally, self-mailers or postcards. If you are planning to mail in an envelope, resist the temptation to combine elements within the package. In a misguided attempt to save money, business mailers sometimes make the mistake of collapsing the letter and response device into the brochure. The result is nothing more than a self-mailer in an envelope, which is often wasteful and ineffective.

If you're looking for ways to save money within an envelope, the letter is the must-keep element. As long as it contains a clear call-to-action and several response paths, a well-written letter is often all it takes to get the job done. Letters are particularly effective when they deliver a hard offer, such as asking for an appointment or paving the way for a phone follow-up.

When writing a letter, personalization is the best trick in the direct mail tool kit. The incremental cost of laser personalization is negligible, and new technologies are making it possible to really tailor your communications to the reader. Variable data printing (VDP) lets you customize copy, images, charts, graphs—virtually everything on the page—in four colors.

SUCCESSFULLY USING THE TELEPHONE

A business call should be treated as a conversation, not a sales pitch.

Have the caller state his or her name, title, company name, and reason for the call.

Follow the established formula: gain attention, establish credibility, qualify the prospect, then move to the offer and call-to-action.

Far more important than the script itself are the research and preparation that should precede each call. Encourage your reps to find out everything they can about the prospect and his or her needs in advance. Visit the prospect's Web site, check the financial and trade press for articles about them, and review any internal information on the prospect.

If you need to leave a voice mail, create a message around a critical business issue that truly captures a prospect's attention. Here are some best-practice voice mail tips:

Keep the message under 45 seconds.

Mention an industry pain point your prospect is likely to have.

Describe a solution to that issue that your company provides and offer additional resources.

Mention the prospect's name and your callback number at the beginning and end of the message.

Direct mail formats

Direct mail is the go-to medium for lead generation. With over 18,500 B-to-B lists available for rent—plus comprehensive compiled files—most prospective business buyers can be reached through the mail, even for obscure products or highly targeted niche audiences.

One reason for direct mail's staying power is its vast flexibility. Direct mail can be short or long, plain or visually exciting, simple or complex. Consider some of the most productive direct mail formats in use today:

- **Flat mail.** Business mailers generally create packages that arrive in an envelope, whether it is a standard #10 business envelope or a 6" x 9" mailer. The standard elements of a traditional direct mail package (outer envelope, letter, brochure, reply form, and business reply envelope) work solidly for lead generation.
- **Self-mailers.** Self-mailers are widely used to promote seminars and trade shows. The main advantage of self-mailers is cost, plus the likelihood that they will be passed along from in-box to in-box within an office. However, for most lead generation programs, letter packages outperform self-mailers. The secret is knowing how to produce letter kits cost-effectively.
- **Postcards.** Marketers like postcards because of their low cost. Recipients like them because they are a quick read. Double postcards with detachable business reply cards work well for information requests or seminar registration. Oversized postcards are often used to introduce new products or events when not a lot of detail is necessary.
- **Dimensional mail.** Often oversized and cleverly designed, these packages typically are very expensive. When you need to cut through the clutter and get past the desk of a gatekeeper and into the hands of a decision-maker, they can be worth the added expense. Sometimes an expensive premium is enclosed. Sometimes the premium is delivered at a follow-up sales call.

Direct mail is the go-to medium for lead generation.

WEB EVENTS AND WEBINARS

Thanks to their low cost, Web-based events have experienced rapid growth as a lead generation tool. Business marketers are using Webinars to demonstrate products, communicate with partners, brief analysts, and even substitute for trade shows.

Like conventional seminars, Webinars are most effective relatively late in the selling process, when you already are in contact with prospective buyers and want to communicate more detailed product information to move them along the buying cycle.

Webinar technology has evolved to be very flexible, giving you the ability to:

- Present slides
- Draw live on whiteboards
- Invite attendees to vote in real-time surveys
- Take questions from the audience, either publicly or privately
- Allow attendees to correspond with one another using text chat while the speaker is presenting

Webinars are most effective relatively late in the selling process.

Webinar technology has evolved to be very flexible, with plenty of useful features.

Web-based events must be managed carefully. Presenting a lot of rich information in a disembodied environment can get very boring, very quickly. Here are some guidelines for creating a successful Webinar:

- **Keep the customer experience top-of-mind.** No one likes to listen to a presenter drone on and on, either live or online. Don't let your presenters read their speeches. Put another person in the room so the presenter can speak to them instead of to a microphone or computer. It will sound much more natural and engaging to listeners.
- **Use concurrent conference calling for the audio.** Voice over IP, or voice delivered live online, is still a bit risky. There's nothing worse than slides that are out of sync with the presenter's voice.
- **Be sure your content is compelling and relevant.** Recast your message into benefits for the listener. Talk more about the listener and his or her challenges than your company and its solutions.
- **Pay attention to your audience.** If they provide feedback via live chat, make sure the presenter responds to comments like "slow down" or "speak up."
- **Add variety.** Use multiple presenters to keep listeners engaged and break their sessions into manageable bits.
- **Test the speakers' phone equipment in advance.** Headsets are preferred, but make sure the sound is clear and the fit is comfortable. Avoid speakerphones.
- **Build in as much interactivity as you can.** Use polling questions. Encourage listeners to type their ideas into a text chat box. Give prizes for the best answers.
- **Record the event for later viewing.** This will broaden your audience and cut your cost per contact.
- **Follow the rules of direct marketing to drive attendance.** Offer an incentive, like a white paper or a book. Follow up with confirmation emails before the session and thank-you emails afterward.
- **Conduct a poll at the end of the Webinar to further qualify attendees.** Ask for their reactions to the products or ideas discussed. Ask them questions about their intent to buy, their authority to buy, and their likely time frame. And don't forget to ask whether they'd like to speak with a sales rep.

Talk more about the listener and his or her challenges than your company and its solutions.

Maximize attendance by offering an incentive, like a white paper or a book.

TRADE SHOWS, IF THE AUDIENCE IS HIGHLY QUALIFIED

Exhibiting at trade shows and conferences is a time-honored way to get in front of prospects in a focused, personal fashion. But exhibiting has the highest cost per contact of all B-to-B lead generation media. To avoid overspending, make sure you're selecting events that attract solid prospects for your products or services.

To generate the most quality leads at a trade show, follow these steps:

- **Keep in mind that trade shows are the tip of a much larger iceberg.** Some companies think that if they pull together a booth and show up at the trade show, they are all set. But the show should be just one step of an integrated marketing campaign.
- **Do your own promotions.** Don't rely on show management to drive business opportunities to your booth. An investment in your own pre-show communications is the best money you'll ever spend. Postcard-format direct mail is a proven approach to drive booth traffic. For best results, include current customers and inquirers in your pre-show communications, too.
- **Design your booth and signage to give attendees a reason to stop at your booth.** Passersby will give you only a few seconds to get your message across. Consider having a sweepstakes or drawing to drive traffic to your booth.
- **Train your booth staff** in ways to engage—and disengage—in a series of conversations.
- **Insert one or two qualification questions into your inquiry-gathering process** by attaching a short form to the prospect's business card or using an electronic swipe tool provided by show organizers.
- **Put in place a process to qualify the leads**—or have them contacted by sales—immediately on return from the show.

Exhibiting at trade shows and conferences is a time-honored way to get in front of prospects in a focused, personal fashion.

Consider having a sweepstakes or drawing to drive traffic to your booth.

III. Best Practices for Multi-Touch, Multi-Channel Lead Generation

Business marketers seek to leverage the power of various media channels working together. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, as they say.

MULTIPLE MEDIA TOUCHES BLEND WELL TOGETHER

Here are some effective ways to combine different channels of communications:

- **Telephone follow-up to direct mail.** This tried-and-true approach combines the deep penetration of the telephone with the persuasive power of the mail. Together, they can build on each other to deliver a lower cost per action than each element could deliver individually. Just make sure the follow-up call moves the prospect along the buying process and doesn't just confirm that the mail arrived.
- **Direct mail follow-up to phone call.** Some business marketers reverse the process by telephoning first and following up with mail later. This approach works well when asking for a specific action, like attendance at a seminar. Calling is also a good way to qualify inquirers from trade shows, where many people may stop by your booth but only a few will ever become buyers. Rather than investing further in the inquirer by sending an expensive fulfillment package, a phone call can be used to screen out the unqualified prospects.
- **Postcards as support to other media.** Some marketers find that varying the mail format is helpful. Begin with a series of postcards, then follow up with a letter and a phone call or email.
- **Print ads mailed as reprints.** Make your trade advertising work even harder by redeploying it as part of an ongoing program for keeping in touch. Accompanied by a letter saying "In case you missed our recent ad in such-and-such magazine ...", this technique can provide a good excuse to contact your customer base directly.
- **Corporate communications as "air cover."** Mass media awareness campaigns in channels like television and print provide excellent support for a lead generation program. If you can time your campaigns to coincide with—or follow shortly after—a corporate branding campaign, your response rates will be stronger than usual.

Rather than investing further in the inquirer by sending an expensive fulfillment package, a phone call can be used to screen out the unqualified prospects.

If you can time your campaigns to coincide with—or follow shortly after—a corporate branding campaign, your response rates will be stronger than usual.

IV. Media to Avoid

There are many media channels that don't deliver the highest returns on your lead generation investment, despite their apparent popularity. Use with caution:

Less effective medium for lead generation	Insight about the channel
Print advertising	Most print advertising today is done for awareness purposes, so it does not generate leads effectively. However, if you use direct response techniques, including a strong offer and call-to-action, print advertising can be effective in lead generation, especially if accompanied by a blown-in business reply card.
Banner advertising	Banner ads, too, generally are more effective for branding than for lead generation. It's often difficult to find enough targeted media to generate the volume needed to sustain an ongoing lead generation effort.
Rental email	Due to the wide use of spam filters, few companies are finding rented email lists effective for lead generation. While the DMA reported that B-to-B spending on email grew 27.1% in the past 5 years, that growth was driven by current-customer marketing, not prospecting.
Bingo cards	Also known as readers' service cards, bingo cards invite readers to circle numbers placed on print ads in a trade publication and then send their names to the advertisers. These names tend to arrive so far after the original interactions that they are essentially worthless.
Broadcast advertising	Broadcast advertising can work for some product categories, like office supplies, but the costs are so high that it's a risky choice for most companies.

DM advertising expenditures by medium and market (billions of dollars):

	2012 (projected)	Compound Annual Growth	
		2002-07	2007-12
Direct Mail (non-catalog)	\$44.5	7.0%	5.2%
Consumer	\$27.8	6.3%	5.6%
Business-to-Business	\$16.7	8.2%	4.7%
Direct Mail (catalog)	\$27.2	5.7%	5.5%
Consumer	\$16.8	5.3%	5.7%
Business-to-Business	\$10.4	6.3%	5.3%
Telephone Marketing	\$52.1	0.4%	2.5%
Consumer	\$20.4	-0.2%	2.4%
Business-to-Business	\$31.7	0.8%	2.5%
Internet Marketing (non-email)	\$39.7	27.2%	15.6%
Consumer	\$18.0	27.3%	16.2%
Business-to-Business	\$21.7	27.1%	15.1%
Commercial Email	\$1.2	14.5%	20.2%
Consumer	\$0.5	14.6%	20.8%
Business-to-Business	\$0.6	14.5%	19.6%

Source: DMA, *The Power of Direct Marketing*, 2007-2008 edition.

V. Checklist for Successful Lead Generation Planning

- What is the product category's momentum?
How motivated is your target audience to find a solution like yours to the problem they are facing?
- Who exactly is your target audience?
Who is the economic buyer, technical buyer, and user buyer?
What are their worries, needs, and desires?
What is their age, income, educational level, and gender?
- Where is your target audience going for answers?
Which trade publications are they reading?
Where are they searching online?
Which events are they attending?
- How long is your sales cycle?
- How accurately can a given media channel reach your target audience?
What is the waste associated with a given channel?
- What is the cost per contact or cost per thousand for each channel?
- What is the anticipated response rate?
Given the cost per touch, will the cost per inquiry be acceptable, based on your average selling price?
- Do you have a unique, exclusive offer that will generate inquiries within a given channel?
- Does your sales team need help busting open doors to get appointments?
- What sequence of touches will help you get the attention and response you desire?
- How does your message relate to the media channel you are selecting?

About The Kern Organization

Over the past 20 years, The Kern Organization has developed unique expertise in helping B-to-B marketers optimize their go-to-market operations. TKO brings to its clients the experience of working with more than 50 leading B-to-B marketing companies, developing thousands of campaigns and generating millions of qualified sales leads. TKO provides evaluation, consultation, design and implementation services for all aspects of integrated demand generation and lead management programs using its exclusive B-to-B High-Tech Lead Farm™ approach.

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