Waiting for the Organiser...

The Webinar Will Begin Shortly
Doing business in China and the importance of trade secrets

Valentin de le Court

01st of February 2019
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Edouard Leonet
China IPR SME Helpdesk
Project Executive
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Valentin de le Court is a Belgian qualified lawyer with close to fifteen years of experience in the intellectual property field, including four years of on the ground practice in China. His area of expertise covers contentious and non-contentious IP matters relating to patents and trademarks, trade secrets protection and management, with a strong focus on China related IP strategies and technology transfer. Over the past years Valentin has assisted European MNCs and SMEs active in a wide range of sectors (semiconductors, automotive, mobile gaming, oil & gas, digital communication, F&B, fashion, medical device and design) with their China related IP issues. Today he co-heads the IP/IT team and leads the China IP Desk at DALDEWOLF, a Belgian business law firm. Valentin is fluent in French, Dutch and English.
TRADE SECRETS PROTECTION IN CHINA
(on the importance of keeping your secrets... secret)
PART I – TRADE SECRETS, THE CONTEXT

PART II – TRADE SECRETS PROTECTION IN CHINA

PART III – ENFORCING TRADE SECRETS IN CHINA REMAINS CHALLENGING

PART IV – IMPLEMENTING REASONABLE STEPS: CASE STUDY #1

PART V – THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG CONTRACTS TO PROTECT YOUR TRADE SECRETS: CASE STUDY #2
TRADE SECRETS & CHINA, A HOT TOPIC?

Department of Justice
Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 28, 2019

Chinese Telecommunications Device Manufacturer and its U.S. Affiliate Indicted for Theft of Trade Secrets, Wire Fraud, and Obstruction Of Justice

Huawei Corporate Entities Conspired to Steal Trade Secret Technology and Offered Bonus to Workers who Stole Confidential Information from Companies Around the World

Chinese man Jizhong Chen ‘stole Apple’s future-car secrets for company in China’

- Jizhong Chen was reportedly seen by a fellow Apple employee taking photographs inside a secure workspace on January 11
- Chen said the pictures were to support applications within the company, but Apple says he was seeking employment with a Chinese rival

Bloomberg
Updated: Thursday, 31 Jan, 2019 10:57am
PART I – TRADE SECRETS, THE CONTEXT
(1.) THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF INTANGIBLE ASSETS IN TODAY’S ECONOMY

“More than 80% of your business’ value”
(2.) TWO WAYS TO PROTECT THE RESULTS OF YOUR INNOVATION

1. Intellectual Property Rights (‘IP’)
   ➢ Exclusive right granted

2. Trade secrets (‘TS’)
   ➢ Protection based on the
     ▪ nature of the information
     ▪ the way the information is handled by the holder
WHAT IS A PATENT?

➢ A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention
  ➢ “Invention” = a technical solution to a technical problem
  ➢ “exclusive right” = a right to exclude others from making, using, offering for sale or selling the invention without the patentee’s authorization

➢ Invention must be new, inventive, applicable industrially

➢ A patent is PUBLIC

Uber patents VR systems for self-driving cars so passengers don't get bored during their ride

- Uber has submitted two patent applications that detail VR technology
- The technology could be used to entertain passengers in self-driving cars
- Uber is among a growing number of tech firms racing to perfect self-driving cars
- The VR technology could induce motion sickness or further isolate passengers

By MAGGIE O’NEILL FOR DAILYMAIL.COM
A virtual reality system is disclosed that provides autonomous vehicle (AV) sensor data to applications such as games and augmented reality overlays to enhance experiences for riders in the autonomous vehicle. Virtual reality headsets offer users unique and interesting experiences, but when used in a changing environment such as a moving vehicle, external stimuli can impair the virtual reality experience. AV sensors can predict these stimuli so that applications can take measures to reduce their impacts on virtual reality experiences. In addition, sensors can include cameras that send live video feeds to virtual reality devices to render improved views of the environment around the AV and of landmarks in a city. Furthermore, virtual reality devices can take advantage of the AV’s computing resources in order to offer better performance and more features to applications.
WHAT IS A TRADE SECRET?

- Confidential information (+ other conditions)

- Can cover a wide variety of information:
  - Technical *(Unpatented inventions, Technical drawings, Manufacturing processes, Know-how,...)*
  - Commercial and financial *(Consumers’ profiles, clients list, Costs/price data,...)*

- Factual protection *(no exclusive right)*
(3.) COMPLEMENTARY ROLE of trade secrets and IP to protect innovations

➢ Innovative EU firms use both patents and trade secrets

➢ Trade secrets → more widely used in the EU than patents for protecting innovations
   ❖ by most types of companies
   ❖ in most economic sectors
   ❖ in all EU member states

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER TO CHINA

➢ Technology = patents + trade secrets (COMPLEMENTARITY)
  ✓ Importance of collateral know-how + undisclosed information
  ✓ Value for your CN partner

➢ EU SME’s often focus on patenting and developing an IP portfolio in CHINA
  ✓ Trade secrets portfolio is neglected
  ✓ No active trade secrets management and protection strategy
  ✓ Risks + reluctance to transfer tech to China
(4.). TRADE SECRETS THEFTS ARE ON THE RISE

Increased flow of information

- Internet
- Open innovation
- Globalization of supply chains
- Mobility of workers (high employee turnover in China)
The flow of information is on the rise:

- Internet
- Open innovation
- Globalization of supply chains
- Mobility of workers

**TRADE SECRETS THEFT ARE ON THE RISE**

Source: EUCCC Business Confidence Survey in China 2017

Please indicate how your company perceives the following challenges to impact future business in Mainland China.¹)

N=561

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Change (2015-16)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese economic slowdown</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>-31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising labour costs</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent attraction and retention</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous rules and regulations</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market access barriers and investment restrictions</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary enforcement of regulations</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>+17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global economic slowdown</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition from Chinese privately-owned enterprises</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient and qualified talent</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet speed and accessibility</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing against non-compliant competitors</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMB volatility</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹) Significance level: Not applicable, Insignificant, Neutral, Significant

Macroeconomic Risk | Regulatory Risk | Business Risk | Other Risk

- CHINA IPR
- SME HELPDESK
Majority of trade secrets theft by **people close to the business**

- By (ex)-**employees** & partners

- **USA**: “According to an analysis of federal court cases filed over a 58-year period, **85 percent of trade secret theft was committed by employees or business partners**”

Chinese firm denies involvement in alleged theft of Apple self-driving car tech by its new employee

Former Apple employee was arrested at a California airport on Saturday for allegedly stealing secrets as he left to start job at Xiaopeng Motors

PUBLISHED: Wednesday, 11 July, 2018, 9:54am
UPDATED: Wednesday, 11 July, 2018, 11:07pm

Inside a Heist of American Chip Designs, as China Bids for Tech Power

By Paul Mozur

June 22, 2018

JINJIANG, China — With a dragnet closing in, engineers at a Taiwanese chip maker holding American secrets did their best to conceal a daring case of corporate espionage.


GE engineer tied to China charged with theft of company secrets

FBI says technology stolen for use in foreign commerce

ARIANA KIM, Nikkei staff writer
August 03, 2018 08:58 JST


China's Sinovel Convicted in U.S. of Stealing Trade Secrets

By Janan Hanna, Christie Smythe, and Chris Martin

24 janvier 2018 20:16 CET Updated on 24 janvier 2018 22:54 CET


Senior Chinese official charged with stealing US trade secrets

- Yanjun Xu indicted in Cincinnati after extradition from Belgium
- Xu accused of targeting aerospace firm GE Aviation

(5.) HOW TO PROTECT YOUR TRADE SECRETS?

Trade secrets protection requires:

(1.) An appropriate **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

(2.) An **INTERNAL POLICY** for the management and protection of trade secrets
5.1. GLOBAL AWARENESS: NEED TO REINFORCE THE PROTECTION OF TRADE SECRETS

USA 2016
Defend Trade Secret Act

CHINA 2017
Anti-unfair competition law revised (effective since 1 Jan. 2018)

UE 2016
Trade Secrets Directive 2016/943

BE 2018
BE law on Trade Secrets

IMPROVED LEGAL FRAMEWORK
5.2. INTERNAL TRADE SECRETS MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION POLICY

➢ Most EU businesses
  ✓ favor TS protection over other IP rights
  ✓ But lack a clear internal TS management and protection policy

➢ Questions to you: does your company
  ✓ perform trade secrets and IP audit?
  ✓ have a trade secrets inventory?
  ✓ actively manages access to its trade secrets?
  ✓ implement a TS awareness policy?
  ✓ involves the HR in the trade secrets protection strategy?
  ✓ monitor and enforce its trade secrets?

Pro-active TS management is the only way for effective protection
HAVE A TRADE SECRET ACTION PLAN

In Europe and in China

- Action 1 - AUDIT
- Action 2 - INVENTORY
- Action 3 - IMPROVE
- Action 4 - EDUCATE
- Action 5 - MONITOR AND REACT
PART II – TRADE SECRETS PROTECTION IN CHINA
I. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK
Main Chinese and EU legal framework

1. CHINA
   - Anti-Unfair Competition Law (AUCL – revised in 2017) = centerpiece
   - Set of regulations: PRC contract law (negotiations/tech licences), Company law, labour law, labour contract law, criminal law
   - SPC judicial interpretation of the AUCL (2007)

2. EUROPEAN UNION
   - DIRECTIVE (EU) 2016/943 on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure
   - To be transposed into NATIONAL LAWS by June 9, 2018
Centerpiece of Chinese trade secrets legislation: the AUCL

➢ Art.9 AUCL (revised in 2017)

A business operator shall not engage in any of the following infringements of commercial secrets:
1. obtaining an obligee's commercial secrets by theft, bribery, intimidation or other improper means;
2. disclosing, using, or allowing others to use an obligee's commercial secrets obtained by the means mentioned in the preceding paragraph; or
3. disclosing, using or allowing others to use an obligee's commercial secrets in violation of an agreement or the obligee's requirements on keeping such commercial secrets confidential.

Where a third party knows or should know of the fact that an employee or former employee of the right owner of commercial secrets or any other entity or individual conducts any of the illegal acts specified in the preceding paragraph, but still accepts, publishes, uses or allows any other to use such secrets, such practice shall be deemed as infringement of commercial secrets.

For the purpose of this Law, commercial secrets refer to any technical information or operational information which is not known to the public and has commercial value, and for which its obligee has adopted measures to ensure its confidentiality.

➢ SPC judicial interpretation of the AUCL (2007)
II. TRADE SECRETS PROTECTION REQUIRES TRADE SECRETS IDENTIFICATION
(1.) WHAT IS A ‘TRADE SECRET’?

1. UNDER CHINESE LAW? art.9 AUCL

“any technical information or operational information which is not known to the public and has commercial value, and for which the obligee has adopted measures to ensure its confidentiality”

2. UNDER EU LAW? Art.2(1) EU Directive 2016/943

“information which meets all of the following requirements: (a) it is secret in the sense that it is not, as a body or in the precise configuration and assembly of its components, generally known among or readily accessible to persons within the circles that normally deal with the kind of information in question; (b) it has commercial value because it is secret; (c) it has been subject to reasonable steps under the circumstances, by the person lawfully in control of the information, to keep it secret”
UNDER BOTH CN AND EU LAW

1. INFORMATION - Know-how, business and technical information

2. SECRET
➢ “not known to the public” - art.9 CN AUCL
➢ “secret” - art.2 EU TS Directive

3. COMMERCIAL VALUE because it is secret
➢ “has commercial value” - art.9 CN AUCL
➢ “has commercial value” - art.2 EU TS Directive

4. REASONABLE STEPS to keep it secret
➢ “has adopted measures to ensure its confidentiality”, Art.9 CN AUCL
➢ “reasonable steps (...) to keep it secret” - art.2 EU TS Directive
Requirement #1: Know-how, business information and technical INFORMATION

➢ “any technical information or operational information”, Art.9 CN AUCL
➢ A broad notion

✓ Algorithms,
✓ Analytical data,
✓ Data sets,
✓ Screen designs prototypes,
✓ Source code,
✓ Software prototypes,
✓ Software development methodologies
✓ Sales methods,
✓ Consumers’ profiles,
✓ Supplier info
✓ Costs/price data
✓ M&A projects,
✓ Targeted strategic partnerships
✓ Advertising strategies,
✓ Know-how,
✓ Technical drawings,
✓ Unpatented inventions,
✓ Manufacturing processes
REQUIREMENT #2: SECRECY / CONFIDENTIALITY

➢ “not known to the public” - art.9 CN AUCL

➢ Information which is unknown to and is difficult to obtain by the “relevant person in the relevant field” (art.9 SPC Interpr. 2007) → is NOT a trade secret:
  ▪ “Information that is common sense or trade practice”
  ▪ “can be directly acquired through observation of products/ through other public channels/ without substantial efforts and costs”
  ▪ “has been publicly disclosed” in publication/ media/ through conferences / exhibitions [TIP: be careful at trade fairs!]

➢ Secrecy excludes information generally known /readily accessible / made public
QUESTION to ask: What secret information do you have?

➢ List of information not generally known / not readily accessible / not made public

➢ *In concreto* analysis
REQUIREMENT #3: COMMERCIAL VALUE BECAUSE IT IS SECRET

➢ “has commercial value” - art.9 CN AUCL

➢ “Information has practical or potential commercial value, and can be used for enhancing the competitive advantage for the obligee, it shall be ascertained as capable of bringing about benefits to the obligee” (art.10 SPC Interpr. 2007)

➢ Broad notion
  ▪ Information must provide a COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
  ▪ Potential value is (in theory) enough
QUESTION to ask: COMMERCIAL VALUE < SECRECY?

➢ Does the information bring any economic benefit to your business?
➢ Would it hurt your business if it was leaked?
➢ Example of evidence of commercial value: sales invoices showing that the use of the trade secret generating profit
REQUIREMENT #4: THE REASONABLE STEPS
TO KEEP INFORMATION SECRET

➢ "if the owner adopts proper measures reasonable under the circumstances in order to prevent its disclosure or leakage, such measures shall be held as reasonable confidentiality measures » (art.11 SPC Interpr. 2007)

➢ Need to take proactive measures to protect secrecy (protection is not automatic)

➢ No measures = information is no trade secret → loss/absence of protection

➢ The first thing a judge will check!
WHAT reasonable steps to implement?

Art.11 AUCL Judicial Interpretation by SPC (2007): Non-exhaustive list of confidentiality measures

(1) Limiting access to classified information and disclosing it only on a need-to-know basis;
(2) Locking up the carrier of classified information or adopting any other preventive measure;
(3) Including a confidentiality notice on the carrier of classified information;
(4) Adopting passwords or codes on classified information;
(5) Executing a confidentiality agreement;
(6) Limiting visitor access to classified machinery, factory, workshop or any other place, or imposing confidentiality obligations on visitors; and
(7) Adopting any other proper measure for ensuring the confidentiality of information
Key REASONABLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT

1. **Identify** your trade secrets and organize a **trade secrets inventory**
2. **Access control** - restrict to ‘need to know basis’
3. **Implement legal measures**
   - Company wide confidentiality policy
   - NDAs
   - Ad hoc provisions in contracts
4. **Physical & organizational measures**
5. **IT Security measures**
6. **Adapt HR policies (!)**

→ Important to **DOCUMENT your confidentiality measures**
QUESTION to ask: What confidentiality measures are taken today?

An NDA is a good start... but is not enough (!)
TAKE AWAY - To PROTECT you need to IDENTIFY

(1.) *Perform an INTERNAL AUDIT*
- Comprehensive overview of trade secrets (and IP assets)
- Assess and improve the measures in place

(2.) *WHAT INFORMATION qualifies as trade secret?*
- Is the info “secret”?
- Does the info have commercial value because of its secrecy?
- What measures have you taken to protect the secrecy?
PART III – ENFORCING TRADE SECRETS REMAINS A CHALLENGE
(1.) WHAT IS TRADE SECRETS INFRINGEMENT?

Trade secret infringement (illicit appropriation / use / disclosure) - art.9 CN AUCL

- Obtaining trade secrets through theft, bribery, intimidation or other improper means

- Disclosing, using, allowing others to use illicitly acquired trade secrets (incl. in breach of contractual obligation)

- Second degree infringer (new employer knows or should have known) [TIP: don’t become a target yourself]
(2.) Remedies and improvements of the judicial system

- **Civil enforcement**: Injunction + Damages
  - Specialized IP courts (professionalization / technical advisors / technical advisers)
  - IP Division of SPC (a.o. appeals of patent & technology-adjacent IP judgments before the Supreme People’s Court)

- **Administrative / criminal enforcement**: fine + damages
(3.) Enforcement of trade secrets is difficult, especially in China

- No public data on civil trade secrets cases for 2018 (chinaipr.com)
  - Less cases than patent/ TM/ © cases
- High evidentiary burden
  - Qualification as trade secret?
  - Evidence of misappropriation (unauthorized use/disclosure/acquisition)
- 35% reduction of criminal trade secrets prosecutions (chinaipr.com)
(4.) Promising indications

- Example: 2017 Top 10 IP Case by Supr. People’s Court - Hebi Reflective Material vs. SONG et al. (Henan Higher People’s Court)
  - Employee with access full access to customer’s list
  - Employee working in parallel for another Employer
  - The court confirmed that the customer’s list = a trade secret (3 conditions met)
  - Confidentiality measures: non-competition + confidentiality in employment contract
  - Joint liability of the acquirer of misappropriated trade secret held jointly liable
PART IV – IMPLEMENTING REASONABLE STEPS
-
CASE STUDY #1
EU SME aims to access the Chinese market

- EU SME has developed a highly sophisticated software (application for the development of strategic technologies)
- Technology protected through confidentiality (no patents, © on source code)
- Chinese partner is a government incubator
- Essence of the deal
  - Gvt incubator puts a laboratory at disposal
  - Gvt incubator buys equipment on request of the EU SME
  - EU SME operates the lab
  - EU SME needed to transfer its technology to China (from EU entity to its CN entity)
  - Laboratory use agreement
- EU SME had little knowledge of trade secrets protection (no reasonable steps in place)
IMPLEMENTATION OF A TRADE SECRETS PROTECTION PROGRAM: first step → TS audit at home in the EU

Step 1 - **INTRODUCTORY TRAINING** on trade secret protection
- **Result:** Awareness of key employees + ability to better identify trade secrets

Step 2 - **INTERVIEWS** with key people
- **Result:** SME equipped for a mapping of its trade secrets

Step 3 - **MAPPING** and **CLASSIFICATION** of trade secrets and confidentiality measures
- **Result:** inventory and classification

Step 4 - **GAP ANALYSIS**
- **Result:** red flags and overview of confidentiality measures to implement

Step 5 - **IMPLEMENTATION**
- **Result:** Trade secret management system in place, better handling of risk management
IDENTIFY your trade secrets & IMPROVE your confidentiality measures

Step 1: INTRODUCTORY TRAINING
WHAT IS A TRADE SECRET?

Step 2: INTERVIEW with key people
WHAT ARE MY TRADE SECRETS?

Step 3: MAPPING and CLASSIFICATION
HOW DO I PROTECT MY TRADE SECRETS?

Step 4: GAP ANALYSIS
HOW CAN I IMPROVE PROTECTION

Step 5: IMPLEMENTATION
BETTER RISK MANAGEMENT
To secure trade secrets protection of the EU SME

- Identification (audit)
- Assessment and improvement of confidentiality measures in place
- Starting point: assume trade secrets transferred will be lost
- Compartmentalization
  - Trade secrets to be transferred
  - Trade secrets to be kept at home
  - Structure the tech transfer to mitigate the risks
- Structure collaboration with strong contracts
- Document everything
PART V – THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG CONTRACTS TO PROTECT YOUR TRADE SECRETS

- CASE STUDY #2
Service contract: how to avoid trade secrets theft?

- **EU SME**: services in the field of pharmaceutical clinical trials
- **Subcontracting** part of services to CN partner (for PRC clinical trials)
- **Laboratory service agreement**
  - Executed by EU SME and by CN Partner
  - Specific personnel of CN partner to be trained
    - Supervision role
    - Ensure top quality services
  - Personnel training agreement (annex to LSA)
    - Executed by EU SME + CN Partner + Employee
    - Direct right of action against the employee
1. Service contract – Strong confidentiality provision

➢ **Definition:** What is Confidential info?
  - Non public information & data, relating to a party/its suppliers/its customers
  - Marked confidential / reasonably expected to know is confidential / observed during visits

➢ Non disclosure obligation

➢ Permitted use

➢ **Treatment of confidential info:** impose explicit physical, legal, technical confidentiality measures (e.g. physical access control; up-to-date firewall, etc.)

➢ Ownership + obligation to return

➢ Duration of confidentiality obligation

➢ Liquidated damages

[**No one-size fits all confidentiality obligation / NDA**]
2. Personnel training agreement

- Executed by EU SME + CN Partner + Employee
- Organize the training (obligations & liabilities of each party)
  - Obligation of CN partner + employee to collaborate to training
  - Avoid any employee is employee/independent contractor of EU SME
  - ...
- Organize confidentiality obligations of the employee
  - What is Confidential info? Non public information & data relating to the technical training
  - Confidentiality, non-use & non-disclosure obligations of the employee
  - Liability for breach: joint liability of CN Partner and employee (+ Liquidated damages)
  - Duration of confidentiality obligation
Contracts are key for successfully protecting your trade secrets (and your IP)

Ad hoc IP + confidentiality provisions

Trade secrets are relevant to numerous contracts

- IP agreements (Technology contracts such as (co-)development, tech transfer, consultancy and service agreements + Confidentiality agreements)
- Manufacturing agreements (OEM, outsourcing, etc.)
- Distribution contracts
- ...
CONCLUSION: What to remember?
1. Trade secrets enforcement is challenging in China

**Burden of proof rests on the plaintiff**
- Identify your trade secrets (inventory)
- Document all transfers + your confidentiality measures

2. Pay special attention to employees and business partners

3. Prevention is key & pro-active TS management is the only way to protect your trade secrets
4. Implement a TRADE SECRET ACTION PLAN

1. **AUDIT** - Identify trade secrets + protection measures
2. **INVENTORY** - inventory + trade secrets classification
3. **IMPROVE** - Review contracts, confidentiality policies & processes,... → implement “reasonable steps”
4. **EDUCATE** - Raise awareness among employees, suppliers, biz partners
5. **MONITOR AND REACT** - Have a person in charge + TS misappropriation action plan
Any question, drop me a line!

Valentin de le Court
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Q&A
“KNOW BEFORE YOU GO.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU GROW…”

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