



**Be Aware
Take Care**

**10 OF THE
BIGGEST
RISKS
TO YOUR
EMPLOYEES
PERSONAL
SAFETY**

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10 OF THE **BIGGEST RISKS** TO YOUR EMPLOYEES PERSONAL SAFETY

The purpose of compiling this executive report is to enable you to understand the top 10 risks that your people face in ensuring their personal safety. These have been compiled from my own content, discussion and feedback from the workshops that I run.

The purpose in sharing these 10 risks is because knowing about them will place you in a far better position in understanding the risks your people face.

As you consider the points raised in the report, I am sure your mind will generate other questions and scenarios and if you would like to discuss these then please drop me a message or give me a call.

I fully appreciate that this report may challenge your thinking about your own safety and possibly your organisations policies, procedures and level of care. However, if no one shines a light on possible risks then the risks remain but they will be unrecognised, unspecified, unrated, and unaddressed.

I can assure you that reflecting on risks often generates significant questions and ideas in the workshops I run. The power of this is that as people relate to these risks and see themselves in these situations, they then start to not only recognise but plan to avoid them where possible.

Within this report I have not shared the 3-step system and toolset that I use to ensure people can rapidly recognise and plan how to mitigate each of these risks. However, if you would like a chat on how I could help your people with this then just give me a call.

1 Working from home or remote location



People who are remote working from temporary office space, working from home, secondment or remote locations should be treating that location in the same way as if they were travelling abroad. Often the fact that a place is familiar or in a known area can lead to a high level of complacency. For example, do they have the appropriate technical setups such as encrypted links for computing and a VPN on their phone. Along with the technical setup is the physical security at the location suitable both from a physical as well as an IP and confidentiality perspective.

As with all locations the travel to and from those can be a significant risk that should be considered. Parking and public transport can both be areas of concern and although these are everyday experiences, if undertaken at the request of the organisation, thoughts to their safety should be undertaken.

I remember a case where a temporary office location was being used but the company car park was out of site and not covered by security. Following an attempted sexual assault as one of the managers left for home after working late the organisation pulled out of the premiss as they felt unable to provide a secure environment.

For some people working from home, managers and colleagues, can be the only people they speak to outside of their household. As such they are in a unique position to assist anyone suffering domestic violence.

If the organisation has instructed people to work from home, then they have a duty of care to ensure that persons safety. For some, the only sanctuary they have in their life is whilst attending an office. If at any time that changes to being the home, then their risk has significantly increased.

The BBC reported that the law firm Linklaters now offers people who need to flee their home but can't stay with others three nights hotel accommodation. During the first COVID-19 lockdown the domestic violence charity Refuge, reported an 80% increase in calls to its helpline.

In November 2020, 43% of respondents to a survey by charity Surviving Economic Abuse showed an abuser had interfered with someone's ability to work or study from home during the crisis. (BBC, 2021)

2 Cashpoint (ATM)

Having previously run a major fraud department it amazed me how clever some people were at using skimming devices on a cashpoint with the latest ones being extremely hard to recognise. The purpose of skimming devices is to provide the fraudster with your details so they can use or replicate your card.

There are basically two major configurations of cashpoint machines. Those based in a room normally as part of a bank where you swipe your card to gain entry and those often simply referred to as hole in the wall machines. Neither offers you the protection of people not realising you are taking out cash. There really is no better advert to the local low life than someone stood at a cashpoint. "Sorry I don't have any cash" will no longer wash. If you are simply making a deposit, then you should assume they believe you have just withdrawn cash.

Room based systems have a slightly improved security as in theory everyone in there has swiped their card to gain entry. However, it's possible a stolen card could be used to gain entry so you shouldn't lower your guard. Additionally, if there is any kind of robbery or confrontation you are then trapped in this locked room with your attacker. Even a well-meaning passer-by can't come to your aid and assistance. CCTV is great in helping

the police catch who ever robbed, raped or murdered you after the event but never rely on CCTV to protect you before or during your struggles.

One of the ways assailants may fool you into letting them in is by having something in their hands like shopping bags or being on the phone. These are all distractions to take your mind off the fact they can't gain entry into the secure area which means they shouldn't be in there. At this point even if you don't let them in you should be very alert as they may well be waiting outside.

The hole in the wall machines offer you the chance to just leave the card or cash and run. Yes, you will be down a few notes but really it isn't worth fighting over. Shoulder surfing and a number of other similar scams have inevitably sprung up to take advantage of these machines. Your main defence is to be alert to your surroundings and other people. If someone talks to you while you are working the machine assume the worst.

If you feel someone is watching or too close, then cancel the transaction make a fuss, moan about the card not working, shake your head and stride off. People will assume you were refused the cash and simply wait for the next unsuspecting victim.



NBC New York reported that a woman who opened the door to a bank lobby for a man who didn't have his card out was caught on CCTV as he violently attacked the woman, even biting her hand in an attempt to take the money she was holding. (Rosendale, G 2015).

3 No possession is worth risking your life



We put far too much emphasis on not losing possessions and we give them far too much importance. This brings the ego into play and is the element few consider in any risk assessments and training yet in my opinion is the thing that is most likely to get you seriously hurt, assaulted and possibly killed.

I often ask people how much money they would give to be able to return home that night, safe, rather than giving up their life alone and in pain bleeding to death while loved ones worry as they haven't returned home.

Yes, that is hard but it's also real and one area we discuss repeatedly throughout my workshops and training events. I like to use examples from errors I have personally made and often within minutes the participants provide many of their own examples. We are all lucky of course, having survived to tell others of these mistakes so that they can learn.

For many years I have told the story of a very senior member of staff who attended one of my workshops. When discussing muggings and robbery he stated that no one would take his wallet, instead he would fight. How dare they take what he had worked so hard for.

No possession is worth risking your life for. Reacting to a noise Michael Samwell a Naval officer went to investigate but unfortunately was killed attempting to prevent his car being stolen (Maan, T 2017)

This from a man who had not had a fight since junior school many years ago. When asked if he would show his wallet, we found only a tiny amount of cash alongside plastic cards and a driving licence. This was a wealthy senior executive so why then would he risk his life to fight someone for a few pieces of plastic.

What you must remember is that the thief, attacker, or drug addict needing their next high has made their career not by working long hours in the office but by long hours committing robbery and assault. They have probably already served at least one prison term and are not scared of any repercussions.

Why risk your life and the future of your loved ones for what you would earn in less than 10 minutes. Yes, it's hard to accept defeat and hand over your wallet, watch or ring without a fight but if you managed to purchase it once you can do so again.

Anyway, everything is probably insured.

4 Traffic

The HSE reports that more than a quarter of all road accident may involves somebody who is driving as part of their work at the time. (HSE, 2014)

When considering safety of employees, it is far too easy to overlook the obvious.

Traffic accidents are more likely to cause serious injury or death than any other type of incident. Terrorism and other events may hit the headlines but by far the riskiest activity is normal transport.

Key messages that an organisation needs to be considering are the region and method of travel and if local or international options for travel are available. For example, the use of a local taxi shuttle in some regions would be my last choice of travel, however there are sometimes international organisations in country that could be booked and arranged in advance.

International booked travel options could also include an

element of close protection (CPO) to provide personal safety to the person travelling, especially useful in areas of conflict or lawlessness. There are many levels of CPO, they could be firearms trained and carrying or they could be unarmed, working alone or as a team.

The fact that the World Health Organisation reports on traffic accidents is significant but the dangers across the world are not all at a similar level with certain regions and countries experiencing much higher rates of injury and death. For a snapshot of the level of deaths per region the active map below can be used as a high-level guide.

<https://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/cause-of-death/road-traffic-accidents/by-country/>

According to the WHO 1.2 million people die in road traffic accidents each year (Peden et al. 2004).



5 Terrorism

Terrorism could impact your organisation in many ways including the targeting of your staff or organisation due to the country they or the organisation represents, your markets or products, political affiliations or who your customers are.

The aim of the terrorist is to cause as much of an impact as possible, often gaining significant international press and government coverage. The airport, flight, hotel, office, or shopping centre your people are in could be the target. All would gain significant coverage and could result in loss of life, fear, cultural, political and reputational damage.

Methods of attack vary significantly including bomb or active shooter attacks that may be targeted at your staff or organisation or they could be collateral damage as an attack targets someone or something else.

Have your security team specifically assessed the threat of a terror attack on your offices. Have they considered the fact that emergency exits funnel people together therefore making them susceptible to attack as they exit. Have you drilled the scenario of a firearms or knife attack within the building. Are people told to exit or lock and fortify their offices.

One area of organisation risk responsibility and duty of care would be the country risk assessment (This normally initiates a long sigh from everyone). Now, in my experience very few people have ever read one, many organisations don't provide them and if they do its purely as a tick box for the insurance. Those that do have them never check the read stats to see if they have been accessed, by whom and when. It's quite possible that your organisation has a full set of country risk assessments, maybe they are even updated but has anyone ever read them.

I can't imagine any of the Directors or Partners I worked with over the years sitting down and reading a long risk assessment unless that is they were going somewhere featured in the headlines such as Iraq. Risk assessments are too often written and then forgotten when they should be helpful and the font of knowledge. They should be accessible by smartphone and have a particularly good summary which is all most will ever read.

Travelling or working in Europe can seem very safe compared to some places in the world however the annual TESAT(2018) report from Europol continues to highlight both Jihadist and right wing terrorism across Europe with France and the UK experiencing the highest number of attacks and arrests followed by Belgium. Many organisations would not consider an employee on secondment to their Paris, Brussels or London office as 'at risk' but some level of understanding of possible local tensions would certainly be a good recommendation.



Terrorism is a major threat for businesses (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2020) In November 2015, a terrorist cell conducted a series of coordinated attacks in Paris, using firearms and suicide bombs, killing 130 people and injuring 368 more. This was the most sophisticated western attack carried out by DAESH, involving at least nine operatives and using multiple weapons including automatic firearms and person-borne improvised explosive devices (PBIEDs).

6 Your IP (Intellectual Property)

Many organisations fail to comprehend the value of their IP and how that IP affects their market position as well as the overall value of the organisation.

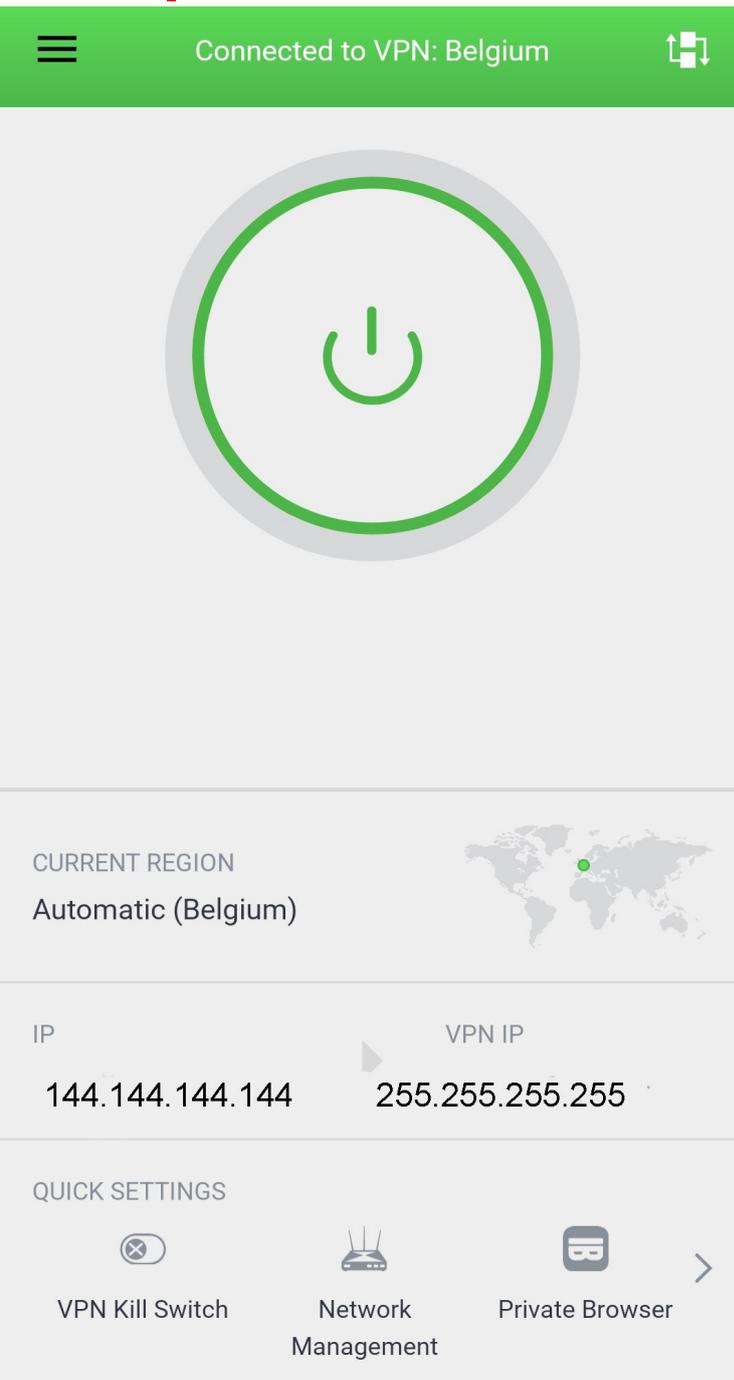
Your IP is what makes you competitive, differentiates you in the market and when breached can seriously affect your bottom line. In the *WannaCry ransomware attack* of 2017 cyber criminals used ransomware to prevent victims accessing their IP unless a ransom was paid.

Many organisations have dedicated cyber security teams within their fraud prevention department while others include it within their IT or security departments. Most try and lock down their Intellectual Property by various means, often involving the use of technology against hackers or malware and by educating or restricting access by employees. However, one of the biggest risks to your IP is not the hacker or concerted attack it's the people within your organisation, either as a result of human error or a disgruntled or financially incentivised employee.

Maintaining security for people accessing the systems remotely can become more difficult placing your IP at risk. Do remote employees have access via an unencrypted link from their ipad, laptop or smartphone. If the link is encrypted, is it difficult to use so that people download the information they need and store it on their personal device. Does everyone use a VPN or other security link on their phones, laptops and other devices all the time or is their data open and exposed once they disconnect from your office secure link.

An instance that comes to mind for me was that of a stolen laptop where the individual had downloaded all their documents as the secure link was too slow when they were out of the office. This was against company policy but as a Director they had persuaded IT to allow the downloads.

A report issued by the US chamber of commerce stated that publicly traded U.S. companies own an estimated \$5 trillion worth of trade secrets. A report by PWC suggested that an estimate of the loss that could be attributed to the theft of trade secrets is between 1 and 3 percent of the US GDP (Yeh, B. 2016).



7 Cultural Assumptions

Do not assume your own cultural and personal measures of your legal and social rights and laws apply in the minds of everyone or around the globe they do not.

It can become easy to assume that your normal is everyone else's normal, your principles, morals, prejudices, and assumptions will be the same as someone else's.

Someone somewhere thinks that because you have a short skirt on, your head uncovered, you have a smart suit or some other signal that maybe only they identify with then you are wrong, and in their eyes that makes you a potential target.

Is that right, no it isn't but if you ignore this you are putting yourself at possible risk. By all means, when safe to do so campaign to change people's opinions, campaign for equal rights but don't ignore the fact that some may have the opposite view to you. In times of conflict or abuse right or wrong do not matter as long as someone has a belief, and they are willing to act on it.

The same applies for LGBTQ rights, what is acceptable to most people in the UK will land you in jail in some countries. If you ignore the fact that even in the UK there are individuals and groups that remain hostile to people living their lives as they wish you could be significantly increasing your risk of assault. I'm not saying don't live your life as you wish what I am saying is be alert to the people, customs, and environment around you.

Remember that if the absolute worst case happens and you are the victim of crime or sexual assault and you aren't in your home country contact your embassy or consulate immediately for assistance and support. Unfortunately, in some countries you won't be seen as a victim if you report a crime or sexual assault to the police and you could find you are ignored or even arrested.

In 2016 an English woman was arrested in Dubai after reporting being raped by 2 men. After much pressure from the UK Government and Human rights groups she was eventually released and allowed to leave the country (Malo, S. 2016).



8 Travel Hubs - Airports & Rail stations

Air Travel is one of the safest methods of transport and is probably one of the most open about its safety with the annual ICAO report available for everyone to read.

As far as personal safety is concerned airports are split into two areas, Airside and Public with airside being the part once you go through security. Airside the risks involve petty crime such as luggage theft along with significant threats such as terrorism. However, this is much reduced since everyone should have passed through security. Airport staff and contractors who work airside normally have security checks on them as well as also having to pass through security checks to enter the airside section of the airport.

The public space is a significant area of concern with large numbers of people carrying heavy bags and backpacks being the norm, all of which have not been checked by security. People are funnelled together as they check in or approach

security making them a significant target. This was the principle behind the 2015 Brussels and the 1988 Glasgow airport attacks.

When you attend an airport, train station or other transport hub your main goal should be to split yourself from the mass of unchecked people. In airports this is easier as you can pass through the security checks although some countries have similar security clearance at major rail or bus stations.

Get airside or through security and on your train or bus as soon as you can as this minimises your exposure to such a large group of people in an open area.

If meeting colleagues or friends pass through security and then meet them rather than meeting in the area used by the general public.



17 people were killed many more injured in the Brussels airport attacks in 2016 with 2 blasts in the airport departure area by suicide bombers (BBC, 2016).

38 people were killed and 60 injured in the 2010 suicide bombings carried out by 2 female terrorists in the rush hour at 2 stations on the Moscow Metro(CNN, 2010).

9 Natural disasters



Natural disasters can occur without warning but very often they are, if not predicted then thought to be highly likely. Earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires and floods as well as many other natural issues could easily leave your people stranded without transport, shelter, or provisions.

The timeline of how to plan and manage through a natural disaster is significant. Firstly, there is preparedness and planning (which of course should be in your country risk assessment), there is the actual incident which for both those directly involved and their family at home can be terrifying. Then there is the period of time immediately following the incident and the following week.

Following the incident people who survived may be at risk due to a second incident, falling buildings, lawlessness, dehydration, or medical issues. What action plan for those involved and communication plan is there for dealing with relatives of your staff who survived, missing, or confirmed dead.

Depending on the incident it could be the environment as well as other people that are going to cause you immediate and further harm. It's easy to assume that everyone pulls together for the greater good following a disaster but that may not be the case. Rape, assault, robbery and looting may be some people's response.

If unprepared, then knowing how to keep safe from further natural developments as well as your surroundings is

essential, while understanding the process and plan of how to extract yourself or be extracted is key and should be understood beforehand.

Planning in advance and everyone knowing that a plan not only exists but how to activate it, manage it and adjust it as events develop is essential. Who within your organisation is responsible for any of your staff in the vicinity or who may otherwise be affected by a natural disaster? Do you have an emergency policy, possibly as part of your insurance that enables you to contact an external agency or does someone in house manage the situation? Who does what and when must be known beforehand.

It is important to recognise that indirect events may impact or affect your people and organisation. For example, a manufacturing centre could be destroyed, or staff could be isolated due to lack of accommodation if their home was affected and that is now their work location.

Following the 2005 floods in New Orleans there were reports of rape, murder and violence (Rezaeian, M. 2013) although later it appeared these were exaggerated (Smith-Spark, L. 2005). 2 of the 14 bodies at the convention centre used as a shelter during the disaster were found with gunshot wounds and the Louisiana Foundation against sexual assault stressed that just because a rape hasn't been reported to police doesn't mean it didn't happen.

10 Crowded Spaces



Just about everything above can be an issue in crowded spaces. Sexual assault, robbery, terrorism and even traffic can be an issue in crowded spaces.

There is a largely held belief that being in a crowd makes you safe. That feeling of being anonymous and part of a large group giving comfort and a feeling of safety in numbers that as social beings we often relax our instinctive warnings as we feel like we belong to the group. However, pickpockets and terrorists along with a range of other people with bad intentions will always be attracted to these areas. The opportunity to merge with a crowd and seemingly disappear is an attractive proposition to many. This applies to most crowds be it a shopping centre, a festival, trade fair or celebration.

Some years ago, I was sitting at a café with my wife in Barcelona when someone who I initially thought was the waiter placed a pile of tourist leaflets on the table. When we said we weren't interested they left without argument. Now I have been doing this a long time and have discussed this exact scenario on a number of occasions, but I was still taken as a victim. As the person walked off, they had picked up their leaflets along with a number of our items that were on the table. As they moved away, they removed their jacket in an attempt to disguise themselves as they merged with the crowd if we were to follow.

30% of female festival goers have faced assault or harassment with only 2% being reported to Police. (BBC, 2018)

In this instance they did not get away with anything but in stopping them that in itself was a risk and not one I would recommend most people to take. However that is a great learning experience within the workshops as people recognise that anyone at any time can become a victim and that the rule of not allowing your ego to overrule your abilities to protect your possessions is relevant to everyone.

In 2017 this same area was the target of an Islamist terror attack when a van was driven into pedestrians in what would have been a very busy section of the tourist district.

It is not just the crowded space itself that is an issue but also the transition as you decide to leave the crowd behind. Anyone seeking a victim can easily identify someone leaving the crowd and follow. If possible, always be alert, and aware of what is happening around you and if possible, from a purely safety standpoint I would suggest you avoid overly crowded places.

16 people were killed, 140 injured from 35 countries in the attack on La Rambla, Barcelona on 17th August 2017 (Rodriguez, J 2018)

About the Author

I spent many years working at a senior level in several large organisations, travelling extensively on behalf of the business. I was often asked what colleagues should do to avoid conflict or what they should have done when unfortunately, it had all gone wrong.

Avoiding conflict is absolutely key, but most people do not know how to do that. Identifying and managing risk is something that many businesspeople do all the time as part of their role but simply do not understand how to apply that principle to ensure their own safety.

I believe that people should be aware of how to recognise and plan for risks and how to mitigate them adapting that plan as events unfold and the risks change. In business we are good at understanding and managing risk but often turn this ability off unconsciously as we walk out of the office.

I have used my experience as a business traveller coupled with a Masters in Counter Terrorism from UCLAN and over 40 years of martial arts training to develop a uniquely detailed knowledge of problems that actually occur in everyday life.

I am a published author, gained a master's degree from UCLAN in Counter Terrorism and have previously held UK Government, NATO and London's Metropolitan Police security clearance.

I run workshops and offer support both in the UK and mainland Europe on how organisations can ensure the safety of their staff.



Tony Willis MSc MBA FCFI ASyI



How I can help you

Whether it's handling the daily commute, navigating foreign cities, understanding terrorist activity or simply being aware of potential threats the training provided along with tried and tested techniques and tips will help you and your teams stay safe when going about your work.

Although the fundamental principles and foundation remain the same no two courses are likely to be the same as the attendees will have had different experiences, be at varying levels of seniority, experience different risk factors and undertake different tasks throughout their day.



3 ways we can work together to ensure your people stay safe

The Workshop

Workshops of up to 12 people normally from 10am to 3pm following my 3-step system we go into detail on areas that apply specifically to those attending. This gives a sound platform they can use in the future to both plan and react to any risks as they develop.

Annual support programme

Starting with the workshop as the foundation and then as part of a Mastermind Group providing individual personal support throughout the year including WhatsApp, zoom, and email in using the 3 step system and risks that may become apparent.

Keynote

A keynote or conference format of about 1 hour. Tailored to the company and audience either through role or level.



What people have said

"Recently, Tony Willis was invited to give a conference in our organisation. He presented the concept Be aware – stay safe developed by himself. We discovered a very interesting approach of self-protection and we were amazed by all the good tips and tricks he provided us with. Very useful for all those who are travelling from time to time, whether for professional or personal reasons."

Birgit Ben Yedder, Admin Asst, The European Commission, Luxembourg

"Business travelling is getting more and more uncomfortable with increased pressures on time and reduced budgets, especially in the big cities like Berlin, London and Paris. Rushing from one meeting to the next often under significant stress business travellers are especially vulnerable. Advice on how to avoid difficult situations and maintain personal safety in these situations is absolutely essential for today's business community..."

Hans-Peter Portner, Global Transition & Transformation Manager



"Being a frequent traveller, I know the importance of avoiding conflict and Tony Willis has successfully captured the essentials on what to look for and how to act"

Magnus Lundgren, Strategic Sales Director Ericsson

"Having known Tony professionally for a few years when I read his book 'Be Aware Take Care' I knew the message he was passing on was not only important for our client base here in Luxembourg but also would make a great presentation. His Presentation was great, and he got booked on the day to go to one of our clients to share his message to their team, I would highly recommend Tony".

Lynn Holland - Tower Training

How to Get in Touch

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