From their beginnings with the first center for teaching and learning (CTL) at the University of Michigan in 1962, CTLs have grown to become respected organizations on their campuses. However, there is an unexplored nexus between the literature on human performance improvement (HPI) and faculty development. As professionals working in support of the academic enterprise, faculty developers must become aware of all possible opportunities to demonstrate their value in an increasingly difficult environment; HPI is just such an opportunity. By using a keyword search of books and articles written by recognized HPI authorities, the author identified and defined 22 words and phrases commonly used to describe the field. A review of the faculty development literature between 2001 and 2010 determined that references to HPI using these key words and phrases occurred in only 26% of the articles reviewed. In addition, over 44% of 303 CTL websites on a comprehensive list maintained by Hofstra University failed to link their services to any aspect of human performance improvement. Several options to begin implementing HPI are described.

Introduction

There is an interesting, though largely unexplored, nexus between
the literature on human performance improvement (HPI) and faculty development. Diamond (1988, 2002) suggests this nexus in his definition of faculty development:

Faculty development focuses on the improvement of the individual instructor’s teaching skills; instructional development on students’ learning by improving the course and curriculum experience; and organizational development on the interrelationship and effectiveness of units within the institution. . . . (p. 8) [emphasis added]

Research conducted by HPI professionals identifies three levels of performance—roughly comparable to the three aspects of Diamond’s (2002) definition of faculty development and, particularly, focused on his third aspect—that must be recognized, aligned, and managed for success to be achieved and sustained. They are the job/performer level, the process level, and the organization level (Rummler, 1998). The field of study that has developed around this integration is defined as “a systematic process of discovering and analyzing important human performance gaps, planning for future improvements in human performance, designing and developing cost-effective and ethically-justifiable interventions to close performance gaps, implementing the interventions and evaluating the financial and nonfinancial results” (Rothwell, 1996).

Although such an exploration might have been simply an academic exercise in the not-too-distant past, the continuing tumult occurring on most college campuses as documented by Ouellett (2010) pushes consideration of this task to the forefront. As professionals in support of the academic enterprise, faculty developers must become aware of all possible opportunities to demonstrate their worth and relevance in an increasingly difficult environment, as suggested by Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) in their survey of faculty developers to discern the top five challenges facing faculty and higher education institutions in general. They identified the following:

1. Balancing increasingly complex and demanding faculty roles
2. Assessment of teaching and student learning (especially in the context of increasingly diverse students)
3. The impact of technology
4. Addressing the needs of part-time faculty
5. The demands of interdisciplinary leadership develop-
ment for chairs and institutions.

HPI offers just such an opportunity—and, as its form and substance come to be understood, it may well rise to the top of the list of possible new theoretical models for 21st-century faculty development.

To begin a discussion about the possible relevance of HPI to faculty development, I examine the current state of faculty development—and, particularly, the unmet needs of the faculty it serves from three perspectives. First, I want to see if a cursory review of sample mission, vision, value, or guiding principle statements from Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at five randomly selected U.S. institutions of higher education might demonstrate that these unmet needs are already being addressed as a matter of standard practice across the field. Second, to determine the extent to which HPI principles may pervade the field of faculty development even without specific references within my randomly selected institutions, I review a comprehensive body of literature on faculty development to determine the frequency of references to HPI using words and phrases key to this field. Finally, I will define and apply those key words and phrases to a much more comprehensive search of mission/vision/values/guiding principle statements for 303 Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) from a public website list maintained by Hofstra University. The CTLs on the list include those housed at universities, colleges, system-level administrative offices, and community colleges.

Consideration of faculty—particularly faculty who are an institution’s full-time employees—as professionals ought to be comparable to how physicians, attorneys or architects define and structure their jobs. Specifically, enormous latitude exists for one’s definition of what is most important, whether—for faculty—in the teaching, research, or service domains typical of most full-time positions. As Braskamp and Ory (1994) state, “Faculty work under the principles of tenure and academic freedom, and thus they enjoy many individual rights. Society has given them its trust and considerable freedom to pursue their own work, needs, and interests. . . . But society also is voicing more loudly the claim that faculty have a social responsibility to their institution and to the larger community” (p. xiii).

While some may argue that social responsibility is met through research, for most faculty developers (and for many parents, state legislators, and students) that claim is heard far more loudly in the need for improved teaching expertise. The involvement of faculty developers in improving pedagogy often begins when graduate students intent on pursuing research careers find themselves woefully unprepared for the challenges they meet when hired as first-time college teachers (Middaugh, 2001). Having arrived on campus and faced with teaching as many as five
classes and several hundred students in their first semester, new (as well as not so new) faculty often turn to their CTL for advice, guidance, and assistance—resulting, as Lee notes, in an “explosion of opportunities for faculty developers and centers to contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning effectiveness and to the institution’s overall mission, both within their institutions and outside them” (Lee, 2010, p. 31).

CTLs, for their part, respond with a broad array of workshops, programs, and training. In fact, as noted by Schroeder and Associates (2011), “The high demand for instructional and technology services [has] led centers to conclude that their role is to function at the individual, course, workshop, and department level” (pp. 26-27). However, for too many seasoned faculty developers unaccustomed to this volume of requests for service, “[i]nstructional and faculty development [has] meant offering support and ‘development’ through one instructor, consultation, workshop or Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grant at a time” (Schroeder, 2011, pp. 26-27).

Yet true—and more global—needs often go unmet. Faculty who begin their careers expecting to do research find themselves teaching students of all types and levels of preparation, most of whom will never major in the faculty member’s chosen academic field let alone develop research aspirations. Although CTLs could take a more aggressive position by honestly assessing each new faculty member’s “as is” teaching expertise and show him or her where improvements are needed to meet these challenges, most choose to develop “strategies to attract instructors voluntarily to their cutting edge and innovative programs by positioning . . . themselves as neutral service providers that function outside of promotion, tenure, and merit systems” (Schroeder and Associates, 2011, p. 28). As a result, “few faculty members obtain a rich and full description and judgment of their work, regardless if the intent of the evaluation is to help them improve or to demonstrate their worth and value to a committee or an administrator” (Braskamp & Ory, 1994, p. 6).

But do my randomly selected institutions fit this model? Perhaps all CTLs should not be tarred with the same brush. There are, in fact, two commonalities shared by all five of the selected institutions, and one that is shared by four of the five. Though the phrasing may differ slightly, all five institutions—taken together—claim on their websites to focus on “building a sense of community,” “professional and collaborative connections,” “a collegial community of faculty,” “working collaboratively,” “a communal effort,” and “partnering with faculty.” All five institutions also focus on providing learning activities—workshops, events, educational opportunities, an organizational space. Finally, four of the five state that
individualized development is paramount. As will be demonstrated, however, the approach to faculty development at these institutions often reflects that taken by training departments that have not yet embraced the principles of human performance improvement. Furthermore, a review of the literature on faculty development and an exhaustive analysis of over 300 CTL public websites also show a remarkable paucity of interest in HPI.

**Performance Improvement: A Brief Introduction**

Today’s CTL faces unprecedented challenges to its very survival. Whether stemming from reduced state funding that trickles down to diminished CTL services, confusion over purpose, scope and mission, or insufficient attention to key stakeholder groups, CTLs, to borrow from Kaufman and Watkins (2000), “… can no longer get away with ‘feel good’ discussions of how we increased efficiency or effectiveness … that may or may not add value to all of our clients, our client’s clients, and the society. … We work on training courses for individual jobs and tasks, and then we hope the sum total of all of the training and trained people adds up to organizational success” (pp. 1, 4). HPI professionals have come to see today’s organization as a complex, open system (Gradous, 1989; Jacobs, 1989; McLagan, 1989; Senge, 1990) and will, therefore, attempt to focus on (1) defining the organization or system broadly enough to include the root cause of a given performance issue, and (2) identify the primary source of power to take advantage of a performance opportunity (Swanson, 1996).

Appendix A lists and defines important characteristics of traditional versus HPI-focused training organizations.

Since 2000, there has been increasing emphasis within the training profession on HPI as practitioners move away from training as the primary solution to all problems and toward HPI, where analysis is paramount and a wide range of solutions are possible (Rothwell, Hohne & King, 2000). Analysis in this context, however, contains two elements that make it substantially different from training needs analysis commonly undertaken by faculty developers (Robinson & Robinson, 1998):

**Need to Partner With Management**

Many training functions have traditionally operated more in parallel to than in partnership with management. In today’s business world, a training department with an HPI focus allocates significant resources to the formation and sustenance of partnerships with management (Robinson & Robinson, 1998). However, in much of the CTL world, as noted by
Knight and Wilcox (1998), “Greater involvement in institutional priorities . . . may make developers seem ‘as the re-socialization agency of university administrations’ and developers were cautioned against being the ‘change agents of mandated change’” (p. 100).

**Linkage to Business Needs**

In today’s business world, the identification of human performance requirements begins with clarification of the current and future goals of an organization. Once a goal is defined, an HPI-focused training department works with its clients to answer the question “What must people do more, better, or differently if this goal is to be achieved?” With an almost exclusive focus on meeting individual needs, all five CTLs selected were negligent in this regard. In addition, when performance interventions are being planned, the following questions need to be asked in an effort to ensure the three-level alignment (Swanson, 1996):

1. Will individuals perform better on the job after the intervention?
2. Will the process involved (such as faculty development itself) perform better after the intervention?
3. Will the organization perform better after the intervention?

Finally, HPI-focused training departments share a laser-like focus on the importance of measurement. According to Enos (2007), “[m]easurement provides a basis for knowing where performance is and a ‘baseline’ for deciding where it ought to be. . . . Without knowing exactly where performance is, compared to where it ought to be (gap or deficiency), there is little basis for knowing what to improve. . . . When there is a clear definition of performance and the current status is known, then there exists a logical basis for deciding what areas need improvement” (p. 25).

In their groundbreaking book *Moving From Training to Performance: A Practical Guidebook*, Robinson and Robinson (1998) provide a table (see Appendix A) that distinguishes organizations with a traditional training focus from those with a performance focus.

**Review of the Faculty Development Literature**

Using a comparison process with glossaries from two well recognized HPI texts—Dubois, 1993, pp. 317-323, and Robinson & Robinson, 1998,
The words and phrases are listed in Appendix B (with definitions adapted from Dubois, 1993, pp. 317-323, and Robinson & Robinson, 1998, pp. 327-329). By and large, these are terms familiar to most faculty developers whose practice includes some aspect of organization development. I reviewed a total of 136 articles from JFD. Because virtually all JFD articles contain an abstract, I operated under the assumption that HPI key words and phrases would likely appear in the abstract if they were a significant focus of the article. (Reading approximately 25% of the articles in total suggested this was likely to be true.) The results are as follows:

- Eleven articles focused on models. I applied an HPI definition of a model from Robinson and Robinson (1998): “Identification of performance requirements for a specific job or role as it must be performed if the business needs are to be realized. Models can be defined in performance language . . . or competency language . . .” (p. 328). With this definition in mind, six of the articles could generally be classified in the competency group, and the other five in the performance group.

- Three articles focused on performance, although none referenced either performance needs or a performance framework.

- Two articles focused on interventions. Robinson and Robinson (1998) define intervention as “a solution or solution component specifically designed to bridge the gap between actual and desired state” (p. 328).

- Two articles focused on best practices.
• Single articles focused on analysis (task), job competence, and gap analysis (clearly implied but not stated).

In addition to these specific references, I placed a total of 14 articles into a “General” category, wherein the text seemed to suggest a general HPI linkage but provided insufficient detail to fall definitively under the HPI umbrella.

To summarize, only about 26% of all articles appearing in JFD over the past nine years contained either a direct or implied reference to an aspect of human performance improvement.

**Review of Mission/Vision/Values/ Guiding Principle Statements for CTLs**

The final piece of my research was an effort to determine the presence of HPI references (using the same HPI-specific words and phrases as in the JFD literature review) in the mission/vision/values/guiding principle statements for 303 CTLs maintained as a hyperlinked, publicly accessible list by Hofstra University. The process I followed was to locate the website for each CTL, read whatever orienting documentation was available, and then make a determination as to whether specific PI terminology appeared—or could reasonably be inferred—from that documentation. The results are summarized below.

**Site Not Found/Access Denied**

A total of 63 CTL sites were unavailable or public access was denied. However, in instances where access was unavailable but an alternative link was provided, that link was followed. Those institutions are not included in this group.

**CTL Re-Focused or Closed**

The web listings for 26 CTLs indicated the Center had been absorbed by another unit, re-focused, or closed. Within this group, the most common change was re-focusing exclusively for technology support (8 CTLs).

**No Reference to Any Aspect of Performance Improvement**

A total of 135 CTLs had no specific reference to any aspect of human performance improvement.
Conducting Classroom Observations

Although not specifically listed as an HPI term or phrase, conducting classroom observations offers a clear opportunity to begin a human performance improvement initiative. A total of 48 CTLs made specific reference to conducting classroom observations.

Best Practices

A total of 20 CTLs made specific reference to best practices. Among CTLs themselves, the following initiatives deserve special mention. These institutions could serve as benchmarks for others with an interest in beginning HPI.

- One CTL had specific responsibility for overseeing the development of teaching portfolios across the institution.
- Another CTL offered department-level consultations in addition to consultations with individual faculty. This service was offered in line with a university goal for the CTL to “initiate and sustain partnerships across . . . departments, units, colleges, and campuses to advance best practices in teaching and learning.”
- One CTL held responsibility for managing an institution-wide leadership development program that included both faculty and staff.
- One CTL was responsible for evaluating program instruction, to include “instructors, courses, and curricula, and help instructors evaluate and improve their own teaching.”
- Finally, one CTL—while recognizing today’s challenging fiscal environment—nevertheless formalized “a new and expanded set of organizational development consultation opportunities that will be available to . . . academic units.”

Models

A total of eight institutions made specific reference to models—although
none made the distinction between a competency model and a performance improvement model.

Additional PI References

The following PI terms and phrases were mentioned (with the number of mentions in parentheses): benchmarking (1), competencies (2), needs assessment (1), quality improvement (2), systems integration (1). It seemed strange that FLCs were not noted.

Findings and Conclusions

The Literature Review

The literature on faculty development demonstrates that slightly more than one quarter of all articles published in the Journal of Faculty Development over a nine-year period dealt with some aspect of human performance improvement. Looking ahead, many of the more controversial aspects of HPI, particularly as they relate to the complex, intertwined world of promotion, tenure, assessment, and professional development in higher education, deserve attention in the faculty development literature. For example, many CTLs state their support for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) initiatives. Beginning a dedicated conversation about human performance improvement in a journal dedicated to faculty development would add a new and valuable aspect to SoTL research and, undoubtedly, prompt some CTLs to take notice.

CTL Analysis

Using the key word and phrase analysis, over 44% of the CTLs on the Hofstra list do not appear to link their services in any obvious way to human performance improvement. While virtually all CTL sites reviewed indicate that events, workshops, brown-bag lunches, and certificate programs are major activities, these tend to be event-driven and reactive rather than process-driven, integrative, and proactive. Several reasons for this situation are described in the following section.

Implications for Practice

A combination of two critically important environmental variables—serious, sustained funding challenges and a dramatically heightened need for instructor accountability—have begun to push CTLs to change, and
change quickly (Schroeder and Associates, 2011). But there are equally powerful forces aligned against such change, as described below.

**Status of the CTL Director**

Research conducted by King and Lawler (2003) indicated that only 28% of all CTL directors are full-time and that an additional 41% performed CTL responsibilities between 50% and 95% of the time. Fortunately, by 2010 this situation appears to have changed. As reported by Schroeder and Associates (2011), among 477 CTL directors surveyed (with a 32% response rate, or 149 directors), 87.8% had full-time directors, 23.1% had part-time directors, 10.2% had full-time assistant directors, and 19% had associate directors. Disturbingly, though, my review of websites on the Hofstra list revealed many examples of CTL directors who held simultaneous faculty appointments—suggesting less than a full-time commitment to the CTL and, probably, reflecting individuals who were not counted in Schroeder and Associates’ survey. Essentially, it becomes difficult to conduct a serious, performance-based observation of one’s peers if one is also an active faculty member at the institution. Such observations inevitably tend to be normative (or comparative) in nature rather than criterion-referenced (focused on specific goals and objectives and utilizing a rubric).

**Inherent or “Natural” CTL Focus**

To quote from a representative CTL mission statement,

The Center does not evaluate the teaching of individual faculty members. We maintain a strict and enduring separation from all efforts to make summative evaluations of faculty members. Furthermore, all consultations with faculty members are confidential; we do not release the names of faculty members who attend Center programs or seek individual assistance, let alone provide any feedback on those faculty members to colleagues, department chairs, deans, promotion and tenure committees, or the central administration. Schroeder and Associates (2011) point out the danger of this approach: “Exclusive reliance on individual learning . . . is limited and too narrow in scope for the challenges ahead. These challenges require broad-based collaboration among multiple ‘experts’ and shifts in the values, boundaries, and paradigms undergirding the structures and policies that inhibit significant institutional change.” (p. 2)

Moving a CTL into the world of serious human performance improvement requires a fundamental re-thinking of how its staff conducts class
observations—in essence, challenging the boundary between summative and formative assessment. While there is no question that individual confidentiality must be maintained, there is an equally serious need to collect organization-wide benchmark performance data from the faculty member’s first observation through all phases of his or her teaching career. Without such data, there is no basis for determining what needs to be improved across the organization (as well as individually), in what order, or the level of resources required.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Investigation

There are three limitations in the approach I have taken to conduct this study. First, my literature review was limited to one journal specializing in faculty development. It is possible that HPI research has appeared in other journals, such as To Improve the Academy, that have regular contributions of interest to faculty developers. Second, my review of the Hofstra CTL list was restricted to publicly accessible websites; significant HPI initiatives may be occurring at the department or college level but not be highlighted on these websites. (Conversely, one may argue that initiatives of HPI prominence, no matter where they occur, ought to be coordinated by and promoted by a CTL struggling for visibility and, perhaps, even viability). Finally, the Hofstra list is not exhaustive; CTLs not appearing on this list may be significantly involved in HPI initiatives. How many are missing?

There is an interesting, and potentially quite positive, development to help spur the linkage between faculty development and HPI: the emergence of Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs). First funded by the Lilly Endowment in 1974, the FLC model was modified by Miami University in 1979 to emphasize community and SoTL. According to Cox and Richlin (2004), “the adapted model opened a way to establish meaningful community across disciplines, curricula, and institutions” (p. 1). Since Miami University’s adaptation, over 60 institutions have adopted their model. In addition, recent articles in the Learning Communities Journal (www.muohio.edu/lcj/) have begun to emphasize HPI-like aspects that have become rooted in some FLCs (see, in particular, Haynes et. al., 2010; Goto, Marshall, and Gaule, 2010; Kincaid, 2009; Searby, Ivankova, and Shores, 2009).

Conclusions

From their beginning with the first center for teaching and learning at the University of Michigan in 1962, CTLs have grown to become active,
involved, collaborative, and respected organizations on their campuses. Perhaps 2011 represents a watershed year—and opportunity—for CTLs to consider a radical shift in focus: not to eliminate those events and services upon which their reputations have been built, but to begin moving to a more proactive paradigm that focuses directly on improving faculty teaching performance through application of human performance improvement principles.

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## Appendix A

### Traditional vs. Performance-Focused Training Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Traditional Focus</th>
<th>Performance Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training emphasis</td>
<td>Focuses on what people need to learn; acquisition of skill and knowledge is the end.</td>
<td>Focuses on what people need to do; acquisition of skill and knowledge is a means to an end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering a work process</td>
<td>Primarily enters the work process reactively (for example, someone calls).</td>
<td>Enters the work process both proactively (through own initiation) and reactively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>Biased in favor of a single solution; this is usually some type of structured learning experience.</td>
<td>Unbiased toward solutions; relies on multiple solutions, of which training is only one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client partnerships</td>
<td>Can, and does, work independently of client partnerships.</td>
<td>Must be partnered to a client, with ownership for success jointly shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-end assessment</td>
<td>Front-end assessment is optional; work environment barriers to desired performance are rarely identified.</td>
<td>Front-end assessment is mandatory; work environment barriers to desired performance are identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring success</td>
<td>Success is measured in terms of the quality of the solution or event (for example, quality of training program).</td>
<td>Success is measured in terms of contribution to performance change and operational impact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Definition of 20 KEY HPI Terms

- **Analysis (business needs, gap, performance, strategic)**—A systematic and documented identification process in the listed area.
- **Benchmarking**—Selecting a target (usually a process in a peer organization) considered to be more advanced than one’s own and determining how to emulate that process.
- **Best practice**—An on-the-job behavior that has been affirmed as desired and as one that contributes to performance and operational results (such as improved student learning).
- **Competencies (boundary, core, job, principal, subordinate, upper boundary)**—Skills required for satisfactory or exemplary job performance within the context of one’s job role, responsibilities, and relationships in an organization and its internal and external environments.
- **Competency-based curriculum**—A competency-based curriculum is one whose content specifications are defined in competence terms—i.e., what one is expected to know or how one is expected to perform.
- **Curriculum integration**—Curriculum integration is a curriculum planning process that ensures the inclusion and development of the critical job competencies, each at their appropriate levels of subject-matter content depth and breadth across all elements or strata of an organization’s performance improvement curriculum.
- **HPI process**—The process of working in a systematic manner in order to analyze, improve, and manage performance in the workplace through the use of appropriate and varied interventions.
- **Intervention**—A solution or solution component specifically designed to bridge the gap between the actual and desired state of a particular aspect of job performance.
- **Learning needs**—The skills or knowledge required to perform as needed.
- **Learning strategy**—A learning strategy consists of the methods, techniques, approaches, and media that are used to encourage or facilitate learning.
- **Models (competency, HPI)**—Identification of performance requirements for a specific job or role as it must be performed if the business needs (such as improved student learning) are to be realized. Models can be defined in performance language or competency language.
- **Needs assessment**—The process for determining what an organization must do or how it must act in order to meet business needs and achieve organizational goals. Generally presented as a “deficit model” that emphasizes missing elements.
• **Organizational goals**—Specific and measurable “future state” targets set for an entire organization.

• **Performance framework**—The conceptual scaffolding required for determining what people must do if business needs and organizational goals are to be achieved.

• **Performance needs**—On-the-job requirements for what people must do if business needs and organizational goals are to be achieved. Typically described and measured in behavioral terms.

• **Quality improvement**—Quality Improvement is a formal approach to the analysis of performance and systematic efforts to improve that generally relies upon a specific model such as Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) or Total Quality Management (TQM). As noted by Colbeck (2002, pg. 1-2), “Pressures to copy corporate management practices are shaping proposed and actual changes in the evaluation of faculty work. [TQM and CQI] may have been just administrative fads in higher education (cited in Colbeck: Birnbaum, 2000), but their processes for data collection, monitoring and assessment linger, shaping new approaches to faculty evaluation.”

• **Results gap**—Measurable differences between results that were expected and those that actually occurred.

• **Strategic alignment**—The process of ensuring that the goals of each organizational subunit align with the top-level goals of the organization overall.

• **Systems integration**—Using performance-based language, ensuring all systems in an organization (such as Academic Affairs, Human Resources, IT) work together efficiently and effectively—and with limited overlap—to meet business needs and achieve organizational goals.

• **Work environment needs**—Systems or processes that surround performers in their work environment. **Enhancers** are systems or processes in the work environment that encourage desired performance; **barriers** are systems or processes that discourage and prevent desired performance.

• **Needs assessment**—The process for determining what an organization must do or how it must act in order to meet business needs and achieve organizational goals. Generally presented as a “deficit model” that emphasizes missing elements.

• **Organizational goals**—Specific and measurable “future state” targets set for an entire organization.

• **Performance framework**—The conceptual scaffolding required for determining what people must do if business needs and organizational goals are to be achieved.
Appendix B
Definition of 20 KEY HPI Terms (continued)

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