

## **CULTURE AND NEGOTIATION IN CHINA**

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this research is to know and determine the most relevant aspects in a negotiation between Colombian and Chinese businessmen. For this reason, the information was compiled from sources, databases, web pages, scientific articles and academic articles. So, the the information was classified to know the key and influential factors and aspects in a negotiation between these cultures, such as the customs of each culture, the rules of the protocol that should be followed so as not to be offensive or unpleasant in the meeting, the types of language in China, what things we should avoid and be assertive according to to the occasion presented. In addition, issues such as cultural differences and the negotiation culture that each of them have and the key points to consider in the negotiation.

**Key Words:** Culrure, Negotiation, China, Colombia, International Business.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The objective of this research is to determine which are the most relevant aspects to carry out a negotiation in China and be successful. You must adapt to the culture of the country where you want to close business, because sometimes local strategies do not always work in foreign markets. That is why we will learn about their languages, business culture, stereotypes and key points when negotiating between Colombian and Chinese entrepreneurs. It is very important to prepare before undertaking a negotiation in another country. Just as it can influence the language in which the business is conducted.

Taking into account that China is a country with more than 5,000 years of history, many of which have been dedicated to commerce, makes the Chinese entrepreneur a person with great skill and ability to do business in a very own way and influenced by a high cultural burden full of traditions and behaviors that are not common in the West. In China the manuals indicate that it is very important to exchange cards, bring gifts to the hosts, take pictures with them.

Initially you will find the types of language in China, showing its three types. Next, their cultural differences and also illustrating both that of Colombia and China.

Finally, opportunities that exist to negotiate in China and what protocols should be taken into account, such as their stereotypes and key points for everything to happen, in the best way.

## **1. Types of languages that are used in China**

One of the main characteristics that differentiate one worker from another is the knowledge and mastery of a foreign language. In an increasingly globalized world with a growing movement of people looking for work outside their country, knowing a foreign language gives us a differentiating element against our competitors that can make us get that job we want. Not only is it used in traditional businesses, but it is also a really useful tool when it comes to doing business over the network.

This research will develop important languages like Standard Chinese, Putonghua, or Mandarin, is the national language and is spoken by over 70 percent of the population in China, according to the author Frank L. Acuff.

### **1.1 Standard Chinese Language:**

According to the author San Duanmu (2007) around the turn of the twentieth century, in conjunction with the movement to abolish the imperial establishment, some intellectuals began a campaign for language reform. The People's Republic of China (founded in 1949) continued to support the reform and over a period of half a century, three goals have been achieved: a standard spoken language, an alphabetic writing system and vernacular writing.

According to World Atlas articles, the Standard Chinese is the official language in mainland China, as well as in Taiwan, and is also known as Standard Mandarin or Modern Standard Mandarin. The language is a standardized dialect of Mandarin language, but features aspects of other dialects in its usage, including written vernacular Chinese in the language's grammar, Mandarin dialects in its vocabulary, and the Beijing dialect in the pronunciation of its words. In mainland China, Standard Chinese is also known as Putonghua (loosely translating to "common speech"), while in Taiwan the language is referred to as Guoyu, which loosely translates to "national language." The use of Standard Chinese in mainland China is regulated by the National Language Regulating Committee, while the National Languages Committee is mandated to regulate the language's use in Taiwan. The law provides Standard Chinese as the lingua franca in China and is used as a means of communication, enabling speakers of unintelligible varieties of Chinese

languages. Mainland China has a law titled the “National Common Language and Writing Law,” whose provisions call for the mandatory promotion of Standard Chinese by the Chinese government. Records from China’s Ministry of Education show that about 70% of the population in mainland China can speak Standard Chinese, but only 10% can speak the language fluently. Standard Chinese is incorporated into the education curriculum in both mainland China as well as in Taiwan, with the government aiming to have the language achieve a penetration of at least 80% across the country by 2020. In its written format, Standard Chinese uses both simplified Chinese characters (used mainly in Putonghua), as well as traditional Chinese characters (used primarily in Guoyu). For the braille system, the language uses Taiwanese Braille, Mainland Chinese Braille, and Two-Cell Chinese Braille.

The official body for language reform set up by the Republic of China proposed that a standard spoken Chinese be adopted. It was called Guoyu ‘National Language’ and was based on the pronunciation of the Beijing (Peking) dialect. The people’s of China adopted the Standard pronunciation, although the name was changed to Putonghua the ‘Common Speech’. Standard Chinese has been the official language of China for a few decades. It is used in schools and universities and on national radio and television broadcasts (although regional stations still air some programmes in local dialects).

### **1.2 Putonghua Language:**

According to the Website TutorMing Mandarin Learning Tips Blog, the Putonghua is the official language of China. This national language has since been known as Putonghua, which means the ‘common language’. It turns out that Chinese that has been learned is just a dialect of Chinese, although it is the most popular. Mandarin, or as it is called in China, Putonghua, is the only official language of China. Other popular dialects include Shanghai, Fujianese, and Cantonese. Many of these local language varieties are not mutually intelligible, meaning that even if you speak Mandarin fluently, you still can’t understand Shanghainese, or vice versa.

The website simply is Pǔ tōng huà is the official language of the people's republic of china (mainland china). But pǔ tōng huà is not the only language spoken in china. There are

five major language families with a total of up to 250 distinct languages or dialects. This wide divergence intensifies the need for a unifying language that is understood by all Chinese people.

Historically, the written language was the unifying source of many of the Chinese languages, since Chinese characters have the same meaning wherever they are used, even though they may be pronounced differently in different regions.

The use of a commonly spoken language has been promoted since the rise of the People's Republic of China, which established *pǔ tōng huà* as the language of education throughout the Chinese territory.

Due to its long history and vast geographic size, China has always been a country with many regional dialects, lacking one common language to unite the regions. It wasn't until the Ming Dynasty, when the court moved from Nanjing to Beijing, that what we know as Putonghua today became the official language of the government.

Putonghua is the language of instruction in the Chinese school system, but even as a recent one, about 30% of the Chinese population does not speak Putonghua. People who do not speak Putonghua often live in rural areas, belong to a tribe of ethnic minorities and are usually older.

That is, if you make a trip through China, Mandarin Chinese skills will be much more useful in northern China than in the south, as the northern Beijing dialect is what Putonghua is based on. You'll have better luck communicating with people in cities rather than rural areas, and younger people than the older Chinese population.

The authors Charles N. Li and Sandra A. Thompson show since both Putonghua and Guoyu ('national language') are based on the Beijing dialect, they are quite similar except in certain areas of vocabulary, which can be attributed in part to the political differences between the mainland and Taiwan. On the other hand, both Putonghua and Guoyu are far from being 'uniform', for China has a large population spread over a vast geographical area, and consequently numerous other dialects inevitably influence and affect the versions

of Putonghua and Guoyu spoken by people from different regions. Thus, a truly uniform language in a country such as China can exist only in theory, not in reality. This is not to downplay the success of Putonghua and Guoyu in facilitating communication among speakers of mutually unintelligible Chinese dialects and in promoting universal education.

### **1.3 Mandarin Language:**

Written by the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, the Mandarin Chinese is often divided into four subgroups: Northern Mandarin, centring on Beijing and spoken in northern China and the Northeast provinces (Manchuria); Northwestern Mandarin, extending northward from the city of Baoji and through most of northwestern China; Southwestern Mandarin, centring on the area around Chongqing and spoken in Sichuan and adjoining parts of southwestern China; and Southern, or Lower Yangtze, Mandarin, in an area centred on Nanjing.

According to the authors Charles N. Li and Sandra A. Thompson, the world Mandarin denoting the major dialect family of China is an established linguistic term in the West. In popular as well as linguistic usage, the term also represents the speech of Beijing, which for centuries has been recognized as the standard language of China because of the political and cultural significance of that city. China did not officially establish a common language for the nation until 1955, however, when the government of the People's Republic of China proclaimed a national language embodying the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect, the grammar of Mandarin, and the vocabulary of modern vernacular literature. This national language has since been known as Putonghua, which means the 'common language'.

The word "Mandarin" actually has two meanings when referring to language. It can be used to refer to a particular group of languages, or more commonly, as the Beijing dialect that is the standard language of mainland China.

In recent years, and since China has become one of the greatest trading powers, Mandarin, the main and native of this country, has taken on remarkable importance in the world, mainly in the field of business. Because of this, people interested in entering the area of commerce resort to learning this complex language, to excel among the other entrepreneurs that exist.

According to an investigation by the Universidad Externado de Colombia, has become a fundamental tool in international trade, even more so than English has been. Carlos Aguirre, Director of Strategic Planning at Incae Business School, argues that thanks to China's relevance in this area, it is necessary for entrepreneurs to adapt and train in Chinese. Nowadays knowing this language opens many doors in the world of work and that more and more companies both national and international give importance to candidates to use this language, in order to create and formalize trade agreements china.

If you are not interested in the area of business, Mandarin can still be quite useful for anyone. This interesting language can be beneficial for anyone who is willing to learn it. A fairly important reason to do so is that it is beneficial for stimulating and training the brain, due to the number of symbols it contains, and it is possible that studying it will develop both hemispheres of the brain. This is because Chinese is a tonal language, and it has been proven that those who start studying it from an early age will be better in mathematics, this happens because the calculation is part of this language. On the other hand, another positive aspect of learning it is that it is a way to learn and learn about Asian culture. Knowing a new language allows you to be inuned with literature, philosophy, film and music from other places, in this case from China. (*Andrés Ferrans, librepensador uexternado, 2018*)

## **2. Differences between Asian and Latin American culture**

This research will develop important topics such as culture and customs in one between Colombian and Asian entrepreneurs, topics that could be key to the success of the negotiation and can be assertive, in addition, negotiation can be reached with knowledge of

how to deal with them, how to react to a given event or with some expectation of how to negotiate.

One of the big differences that today are noticeable and the most important is the economic disparity. Asians are supposedly linked to "fortune and success," the "model minority," while Latinos are despised as "dirty, drug dealers, straight from school to jail," all of which I know is a lie. Many Latinos don't go in the 'bad' direction, and many Asians actually suffer from drug and alcohol addiction.

The other difference is that East Asians (at least older people) tend not to want to mingle with Latinos. I'm not sure what the perspective of Asians on the other side of the war is like, but I know for sure that some of the members. (*Joan Chin*).

Culture defined as the set of knowledge, traditions, uses and customs is unique to each social structure or community, from which it is learned and transmitted from generation to generation. In this way, business culture can be applied in a more serious environment involving a particular society: entrepreneurs. (*Legiscomex*).

### **2.1 Colombian negotiation culture:**

According to the autor Frank L. Acuff, there are numerous "macrofactors" that influence your international business negotiations, such as the politics and economic climate of the region involved. There are four cultural factors that most affect negotiations among cultures: (1) use of time; (2) individualism versus collectivism; (3) role orderliness and conformity; and (4) patterns of communication. Let's examine each of these factors and how they affect negotiations.

According to Legiscomex, the negotiating in Colombia can be just as easy or difficult as negotiating with any other country in the world. Colombians manage a very simple business culture characterized by carrying out commercial relations, through dialogue and knowledge of the market with which it wants to link.

One of the most important strategies of negotiators in business processes is to generate security and trust to the counterpartso so that they can believe in something or someone,



based on the product being offered, this is the first thing you will need to achieve when you feel to do business with Colombians.

Generally, when making decisions, Colombians leave everything for the last minute, because they think that an agreement between the parties is a personalized field where everything will depend on personal relationship and even chance. This is because Colombia is a culture accustomed to uncertainty.

Gender at the negotiating table can influence, even if it is a woman. For example, women countries are the ones who make better negotiations, without deserving of men, who the more adults have more experience in managing these types of meetings.

Colombians have a very particular way of negotiating, resorting to 'haggling' and seeking an eventual and lasting gain, so you must also know trade policies and taxes, so that their price is not affected and an agreement that reaches benefit both parties.

You don't have to be overbearing, the Colombian was educated to value the outsider a lot and there are negotiators who respect and enforce each other, because at the negotiating table you have to be the same, without neglecting the helpful sense, they are amble and open, so make the most of these qualities.

Establish a good personal relationship, build trust and be firm in the negotiation with objective criteria to solve all issues. Cono mentioned above, Colombians will prefer the procedure of 'haggling', so you should ask them the sustenance of their demands and the criteria they used.

Do not despair if you are not precise with yourself, insist and try to clarify the commitments of the parties. Be open to negotiation by exchanging concession points and don't expect negotiation resolve point by point, but by exchanging trading preferences.

On the other hand, one of the most important decisions you should make before negotiating with Colombians is to select the representatives of your company who will visit this country. Colombian businessmen will want to meet their representatives personally and establish a good relationship of friendship and solidarity. It is not recommended that you

replace one of your representatives with another in the middle of a negotiation. This action could even lead to the annulment of an agreement, it is also key to show confidence and security when presenting your business because many Colombians make decisions based on their presentiments. If the Colombian businessman has any doubt about what you present to him, no matter how much evidence proves that the business will be a success, you can be sure that the negotiation will be cancelled. (*Protocol.org, 2019*).

Finally, the culture or protocol of business is applied permanently in the daily life of entrepreneurs, whether Colombian or foreign. The way of doing business becomes a whole 'ritual' between cultures that seek to establish a commercial relationship, through communication and the exchange of ideas and customs. The goal is to build trust for parties talk about businesses that generate responsibilities, projects and progress, benefiting the community around them through the exchange of products or services.

**According to the autor Frank L. Acuff , the Key Negotiating Pointers are:**

- Colombian negotiators are gracious and formal. Colombians are generally receptive to Western businesspeople.
- Be punctual even though your counterpart may not be. Colombian negotiators stress individuality more than punctuality.
- Be prepared for sometimes long discussions over black Colombian coffee before serious business is transacted.
- The pace of negotiations is slow.
- Focus on the top person in the negotiating team, probably the head of the family firm.
- Avoid embarrassing your counterpart in front of others. Try to find ways to make him or her look good.
- Put flair into your presentations.
- Get a written agreement that summarizes the key aspects of agreed-to points. Expect contracts to be fairly lengthy and detailed.

## **2.2 China negotiation culture:**

According to Legiscomex, the negotiations are process-oriented. First they need to determine whether relationships can develop at a stage when both parties feel comfortable doing business with each other. International managers of Chinese companies have developed great negotiating skills that demonstrate the ongoing pursuit of a benefit to the company they represent.

A traditional process is likely to follow during the negotiation, however, to the extent that the issue becomes more complex, the techniques of the Chinese counterpart may vary. The initial bid price should leave room for trading.

Medium- and long-term trade relations are formally built after the Chinese personally know their counterpart. While this is not an obligation, it has been shown that the more contact and personal relationship is established, the better the chances of reaching a business agreement.

The Chinese prefer to do business with people known or referenced by their friends or colleagues. For this reason, it is advisable to be presented by an intermediary who knows both parties and above all, who is in the capacity to give very good references of you and your company.

Being a member of your country's binational chamber of commerce with China or meeting the embassy's business manager, is a gateway to the Asian market.

Be very patient. International business requires considerable time, permanent exchange of communications, even several working meetings before a final agreement is reached.

China is a major importer of supplies, raw materials, finished products and services. For this reason, it is very common that in addition to you there are other foreign companies that have in the crosshairs the same company.

The Chinese prefer to set up face-to-face business rather than written or telephone communication. Participating in business wheels, traveling on trade missions, attending

fairs and having a specialized advisor are strategies that can define your access to the market.

The bias of the genre is almost non-existent in business. In China, women hold senior positions within companies and are empowered to make decisions. If you are a woman, rest assured that you will be very well received by your male counterpart in China. However, to achieve better and faster relationship, Chinese men feel more comfortable doing business with those of the same gender.

Don't be surprised if you're asked very personal questions, this is normal for the Chinese. If you do not wish to provide this type of information, try to avoid it with some humor or politely explain that such questions are not asked in your country. Tea or water will be offered for drinking in the first instance. It's not common to drink coffee. The tea is taken without sugar and there will always be a person waiting to fill the cup.

Be patient, cell phones ring and are always being contacted, no matter what process the meeting is in. Conversations tend to be noisy. If you are using interpreter, I spoke by looking at the host and not at the translator.

### **2.3 Similarities between the negotiation:**

According to the autor Lucía Fernández in the Wensite HolaChina, in both cultures it is important to keep in mind that business appointments should be scheduled at least one week in advance. It is usual to make the first contact by phone or email. Also, do not forget to confirm your appointments and arrive a few days before the scheduled date. This will allow you to adapt to the climate and altitude and finalize final details for your business meeting.

Both cultures have similarities in negotiation topics, that is to say, you never start a meeting talking directly about the negotiation, first you meet, you talk about diverse topics or of interest of each one and then if you continue with the business part.

Colombians are very friendly, friendly and uncomplicated, so gifts will be well received. Something representative of your country or your company will be well seen.

Make sure that your gifts are not so ostentatious and as far as possible try to bring a gift to all the attendees of the meeting, no matter the value, the most appreciated detail. For the Chinese, giving or receiving details is an ingrained custom, for this reason it is important to be clear what can and cannot be given in the spirit of lessening the negative impact that these may cause. Aspects such as color, quantity, and size are important variables when deciding what to give. The details are considered a show of gratitude and respect.

Trade and investment between Asia and Latin America have been booming in recent years. But the relationship can become much richer and deeper. When they eat together as a family, they talk, they scream, they laugh. They can go out to the best restaurant in town, but the greatest pleasure is cooking and eating together at home.

Societies, history, the culture of each country, of each state, city, family, are of enormous complexity, so comparisons are always a little odious; but you have to be encouraged to see the similar, to look like.

As a conclusion to capitalize on the opportunity to do business between China and Colombia, the different cultural ways of seeing time, acceptance of change and power management must be reconciled. This can affect marketing, sales, logistics, and contracts. Finally we will find affinity in the way we relate the Chinese and the Colombians as we give similar value to family and friends. Special attention should have differences in religion, philosophies, and political systems as it will be a factor that dictates guidelines in long-term communication/negotiation, so you should have as in every international relationship, people with "open mind " capable of managing, understanding and capitalizing on these kinds of differences. (*Global Minds, Fernando Parrado*).

### **3. Opportunities and protocols to negotiate in China**

China, is the most populous country in the world, with about 1300 million inhabitants, is located in East Asia. But, one of the things that most characterize China is to be the world's leading economic power, for its investments and the export of products abroad. Therefore, many entrepreneurs want to conduct business in this country.

### **3.1 China: a country open to international business:**

According to the article of American Express, China is in a privileged position in relation to other Asian countries; It has become the leader of its region, becoming the second largest economy worldwide; it is the country with the largest number of inhabitants (more than 1.3 billion); and the one that has had the highest economic growth in the last 25 years, with an annual average of 9.5%. China has proven to be a responsible, safe, reliable and friendly country.

China presents remarkable conditions for investments. Indeed, the abundance of employment, the low cost of land, the potential of its market, its legislation for foreign investment and its commercial opening, have transformed China not only in the factory of the world, but also in the center of Studies and business of large international companies.

China has attracted worldwide attention with its decades of steady economic growth and its increasing political influence in world affairs. Many scholars attribute China's rapid development to its political strategies (Grasso, Corrin, & Kort, 2004), to its economic reform (Song, 2010), and to its cultural integration to globalization (Sutter, 2005). China has become the United States' second largest and fastest growing trade partner and its biggest source of imports (Morrison, 2014).

China is a country with interesting opportunities and synergies, it took China less than 70 years to emerge from isolation and become one of the world's greatest economic powers. Over the past 40 years, China has introduced a series of landmark market reforms to open up trade routes and investment flows, ultimately pulling hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

China continues to rely on an investment catalog to encourage international trade and foreign investment in some sectors of the economy while discouraging others. "For the developed regions of China, the goal of the catalogue is to steer foreign investment towards: 1) investment in high-value-added, non-labor-intensive businesses, 2) investment in technically advanced manufacturing, and 3) investment in low pollution and energy saving technologies," according to the PwC professional services firm. The Chinese

government particularly favors foreign investment that supports its manufacturing sector by providing access to advanced technology, PwC said.

China is a country allied with the economy of Colombia due to its high import of Colombian products such as coffee and wood. This year both countries signed a treaty to encourage tourism.

### **3.2 Key Negotiating Pointers:**

According to the autor Frank L. Acuff.

- Make prior appointments and be punctual.
- Use your own intermediary, or zhongjian ren. This person can help with initial and further meetings. The successful businessperson in China is increasingly the person who can contact key people in a short period of time. The intermediary can also help with potential conflicts or misunderstandings. Chinese negotiators prefer this, even if they speak excellent English, so as not to lose face. This is consistent with the emphasis Chinese put on guanxi, or personal connections.
- Give your counterparts advance notice as to what you would like to accomplish in China. This is a courtesy that they will appreciate, and will reduce any concern they may have about being surprised by your intentions.
- Demonstrate respect and build a solid relationship. Politeness, rank, and protocol are essential. A good deal of small talk is important before getting to the content of the negotiations. Trust and mutual connections are important.
- Never do or say anything that might embarrass your counterpart. Be subtle and sensitive in your disagreements. Try not to ask direct questions. Your Chinese counterpart is proud to deal with you as an overseas client even though he probably can't make key decisions alone.
- Focus on long-term benefits, though increasingly many leaders pay attention to short-term benefits because of demands made by their global customers.
- The Chinese see the negotiation as a long courting process. Expect slow decision making that must work its way through a cumbersome bureaucracy.

- Remember that while your negotiating counterpart may not be able to make a decision to go forward on a project, he may be able to veto it or hinder your progress in the bureaucracy.
- The highest-ranking person of your negotiating team should lead the group when entering a business meeting. This highest-ranking person should be the spokesperson.
- Be reserved and dignified in your personal style. Loud, overly expressive behavior is perceived as very offensive.

### **3.3 Stereotypes of China and Colombia:**

#### **Colombia:**

- Colombia has no seasons: Colombia is a paradise, it has cold, heat, deserts and places below zero. Not everything is beach, but there are two entrances to the sea, one to the Caribbean and another to the Pacific.
- Colombia is extremely dangerous.
- Colombia is a backward country.
- There are guerrillas and paramilitaries everywhere.
- Everyone uses or sells drugs.
- In Colombia there are only drug traffickers.

#### **China:**

- The Chinese have no manners. They eat with their mouths open, spit and push themselves. You could say this is true. However, from the point of view of the Chinese, a well-educated person with good manners must possess totally other qualities that most foreigners who visit this country do not have. Blow your nose with a napkin, call an older person by name, let your friend pay for food, sit in the seat of honor (in front of the door): all are considered serious fouls on the Chinese label.
- Chinese merchandise is of low quality. The quality of the goods is determined by the customer, not the manufacturer, therefore all complaints should go to the



people who define the quality and price of the production, not those who produce the goods. There are examples of big brands like Apple, Reebok or Adidas that are "Made in China".

- China is a cheap country. First, there is a big difference between the cost of living in large cities and in the province.
- The Chinese spend their time eating rice. Chinese food is the most varied in the world. For starters, here you'll find many more vegetables than in Western countries. Not to mention the ways to cook the dishes and the variety of spices. Chinese food offers a variety of dishes depending on the season and the region, but not only rice and noodles as most.
- Very harsh punishments for drug crimes. The cruelty of punishment infinitely outrages many foreigners. Unlike other items on this list, this is not a stereotype but a truth: in China this is severely punished. For storing, consuming and disseminating drugs, the punishment ranges from many years in prison to the death penalty. But it is not cruelty but a necessity on which the well-being of the country in general depends.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Colombian and Chinese entrepreneurs each manage their own negotiation culture, but there are always the ability to adapt to give a better impression and be assertive in the negotiation. You can say that each one has its shape according to its culture, but there are similarities in both entrepreneurs that must be taken into account because they are key, they are basic at the time of the meeting, such as punctuality, respect for the other person and the advice of a native person is important.

Language is key in a negotiation because we can be pleasant or unpleasant according to how we express ourselves, more in the case of the Chinese culture, because for them it is important each of the points to consider, and respect them because if not negotiation becomes difficult. In the rules of the protocol, Colombians are more flexible, while the Chinese are more detailed, there are key actions that should be considered so as not to be offensive.

Knowing what issues we can or cannot name in a negotiation is very influential for the negotiation is successful or not, because if we touch on political issues or sensitive issues from each country can cause discomfort at the meeting and this seriously affects because damage to negotiation; If you make any of these mistakes, it is better to sincerely apologize and try to follow and improve the negotiation with another strategy.

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