

autopsy of a deceased church 12 ways to keep yours alive thom s rainer

Autopsy Of A Deceased Church 12 Ways To Keep Yours Alive Thom S Rainer Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive Thom S. Rainer When a church begins to decline, it can feel like witnessing a slow death. Thom S. Rainer, a renowned church leadership expert, offers valuable insights into how churches can identify the warning signs and implement strategies to revitalize and sustain their ministries. His work, particularly in the book "Autopsy of a Deceased Church," provides a blueprint for understanding what goes wrong and how to prevent it. In this article, we explore autopsy of a deceased church: 12 ways to keep yours alive based on Rainer's principles, ensuring your church remains vibrant, relevant, and impactful in your community. --- Understanding the Causes of Church Decline Before diving into the ways to keep a church alive, it's essential to recognize common causes of decline. Rainer emphasizes that many churches become deceased not overnight but through a gradual process marked by specific patterns and behaviors. Key Factors Contributing to Church Death Lack of clear purpose or vision Failure to adapt to cultural changes Declining attendance and membership Inadequate leadership and discipleship Neglect of outreach and evangelism Financial struggles and mismanagement Loss of passion and spiritual vitality Recognizing these factors early can help leaders implement corrective measures before the church reaches a point of no return. --- 12 Ways to Keep Your Church Alive According to Thom S. Rainer Drawing from Rainer's extensive research and practical experience, here are 12 actionable strategies to prevent church decline and foster spiritual vitality. 1. Clarify and Communicate a Clear Mission and Vision A compelling mission and vision provide direction and purpose, aligning members toward common goals. 2 Define what your church exists to accomplish. 1. Ensure the vision resonates with both members and the community. 2. Consistently communicate the mission through sermons, bulletins, and events. 3. 2. Prioritize Evangelism and Outreach Reaching new people is vital for growth and vitality. Develop outreach programs tailored to your community's needs. 1. Empower members to share their faith confidently. 2. Partner with local organizations to increase visibility. 3. 3. Foster a Culture of Discipleship Deep spiritual growth keeps members engaged and committed. Offer small groups and Bible studies. 1. Mentor new believers and young members. 2. Encourage personal spiritual disciplines. 3. 4. Invest in Leadership Development Strong, visionary leaders are essential for revitalization. Identify and train potential leaders within the congregation. 1. Provide ongoing leadership training and coaching. 2. Encourage shared leadership to distribute responsibility. 3. 5. Embrace Cultural Relevance Adapting to cultural shifts ensures the church remains relatable. Use contemporary language and media in communications. 1. Incorporate relevant music styles and worship practices. 2. Address current societal issues from a biblical perspective. 3. 6. Maintain a Welcoming Environment First impressions matter; a warm environment invites newcomers to stay. Train greeters and ushers to be friendly and attentive. 1. Ensure signage and facilities are inviting and accessible. 2. Create opportunities for newcomers to connect. 3. 3 7. Focus on Healthy Finances Financial stability supports ongoing ministries and outreach efforts. Develop transparent budgeting and stewardship practices. 1. Encourage regular giving through engaging campaigns. 2. Avoid

overextension and plan for long-term sustainability.3. 8. Regularly Evaluate and Adapt Programs Continuous assessment helps identify what works and what doesn't. Solicit feedback from members and visitors.1. Use data to analyze attendance and engagement trends.2. Be willing to modify or discontinue ineffective programs.3. 9. Cultivate a Spirit of Prayer and Dependence on God Spiritual vitality is rooted in prayerful dependence on divine guidance. Schedule regular prayer meetings.1. Encourage personal prayer and fasting among members.2. Seek God's direction in decision-making processes.3. 10. Promote a Culture of Servanthood Serving others creates a sense of purpose and community. Create opportunities for members to serve within and outside the church.1. Recognize and celebrate acts of service.2. Embed servanthood in the church's identity and activities.3. 11. Strengthen Family and Youth Ministries Engaging families and younger generations ensures future growth. Develop relevant programs for children, youth, and young adults.1. Partner with parents to disciple their children at home.2. Create intergenerational activities that foster unity.3. 12. Maintain Passion and Spiritual Vitality Church vitality begins with passionate, Spirit-led leadership and engagement. Encourage personal spiritual renewal among leaders.1. Celebrate spiritual milestones and testimonies.2. 4 Create an environment where members experience God's presence.3. --- Implementing the Strategies for Lasting Impact Applying these 12 principles requires intentionality and perseverance. Churches should develop a strategic plan that incorporates these elements, setting measurable goals and timelines. Regular review meetings can help track progress and adjust strategies as needed. Practical Steps for Implementation Conduct a church health assessment based on Rainer's findings. Involve the entire leadership team in strategic planning. Communicate the vision and plan clearly to the congregation. Seek feedback and adapt strategies accordingly. Celebrate small victories along the way to maintain momentum. --- Conclusion: Embrace Renewal and Hope Revitalizing a church is not an easy task, but with intentional effort guided by biblical principles and practical strategies, it is achievable. Thom S. Rainer's insights remind us that churches are living communities that thrive when they stay connected to their divine purpose, embrace change, and prioritize spiritual health. By implementing these 12 ways, church leaders and members can work together to keep their churches alive, vibrant, and impactful for generations to come. --- Remember: The health of your church depends on your willingness to evaluate honestly, adapt proactively, and remain rooted in prayer and purpose. Your church's future is bright when it is committed to the everlasting Gospel and the calling to make disciples. Question Answer What are the key signs that a church is experiencing an 'autopsy' or decline according to Thom S. Rainer? Signs include declining attendance, decreased giving, leadership struggles, disengaged members, and a lack of spiritual vitality, indicating the church may be heading toward decline or death. What are some of the '12 ways' Thom S. Rainer suggests to keep a church alive? Rainer emphasizes practices such as focusing on evangelism, nurturing church members, strengthening leadership, fostering community engagement, and maintaining a clear mission to revitalize and sustain a church. 5 How important is leadership renewal in preventing a church's decline according to Rainer? Leadership renewal is critical; strong, spiritually mature leaders inspire growth, guide the congregation effectively, and help implement the necessary changes to keep the church alive. Can a church turn around after signs of decline? What does Rainer recommend? Yes, Rainer believes churches can reverse decline by intentionally addressing issues, embracing change, focusing on outreach, and aligning activities with their core mission. What role does community engagement play in the health of a church according to Rainer? Community engagement helps build relationships, attract new members, and demonstrate the church's relevance, which are vital for maintaining vitality and growth. How does Thom S. Rainer advise churches to handle internal conflicts that may threaten their longevity? He recommends addressing conflicts

openly and biblically, promoting unity, and fostering a culture of grace and reconciliation to preserve the church's health. What is the significance of a clear mission in keeping a church alive? A clear mission guides decision-making, unites members around common goals, and ensures efforts are focused on spiritual growth and outreach, which are essential for longevity. How can churches implement Rainer's strategies practically to prevent autopsy and death? Churches can assess their current health, prioritize leadership development, engage their community, focus on evangelism, and regularly evaluate their progress to stay vibrant and alive. Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive by Thom S. Rainer is a compelling examination of the factors that lead to church decline and death, as well as practical strategies for revitalization. This insightful work dissects the common symptoms and underlying causes of dying churches, offering hope and actionable steps for church leaders and congregations committed to spiritual vitality. In this long-form guide, we will explore the core concepts presented in Rainer's analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of how to diagnose issues within a church and implement effective measures to keep your church alive and thriving. --- Understanding the Autopsy of a Deceased Church Thom S. Rainer's book, Autopsy of a Deceased Church, functions much like a medical report or forensic investigation. It analyzes the "death" of churches to identify the root causes and warning signs that often go unnoticed until it's too late. Recognizing these symptoms early can be the difference between revival and complete failure. The central premise is that many churches die not because of one catastrophic event but due to a series of small, overlooked issues compounded over time. Rainer emphasizes that understanding these issues allows church leaders and members to intervene proactively, preventing death and fostering renewal. --- The 12 Ways to Keep Your Church Alive Rainer offers twelve practical and biblical strategies to prevent your church from becoming another statistic. Each of these ways addresses a specific area of Autopsy Of A Deceased Church 12 Ways To Keep Yours Alive Thom S Rainer

6 church life, emphasizing that vitality depends on a holistic approach involving leadership, community engagement, worship, and disciple-making.

1. Focus on Evangelism and Outreach Why it matters: A church that neglects evangelism risks becoming inward- focused, shrinking over time. Evangelism keeps the church connected to the community and ensures ongoing spiritual growth. How to implement: - Develop intentional outreach programs. - Train members to share their faith confidently. - Partner with local organizations to serve unmet community needs. - Regularly evaluate outreach effectiveness and adapt strategies.
2. Prioritize Discipleship Why it matters: Discipleship nurtures believers, helping them mature in faith and become active participants in church life. How to implement: - Offer biblically grounded small groups. - Provide discipleship classes for new believers. - Encourage mentoring relationships. - Incorporate discipleship into every aspect of church programming.
3. Maintain Healthy Leadership Why it matters: Strong, godly leadership sets the tone for the entire congregation. Leaders influence vision, morale, and spiritual health. How to implement: - Invest in leadership development. - Hold regular leadership training sessions. - Foster a culture of accountability and transparency. - Seek leaders with humility and a servant's heart.
4. Cultivate a Culture of Prayer Why it matters: Prayer aligns the church's mission with God's will and sustains spiritual vitality. How to implement: - Incorporate prayer into all meetings and activities. - Establish prayer teams or prayer chains. - Hold regular prayer retreats or fasting days. - Teach congregation members the importance of personal and corporate prayer.
5. Embrace Change and Innovation Why it matters: Clinging to tradition at the expense of relevance can hinder growth. Churches must adapt to cultural shifts without compromising core doctrine. How to implement: - Conduct regular assessments of ministry effectiveness. - Be open to new methods of worship and outreach. - Involve diverse voices in decision-making. - Pilot new initiatives

with a flexible mindset. 6. Focus on Biblical Preaching and Teaching Why it matters: Sound doctrine and biblical teaching are foundational to spiritual health and growth. How to implement: - Maintain high standards for preaching. - Use relevant, engaging teaching methods. - Train teachers and small group leaders. - Ensure that sermons address real-life issues with biblical solutions. 7. Foster Authentic Community Why it matters: A church that feels like a family attracts and retains members, creating an environment where people experience genuine relationships. How to implement: - Encourage small groups and fellowship events. - Promote transparency and vulnerability. - Celebrate milestones and life events together. - Provide support during crises. 8. Engage in Strategic Planning Why it matters: A lack of clear, intentional planning can lead to aimlessness and decline. How to implement: - Set measurable goals aligned with biblical priorities. - Regularly review progress and adjust plans. - Involve the congregation in vision casting. - Use data and feedback to guide decisions. 9. Invest in Children and Youth Ministries Why it matters: Engaging the next generation ensures the church's future and keeps current members invested. How to implement: - Offer dynamic, age-appropriate programs. - Train youth and children's leaders biblically and practically. - Foster family-friendly events. - Encourage youth involvement in church leadership. 10. Maintain Financial Health Why it matters: Financial stability supports ministry programs and facilities that sustain church vitality. How to implement: - Practice transparent budgeting. - Encourage regular giving through stewardship education. - Develop diverse income streams. - Avoid unnecessary debt. 11. Practice Hospitality and Welcome Guests Why it matters: A warm, inviting atmosphere makes visitors feel valued and more likely to return. How to implement: - Train greeters and ushers. - Create welcoming signage. - Follow up with visitors. - Incorporate hospitality into regular church activities. 12. Emphasize Personal Spiritual Growth Why it matters: Healthy churches are comprised of spiritually healthy individuals who are committed to their walk with Christ. How to implement: - Encourage daily devotions and Bible reading. - Offer spiritual retreats and seminars. - Provide accountability partnerships. - Promote a culture of continuous learning and growth. --- Diagnosing the Disease: Common Symptoms of a Dying Church Before applying these strategies, it's essential to recognize the early warning signs that indicate a church might be headed toward decline or death. These symptoms include: - Declining attendance over several years. - Reduced participation in worship and activities. - A lack of new visitors or members. - An inward focus with little outreach. - Leadership burnout or turnover. - Financial struggles or declining giving. - Absence of spiritual growth among members. - Resistance to change or innovation. - Negative attitudes or apathy among members. - Loss of a sense of purpose or mission. Addressing these issues requires honest evaluation and a willingness to change—core themes echoed throughout Rainer's work. --- The Role of Leadership in Revitalization Church leaders play a pivotal role in preventing death and fostering renewal. Effective leadership involves: - Casting a clear, compelling vision. - Leading by example in prayer, evangelism, and discipleship. - Building a leadership team that reflects the church's mission. - Being willing to make difficult decisions. - Maintaining humility and openness to feedback. - Continuously seeking spiritual renewal oneself. A church's health is directly proportional to the health of its leadership. Leaders must be proactive, humble, and committed to continuous growth. --- Conclusion: Keeping Your Church Alive The autopsy of a deceased church by Thom S. Rainer offers a sobering yet hopeful perspective. Recognizing the signs of death early and implementing strategic, biblically grounded practices can turn the tide toward revival. Every church has the potential for renewal when leaders and members work together with prayerful intent, biblical fidelity, and a passion for reaching others. By focusing on evangelism, discipleship, leadership, community, and strategic planning, churches can not only

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for over a quarter of a century the problem of losing church members has progressively increased today the situation is so bad that less than one third of the members in some churches attend worship services church leaders are crying for help in an effort to help church leaders the billy graham school of the southern baptist theological seminary conducted a massive research project involving nearly 287 churches the most revealing aspect of the study was that the higher expectations placed on members the greater the likelihood that the members would stay and be involved with the church using the data gathered from this project thom rainer presents the first ever comprehensive study about closing the back door rainer looks at why people are leaving the church and how church leaders can

keep the members

best selling author and ministry leader thom s rainer drew an exceptional response when he posted a 500 word declaration about church membership to his daily blog i am a church member started a conversation about the attitudes and responsibilities of church members rather than the functional and theological issues that previous new member primers all but ignored thoughtfully expanded to book form i am a church member begins to remedy the outbreak of inactive or barely committed church members addressing without apology what is expected of those who join a body of believers when a person s attitude is consistently biblical and healthy matters of giving serving and so forth will fall into place more naturally six intentional chapters with study questions guide this rising discussion 1 i will be a unifying church member 2 i will not let the church be about my preferences and desires 3 i will pray for my church leaders 4 i will lead my family to be healthy church members 5 i will be a functioning member 6 i will treasure church membership as a gift

most church members don t see their churches clearly in almost all of thom s rainer s consultations church members perceive their church to be friendly but as he surveyed guests he found that the guests typically saw church members as unfriendly the perception chasm existed because the members were indeed friendly to one another the guests felt like they crashed a private party bestselling author thom rainer i am a church member autopsy of a deceased church has a game plan for churches to become more hospitable in a format that is suitable for church members to read individually or study together rainer guides readers toward a practical framework for making a difference for those who visit their church churches may use becoming a welcoming church to assess and audit where they are on a spectrum between welcoming and wanting additionally churches can use the companion book we want you here to send guests home with a compelling vision for what pastors want every guest to know when they visit

we ve read all the hot books on evangelism we ve attended scores of seminars and still we re not reaching the unchurched eighty to ninety percent of churchless americans will never darken our culturally relevant seeker sensitive doors what are we missing maybe we ve been asking the wrong people instead of consulting the unchurched masses it s time we heard what the small but important minority who have recently begun attending a church have to say what made the difference for them what critical factors helped spark their faith in jesus and drew them into the community of believers thom s rainer dean of the billy graham school of missions evangelism and church growth shares the results and conclusions of his school s groundbreaking survey of the formerly unchurched at last here are proven insights into what evangelistically effective churches are doing right flying in the face of much contemporary wisdom the answers will surprise you this is truly one of the most valuable resources you can own as a church leader filled with charts graphs and other visual aids plus an abundance of true life accounts this book explodes common myths about the unchurched you ll discover why pastors and doctrinal preaching are critical the enormous influence of family and relationships which things matter more than we d thought and which matter less what causes visitors to return the traits of unchurched reaching leaders how to preach effectively to the unchurched how to become a church for the unchurched and much much more this eye opening compendium of information includes reproducible appendices that can help you fine

tune or even restructure your church from one of the nations foremost authorities on evangelism and church growth here are insights and tools that will change the way you think of and deal with and win unchurched men and women who long to connect with god photocopyable material includes unchurched reaching readiness inventory church health survey

discover a natural way to share the love of christ think about an incredibly joyful event in your life perhaps you got a job you desperately wanted or you were really proud of something you made do you remember how you couldn't wait to talk about it you were willing and eager to have a conversation about it with anyone who would listen why doesn't our excitement for jesus overflow from our lives in a similar and natural way in this book thom rainer explores what makes so many christians hesitant to talk about the greatest news the world has ever heard there are real obstacles challenges and fears but god is bigger and stronger than these hurdles his compassion extends to all who wander and he wants to show them his love through the lives of his people with this helpful guide you will discover why it is so difficult to share the greatest news in the world identify common objections that are difficult to answer and learn how to respond to them gracefully learn about the three biggest barriers to talking to your friends and neighbors about the gospel and how to bypass those obstacles see how god loves to work through our lives to draw others to himself

the message is basic but profound we want guests to know they are welcome to the church this book is a gift to guests to communicate that very message bestselling author thom s rainer i am a church member autopsy of a deceased church has created a tool for churches to become more hospitable through a brief welcoming book that introduces the ministry of the local church to guests we want you here is a clear and instructive message to be given to church guests rainer facilitates the follow up conversation that every pastor would have if they had the opportunity by giving away the book to guests they are encouraged in a non intrusive manner to continue to reflect on the decision to visit their church those churches who share we want you here will be able to tell their guests we really want you here this is not a place for perfect people we would like to get to know you this is where families grow strong getting to know the one who made us come make a difference with us thank you for being here

based on conversations with thousands of pastors combined with on the ground research from more than 50 000 churches best selling author thom s rainer shares an eight stage roadmap to leading change in your church not by changing doctrine not by changing biblical foundations but by changing methodologies and approaches for reaching a rapidly changing culture

this text extends the teachings of bestseller simple church guiding readers to joyfully balance god time relationships and money through clarity movement focus and alignment

a convenient and easy way for pastors to ask for the prayer support they desperately need will you pray for me is a question pastors hear every day but when have you heard a pastor ask that question for themselves frankly it's rare that was the question thom rainer asked his congregation the response was overwhelming within two days more than one hundred people committed to praying for him and the church was transformed over the next year thom cannot imagine what would have happened if he hadn't overcome his initial reluctance to be that vulnerable with his congregation in this book there are thirty reflections and thirty prayers that give church members a glimpse into the struggles most pastors face and helps them pray in specific ways in the back of this book there are instructions on how to start a prayer ministry for your pastor a prayer ministry for members of your pastor's family and a thirty day prayer challenge god promises to honor the prayers of his people when the people pray is an invitation to unleash those promises

what does it really mean to be a christian in a world where everything from sports to politics social media to podcasts and movies to television vies for our attention we need to get back to what is essential i am a christian participant's guide helps people grasp who they are in christ and what their participation means to their local church through an eight session workbook designed for use with the companion dvd experience sold separately based on the book i am a christian by respected author and church consultant thom rainer this guide is a great resource for any christian designed to be used with groups or individually i am a christian participant's guide will help you clarify your purpose and mission encourage you to become a committed church member help christian communities become healthy places so they can make a significant impact on the world don't miss the companion i am a christian dvd experience

who is god why am i here how should i live these are a few of the crucial questions about life that must be answered what's exciting is that god has provided those answers in scripture in i believe thom rainer outlines the essentials of the christian faith in a clear and succinct way you'll learn about prayer church angels heaven the trinity and much more read and discuss these christian beliefs in a small group at your local church it was within a church that thom rainer first experienced the power of these profound yet simple truths to utterly transform his life the urgent need of our day is for christians to understand who they are what they believe and how that affects what they do the best place to answer those life questions is in the context of the local church it's nothing short of miraculous what god will do through a group of devoted christians who become committed and selfless church members studying i believe with a small group of christians will give you a solid base of truth on which to anchor your life in christ

the bridger generation is the first comprehensive study of the new generation 72 million strong born between 1977 and 1994 these are the bridgers the first generation to come of age in the twenty first century bridging the gap between two centuries and two millennia rainer's in depth analysis explores and explains revealing data facts and trends about tomorrow's leaders and how best to present them with the gospel of jesus moving beyond the baby boomers busters and generation x the bridger generation takes a unique first look at the next american demographic phenomenon

spend the next 30 days reaching your community in prayer and learn what it means to be a great commission christian pray go is a profound and easy to use tool that empowers church members to focus outward and learn how to pray regularly there s hope imagine your congregation devoted to prayer envision a healthy and growing church dedicated to worshiping jesus our neighborhoods need prayer like never before pray go is designed to provide convenient opportunities for everyone in your church to participate in and experience the incredible power of prayer it s easy anyone can do it just be present and pray when jesus left his followers to be reunited with god the father his parting command to them was to wait the believers obeyed by gathering praying together and waiting for the power of the holy spirit to come upon them pray go is focused on following in the footsteps of those early christians it s a 30 day journey of praying and going waiting for god and then going outside the church s four walls in obedience to jesus command both adults and young people enjoy the pray go program because it isn t cumbersome or time consuming it requires a small commitment each month to prayer and outreach pray go contains 30 daily focus topics to pray for including praying for great commission church members praying for your pastor praying for unity praying for reconciliation just pray and go yes it s that simple you will be amazed by what god will do when your church family is praying for each other and for the community accompanying video church campaign kit through church answers available online

there is hope god can save your church in this book thom rainer reveals seven findings of revived churches through new research he figuratively dissects hundreds of churches that were on the path toward death but they turned around they revitalized they did so in the face of facts and naysayers who told them it could not be done today three out of four churches are declining in our nation and twenty percent of churches are close to death what are the secrets of the churches who avoided this fate and experienced revival in anatomy of a revived church thom will show you how these churches experienced renewal he will cover everything from expanding the scorecard to dealing with toxins to choosing meaningful membership when you finish reading this book you will have the tools to strengthen restore and energize your church you can choose life for your church

if you invite them they will come it s true in a national survey done by author thom rainer and his staff eight out of ten unchurched men and women said they would come to church if only someone would invite them when and how is the next big question rainer helps you figure out where your neighbors friends and coworkers are in their spiritual quest and how you can know who among the unchurched people in your life are receptive to christ in this fascinating book rainer identifies five faith stages levels of responsiveness prefixed with a u for unchurched that represent your running buddy your sister in law or your hairdresser u1 highly receptive to hearing and believing the good news u2 receptive to the gospel and church u3 neutral with no clear signs of being interested yet perhaps being open to discussion u4 resistant to the gospel but with no antagonistic attitude u5 highly antagonistic and even hostile to the gospel a discovery we made is that reaching lost and unchurched people is not always best accomplished with some cookie cutter strategy rainer writes the unchurched are different in how they respond to the gospel how different you ll be amazed at the variables that exist when it comes to how open people are to the christian message once you ve recognized which stage your unchurched friends and family are you can much more effectively connect them with christ open this book and open your mind and heart to the powerful new

possibilities of reaching the unchurched next door

why do so many young adults 18 to 22 leave the church and what will it take to bring them back this important question is examined and duly answered in essential church a follow up to thom s rainer s best selling simple church cowritten this time with his son research expert sam rainer the book is based on a study of one thousand so called church dropouts who were interviewed about why they left their answers are quite surprising having less to do with losing their religion and more about the desire for a community that isn t made stale by simply maintaining the status quo in turn the rainers offer churches four concrete solutions toward making their worship community an essential part these young people s lives again simplify develop a clear structure and process for making disciples deepen provide strong biblical teaching and preaching expect let members know the need for commitment to the congregation multiply emphasize evangelism outward focus and starting new churches

steer is a short but power packed read for any leader or aspiring leader filled with real life stories and step by step application in steer joel wayne lays out eight key practices that are essential for leading with greater influence each chapter has key takeaways and questions to consider it s a great read to inspire leaders and people within organizations in order to focus on what s most important and minimize leadership distractions if you feel stuck in a leadership rut steer will kick you into gear for greater leadership impact what people are saying about joel and the book it is rare to find someone who is a highly effective leader who is also able to clearly communicate essential competencies that give influence and effectiveness in the marketplace and in ministry joel is a proven leader it is a joy to see the results in his family church and community james jeffery pastor and former university president steer is an eye opening read that helps you assess your leadership skills and ask the difficult questions that must be answered in order for your organization to move forward and experience healthy growth blake w stevens ernst young tax partner

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