

# **Organizational and Personal Antecedents in Adaptation of Market-Orientation in the Public Sector. An Empirical Study of Local Municipal Social-Welfare Agencies**

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## **1. Introduction**

The paper examines promoting and impeding factors, on the professional and organisational levels, that explain the adoption of a market orientation in public welfare organisations. The subject is important because of the contribution of a market orientation to strengthening workers' close relations with their clients and developing services that respond to the requirements of the complex changing environment and improvement of service quality. Furthermore, During the last decades the welfare policy has become weaker and is drifting its responsibility towards citizens into the hands of the non-profit and the private sectors. Therefore, the local welfare agencies must acquire a strategy of competitive advantage, in order to survive the fight over resources and clients. Only recently, the field of social work has begun to give credence to the idea, that in order to survive, social services must draw on business concepts and methods (Boehm & Freund, 2007; Bennett & Sargeant, 2005).

The marketing concept plays a main role in the business concept (Kotler, 2005). Hence, there is a resemblance between the social work discipline and the marketing concept principles; both first identify the clients' needs and willingness, and then attract them, retain them and respond to their needs. Both focus on target market by supplying services designed to be acceptable to and desired by those markets,

avoiding redundancy or money wasting (Yankey, Lutz & Koury, 1986; Segal, 1991; Agarwall, Krishna & Chekitan, 2003). The resemblance between Social Work and Marketing emphasizes the importance of adopting market orientation in the local municipal social-welfare agencies (Segal, 1991).

The research is based on a structured questionnaire administered to 186 employees in 86 welfare organisations in Israel. Three dimensions of market orientation were examined: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness. This study identifies factors that may promote the adoption of market orientation in the Municipal Social-Welfare Agencies. Literature has defined some personality and organizational factors, which are being tested in this research: Self efficacy; The perception of marketing as part of the profession; Person-Organization fit to NPM values: Achievement & Innovation; Organizational politics.

The findings indicate that workers' and organisations' attitudes to innovation ; perceived organisational politics; and the perception of marketing as part of the profession promote or impede a market orientation and significantly contribute to explanation of the antecedents of a market orientation.

#### **5 Keywords:**

**Market Orientation; Municipal or local welfare agencies; Public sector;  
Organizational politics; Management values**

## **2. Theory, model, and hypotheses**

## **2.1. Market Orientation**

Market orientation is an essential contrast of healthy business firms competing in highly demanding and sophisticated modern economies (Shoham, Ruvio, Vigoda-Gadot & Scwabsky, 2006).

Researchers agree that the market orientation is the way organizations manage all their multiple stake-holders and examines the extent to which firms behave or are inclined to behave, in accordance with the marketing concept. (Cervera, et. al., 2001; Liao, et.al., 2001; Ormond, 2005). Hence market orientation has been conceptualized from both cultural (Narver & Slater, 1990) and behavioural perspectives (Kohly, Jaworski & Kumar ,1993). In this study, The behavioral approach was examined. It concentrates on organizational activities which are directed by the managers of the organization. These activities are related to the *generation* of market information, cross-departmental *dissemination* to information and *responsiveness* to disseminated information. This approach is appropriate for implementing the development of public services (Wood, 2008), which cope with ever-diminishing resources and sources of funding, as well as increasing competition (Mayntz, 2006), the need for streamlining and innovation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009), and the aim of developing services that are accessible to clients and adapted to their changing needs (Clarke, 2006). It also enables quantitative, measurable evaluation of performance.

## **2.2. Antecedents of market-orientation in the municipal social-welfare agencies**

### **2.2.1 self efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a process of evaluation, judgement, and control that determines how people think, feel, and act, and contributes significantly to their motivation and achievement. Self-efficacy is defined as a system of beliefs according to which people judge their ability to plan and implement different actions successfully (Bandura, 1982; Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001).

There has also been criticism of the inaccuracy of measurement (Locke & Latham, 1990).Based on this criticism, Bandura (1997) suggested a distinction between general and specific self-efficacy, which is related to tasks in defined situations and fields. With regard to marketing, high self-efficacy with regard to marketing has been shown to contribute to successful handling of complex tasks required in collecting

information and persistence in marketing efforts aimed at improving service (Hu, Huhman, & Hyman, 2007; Strebel, Erdem, & Swait, 2004). According to this approach, employees who are confident in their ability to engage in this field will take action to adopt a market approach without barriers. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis: A positive correlation will be found between the social workers' specific self-efficacy (in marketing) and their market orientation.**

### **2.2.2. The perception of marketing as part of the profession**

Perceptions of marketing as part of the Social Workers' profession rely on the fit between the marketing concepts and activities and the vision and aims of social work. Marketing will be perceived as a professional activity, based on knowledge, goals setting, strategy and assessment (Boehm, 2006). Since there's no study found on this subject, the definition is based on a study that assesses attitudes of social workers towards fundraising as a professional activity. Despite the growing recognition of marketing in recent years (Boehm & Freund, 2007; Escoffier, 2007) and its presentation as an effective means for coping with complex changing environment (Ewing & Napoli, 2005), the adoption of the marketing as part of the social work profession can not be taken for granted. Research over the correlation between market orientation and workers in the public sector found that workers have negative perceptions on marketing (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003, which is a result of the gap between the values that stand in the core of the public sector and those of the for-profit sector (Buurma, 2001; Walsh, 1994; Gainer & Padanyi, 2005).

Regarding social workers, marketing may threaten social workers, as many of them perceive their professional role primarily as caregivers (Boehm, 2006; Dearling et al., 1995), and not as 'marketing people' requiring a managerial approach.

Although the resemblance between social work and the marketing concept (Segal, 1991), those who criticize the marketing concept claim, that it may the welfare agencies to aggressive profitable services Furthermore, and it may raise ethical dilemmas (Boehm, 1998).

***Hypothesis 2. :A positive correlation will be found between the social workers' perception of marketing activities as part of their profession and their adoption of a market orientation.***

### 2.2.3. Person-Organization fit of New Public Management Values

The new public management values were developed in response to a demand for the supply of more efficient and effective public services, requiring public organisations to strengthen patterns that achieve results and set standards for evaluating performance, competitiveness, understanding of customers, accountability, initiative, transparency, innovation, and achievement orientation (Hood, 1991; Meiri & Vigoda-Gadot, 2008). In the present research we concentrate on innovation and achievement orientation, based on their relevance to the research subject. This study focuses on two NMP values, Achievement and Innovation:

#### Achievement

Achievement is the will to advance and succeed in one's career, to exert oneself in order to gain new qualifications, to expand his responsibilities and to promote his organization's goals (Judge & Bretz, 1992). An achievement-oriented person is described as an energetic one, who leads, plans and works by goals and aims. (Ansari, Baumgartel & Sullivan, 1992).

An achievement-oriented organization should benefit its workers by their outputs, in order to develop varied ways to achieve its goals and to raise the workers' sense of achievement (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

#### Innovation

Innovation is where new ideas, goals and processes are being created or developed (Rogers, 1995). Innovation is a successful implementation of creative ideas which creates organization competitive advantage (Miron, Erez & Naveh, 2004), helps to respond quickly to the clients' and environmental demands (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; West & Anderson, 1996; Janssen, Van De Vliert & West, 2004).

#### Person-Organization Fit

Research conducted since the early 1980s emphasizes the fit between the employee and the organisation as essential (Hernes, 2005) to increasing the effect of marketing and the organisational image. Chatman (1989) defines person-organisation fit as the degree of overlap between organisational and personal values, based on two

components: (a) the personality of the employee, and (b) the organisational culture. Fit contributes to the creation of a work environment in which employees and decision makers share the same goals for the good of the organisation (Cunningham, 2000). It also contributes to employee satisfaction and better performance (Bretz & Judge, 1994). When there is fit between the individual and the system regarding the approach to innovation and achievement orientation there are greater chances of collective organisational support for this approach, making marketing a priority and allocating more resources for it. According, the third hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 3. : A positive correlation will be found between person–organisation fit in terms of the values of achievement-orientation and innovation and the adoption of a market orientation.**

#### **2.2.4 Organizational Politics**

Political behaviour is related to aspects of power and influence and reflects the ability of people to affect what happens (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). In organisations with a high degree of organisational politics, the members of the organisation exploit the centres of power in the organisation in order to promote policies and plans that they see as desirable, in order to promote personal interests, often in contradiction to the goals of the organisation itself (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989; Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun, 2005). Such organisations operate less according to professional, technical, or scientific considerations, and more on the basis of considerations of control and power (Gummer, 1990).

Employees perceive a high degree of organisational politics as contrary to the values of justice and fairness in the division of resources and appropriate rewards for effort.

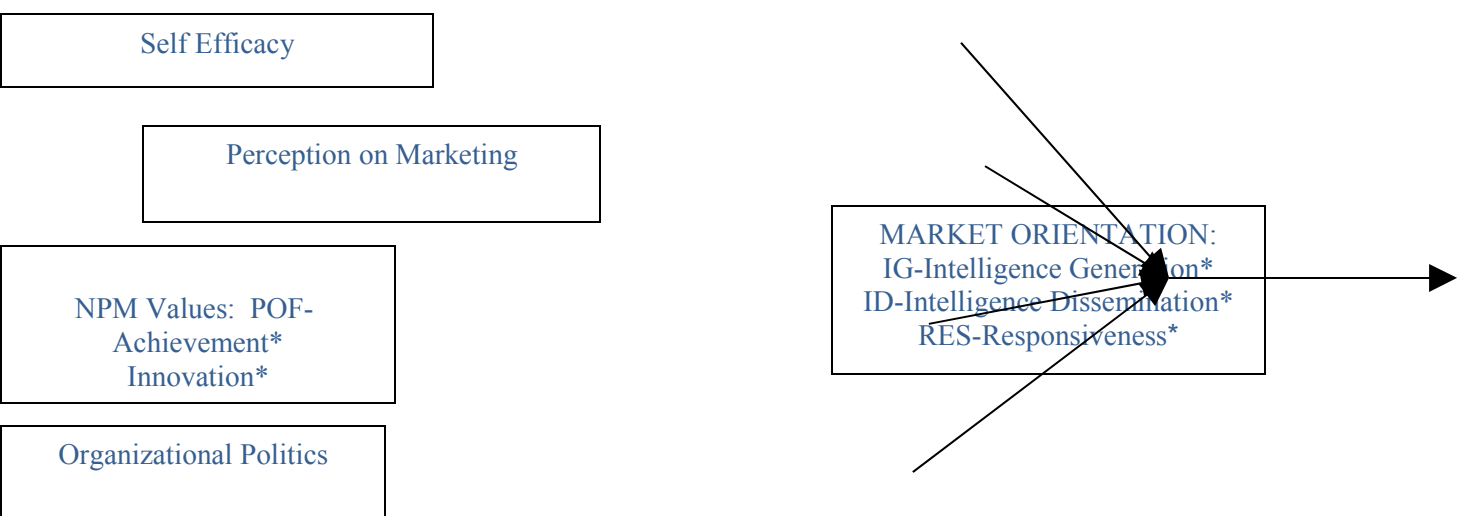
Ambiguity in setting an organisation's aims and goals and how they should be implemented, which often characterizes public organisations (Peters & Pierre, 1998), may contribute to the development of organisational politics (Pfeffer, 1992).

Furthermore, the close relationship between public organisations (including welfare organisations) and political and government systems is likely to impart the values and norms of the political environment to the organisation (Gummer, 1990; Peterson, 1990). Employees who focus on organisational politics are therefore likely to invest effort in locating and influencing the centres of power and less on finding information that is relevant to the organisation's customers, disseminating it, and developing services accordingly. This gives rise to the fourth hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4.: A negative correlation will be found between the social workers' perception of organisational politics and the adoption of a market orientation.**

### **2.3. Model**

The meaning and importance of market orientation has been studied extensively in the business sector (Kohli & Jaworski; Narver & Slater, 1990), but it is relatively new concept for the nonprofit and public sector. The model suggested in this research intends to explain the relationship between the antecedents of market-orientation and the tendency to adopt market orientation in the municipal social-welfare agencies. These factors are conceptualized from two levels: the personality level and the organizational level and include: Self efficacy, Perceptions on marketing as a part of the Social Workers' professional activities, person-organization fit of achievement and innovation, and organizational politics.



### **3.1. Sample**

The research sample was comprised of social workers and their managers, employed in the municipal social-welfare agencies in Israel. The participants were selected randomly from a list of municipal social-welfare agencies in the northern and central regions of Israel. 86 agencies were randomly chosen, 210 questionnaires were given and 186 questionnaires were returned.

The majority of participants were born in Israel (84.4%) and most were women (83.2%). The average age of the participants was 42 years. Slightly more than half of the participants held bachelor's degrees (51.6%) (in Israel it is customary for social workers to begin working with a bachelor's degree), and the others held master's degrees (43.5%) or doctorates (0.5%). Most of the participants were employed by municipalities (67.2%) and the others worked for regional and local councils (in rural areas) (32.8%). The majority were rank-and-file social workers (71.1%) and the rest were employed at different levels of management (team leaders, service directors, or organisation directors) (28.9%). The participants were divided between macro positions (management and community work) (53.7%), and clinical work (46.3%).

### 3.2. Research tools:

The responders were asked to score their answers on a 5 point scale from 1 (do not agree) to 5 (strongly agree) according to the following items:

*Market orientation:* Based on the "Markor" scale (Kohli, Jaworski & Kumar, 1993), adapted from business to public organisations by Caruana, Ramaseshan & Ewing (1999). A scale of 20 items was used examine the implementation of three components of market orientation: (a) 6 items for intelligence generation ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ); (b) 5 items for intelligence dissemination ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ); and (c) 9 items for responsiveness ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). (General measure  $\alpha = 0.90$ ).

*Self efficacy:* following the scale suggested by Boehm (2006) a scale of 7 items was used ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

*The perception of marketing as part of the profession:* following the scale suggested by Boehm (2006) a scale of 6 items was used and transformed from attitudes towards fund-raising to attitudes towards marketing ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ).

*POF of NPM values: Achievement & Innovation:* following the scale suggested by Meiri & Vigoda- Gadot (2007) a scale of 28 items was used (Innovation:  $\alpha = 0.93$  for organization;  $\alpha = 0.88$  for workers ; Achievement:  $\alpha = 0.79$  for organisation;  $\alpha = 0.77$  for workers).

*Organizational politics:* following the scale suggested by Vigoda-Gadot & Kapun (2005) a scale of 9 items were used ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

#### 4. Findings

The findings indicate that of all the dependent and independent variables, the intelligence generation, was found to be relatively low (0.60).

**Table 1: Reliability, Means, Standard Deviation and Pearson Correlations of All Variables**

Variables	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Intelligence Generation	0.60	3.48	0.71	1								
Intelligence Dissemination	0.68	2.90	0.86	0.61***	1							
Responsiveness	0.83	3.41	0.53	0.61***	0.64***	1						
Overall market orientation	0.87	3.31	0.56	0.84***	0.85***	0.90***	1					
Self efficacy	0.83	3.64	0.79	0.11	0.26***	0.21**	0.22**	1				
Market perception	0.79	3.93	0.64	0.15**	0.24***	0.24***	0.24***	0.46***	1			
P-O fit - innovation		0.75	0.69	-0.46***	-0.43***	-0.46***	-0.52***	0.00	0.06	1		
P-O fit - achievement		1.92	1.00	-0.07	-0.28***	-0.22**	-0.23**	0.01	0.17*	0.41***	1	
Organisational politics	0.79	2.92	0.67	-0.32***	-0.34***	-0.51***	-0.47***	-0.12**	-0.08	0.42***	0.42***	1

N = 186; \*p≤0.05; \*\* p≤0.01; \*\*\* p≤0.001

**Table 2: Regression Analyses: Predicting Market Orientation of Social Workers**

Variables	Intelligence generation $\beta$ (t)	Intelligence dissemination $\beta$ (t)	Responsiveness $\beta$ (t)	Overall market orientation $\beta$ (t)
Gender	0.037 (0.521)	0.024 (0.350)	0.072 (1.099)	0.056 (0.864)
Age	0.041 (0.584)	-0.061 (-0.880)	0.082 (1.229)	0.033 (0.510)
Agency	0.106 (1.457)	0.095 (1.333)	0.025 (0.360)	0.078 (1.164)
Occupation	-0.033 (-0.421)	-0.151 (-1.962)	0.075 (1.015)	-0.026 (-0.359)
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>	<b>.077</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.076</b>	<b>.095</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>3.12*</b>	<b>4.68**</b>	<b>3.12*</b>	<b>3.97**</b>
Self efficacy	0.008 (0.092)	0.027 (0.329)	0.039 (0.488)	0.031 (0.403)
Mark. perception	0.119 (1.475)	0.238** (3.020)	0.205** (2.713)	0.214** (2.899)
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>	<b>.023</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.054</b>	<b>.051</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>3.55*</b>	<b>4.64*</b>	<b>4.41*</b>
Organisational politics	-0.219** (-2.660)	-0.134 (-1.655)	-0.373*** (-4.824)	-0.294*** (-3.896)
P-O fit – achievement	0.215** (2.685)	-0.086 (-1.099)	0.068 (0.913)	0.076 (1.037)
P-O fit – innovation	-0.422*** (-5.270)	-0.355*** (-4.518)	-0.318*** (-4.229)	-0.413*** (-5.614)
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.28</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>15.28***</b>	<b>13.82***</b>	<b>21.18***</b>	<b>23.26***</b>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.316	0.339	0.394	0.422
$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	0.216	0.188	0.264	0.276
	0.274	0.298	0.357	0.386
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	15.282***	13.823***	21.182***	23.258***
F for $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	7.446***	8.303***	10.555***	11.841***
F				

N=186; ; \*p $\leq$ 0.05; \*\* p $\leq$ 0.01; \*\*\* p $\leq$ 0.001

In order to examine the relative contribution of the different independent variables to different components of market orientation, three hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each of the orientation variables and another analysis was conducted on the variable of overall market orientation. The regression model included three blocks: background information (gender, age, type of organisation – municipality or local council), and the job fulfilled by the social work (macro or clinical – manager or community worker; individual worker), personal-professional variables (perception of marketing as part of the profession and self-efficacy).

The inclusive models (with all three blocks) were found to be significant and explain a relatively high percentage of overall market orientation (42%), responsiveness (39%), intelligence dissemination (34%), and intelligence generation (32%).

**Table 3: Summary of the findings**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Variable</b>
No correlation was found	<b>Self efficacy</b>
A positive correlation was found between the perception of marketing as part of the social work profession and intelligence dissemination ( $\beta = 0.238$ ; $p \leq 0.01$ ), responsiveness ( $\beta = 0.205$ ; $p \leq 0.01$ ), and overall market orientation ( $\beta = 0.214$ ; $p \leq 0.001$ ). In other words, the more the social workers perceived involvement in marketing as part of their profession, the more they adopted a market orientation in terms of the components of intelligence dissemination and responsiveness	<b>perception of marketing as part of the social workers' profession</b>
Negative correlations between person–organisation fit regarding innovation and intelligence generation ( $\beta = -0.422$ ; $p \leq 0.001$ ), intelligence dissemination ( $\beta = -0.355$ ; $p \leq 0.001$ ), responsiveness ( $\beta = -0.318$ ; $p \leq 0.001$ ), and overall market orientation ( $\beta = -0.413$ ; $p \leq 0.001$ ) were found. These indicate that the higher the person–organisation fit regarding innovation, the greater the adoption of market orientation, in terms of all its components.	<b>Person-Organization Fit of NPM value - Innovation</b>
A positive correlation was found between person–organisation fit regarding achievement and intelligence generation ( $\beta = 0.215$ ; $p \leq 0.01$ ). In other words, contrary to expectations, the greater the disparity between employees and the organisation regarding achievement, the more intelligence generation by the workers	<b>Person-Organization Fit of NPM value - Achievement</b>
A negative correlation was found between the perception of organizational politics and intelligence	<b>Organizational politics</b>

<p>generation (<math>\beta = -0.219</math>; <math>p \leq 0.01</math>), responsiveness (<math>\beta = -0.373</math>; <math>p \leq 0.001</math>), and overall market orientation (<math>\beta = -0.294</math>; <math>p \leq 0.001</math>). The less organizational politics perceived by the employees, the greater their adoption of market orientation in terms of the components of intelligence generation and responsiveness</p>	
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## 5. Discussion

The purpose of the research was to identify factors that promote the adoption of a market orientation among employees of municipal welfare organizations. It is important to identify factors that encourage the involvement of welfare employees in aspects of market orientation because of the need to provide services that fit the needs and desires of the clients, to ensure that the organizations supply responses that are appropriate for complex changing environments, to improve the image and quality of the welfare services, and to operate effectively in a competitive environment.

Research results show that factors which are related to the connection between the individual to the organization, as the person-organization fit to the innovation value and perception organizational politics are dominant. Apparently, the dominance of the organizational factors can be explained by the nature of the marketing activity, which requires action on the macro-organizational level (Kara, et al., 2004; Voss & Voss, 2000). Regarding the results of Organizational politics it appears that social workers view a high degree of organizational politics as undesirable. The investment of effort in marketing depends, then, upon the resources that employees are willing to expend if they have a reasonable change of obtaining fair rewards. The results related to the perception of marketing as a part of the profession can be explained by the resistance to adopting marketing activity among employees who consider marketing techniques as foreign, imported from the business world, and conflicting with the activities and values of the profession (Abramovitz, 2005; Baines, 2008), because it does not significantly contribute to the explanation of intelligence generation. On the other hand, Findings on specific self-efficacy in the field of marketing, does not significantly contribute to the explanation of any of the antecedents of the market orientation. These findings contradict the cognitive-social theory, which defines self-efficacy as influencing workers' decisions about their degree of involvement in activities (Burr & Cordery, 2001), and are also

inconsistent with previous research findings that correlate self-efficacy with performing complex tasks (Boehm, 2006; Hu et al., 2007). It emerges that the value-based perception regarding the issue of marketing (perception of marketing as part of the profession) has greater impact – promoting or impeding – the adoption of a market orientation than self-efficacy regarding this issue does.

### **Limitations**

- The sample used did not investigate other professional groups. It would be useful to expand the research to other organisations and populations.
- The research was conducted in Israel, and should be expanded to other countries
- The research did not directly examine the contribution of the managerial ranks.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The research findings indicate the dominance of the organisational level in explaining variance of market orientation among welfare employees.

The findings indicate that using marketing demands a higher level of organizational activities than personal ones. The research results highlight the urge to take action in order to increase the factors that predict the adoption of market orientation. Therefore, it is recommended to involve the management personnel and policy makers, as the ministry of welfare who are responsible for the policies related to the activities taken by social workers at the welfare agencies. The research findings also indicate a need to develop organizational systems based to a greater extent on rational processes of consideration, evaluation, and findings optimal means, and less on political processes based on power relations and personal interests in the decision-making process (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006). Organisation managers can contribute considerably to shaping organisational structure and culture (McAleese & Hargie, 2004). It is therefore advisable to encourage organisation managers to undertake a leadership role and set a personal example in adopting the different components of market orientation.

In addition, the research results focus on the attitudes of the social worker towards marketing as a part of the social workers' professional activities variable as an efficient factor that increases the adoption of market orientation by social worker. Since this factor is an acquired value, it is desirable that the academy put in their first priority to develop human capital to the subject of marketing early on in the first stages of academic education, in a manner that would emphasize the linkage between social work and market orientation.

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