



# True Colours Keynotes

## *The ABC of Working With A Professional Speaker*

*Authored by Debbie Carr*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This E-book has been written as a guide for anyone who needs to work with a professional speaker. It has been designed to be used as an extensive checklist.

Hiring a Speaker can be a daunting task with a risk involved. My advice to you is to use a reputable bureau if you are looking for a speaker that you have not used before. Using a bureau will save you money, time and stress!

### **About the Author**

Debbie is the Principal of Coyote Management International Speaker Bureau which she founded in 2004, Director of True Colours Recruitment Pty Limited and also True Colours Keynotes Women's Speaker Bureau. Debbie saw a need to establish a women's speaker bureau after realising that the majority of speakers on her books, and that of her competitors, were male.



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## **Audio Visual Equipment - AV**

It is a good idea to establish what sort of AV equipment the speaker will be requiring for the presentation.

Some speakers use PowerPoint, overhead projectors, certain lighting and microphones. Conference venues will have access to this equipment, along with a technician to see that all works well. Arrange with your speaker or bureau what type of AV equipment is required.

## **Airfare**

Many speakers travel Business Class. Some meeting planners try to negotiate on this but please keep in mind that speakers spend a lot of time on planes. In-demand professional speakers travel both nationally and internationally.

When you have booked the speaker, make sure they advise you of their flight details. If you think the speaker is cutting it a bit fine, say so, and ask them to catch an earlier flight. It is a good idea to discuss these types of concerns with the speaker or booking bureau well before the final arrangements have been made.

Remember to allow for transfers from the airport to the venue and back. It is good practice to have an alternative in mind should the pick-up person not show up at the airport. The client is responsible for transfers to and from the airport and venue. Transport from the speaker's home to the airport and back is at the expense of the speaker.

## **Audience Participation**

Speakers often have the audience participation during the presentation. As the meeting planner, ensure you understand exactly what the speaker is going to do during the presentation. I know speakers who have the audience break karate boards, wooden target arrows on their necks and all sorts of seemingly dangerous feats. Enquire with the speaker if there is a Disclaimer Form that needs to be completed before any audience member can participate.

Audience participation is certainly well received if the conference has intense learning sessions.

If a speaker is going to use props, enquire before the presentation where they would like them placed.

## **Brief**

The most important part of working with a professional speaker is to ensure you communicate your brief in detail. I would strongly suggest a face to face meeting, but if this

is not possible due to logistics, a couple of phone calls at least. Your brief should also be put in writing to the speaker and to the bureau if you are using one.

The speaker will most certainly tailor his/her presentation to the organisation and you must ensure that the speaker understands exactly the message to be delivered. It is also important that the speaker is informed with regards to anything **you don't want said**. This is the time to let the speaker know who the audience is and what the objective of the keynote is. When you hire a professional speaker, this is exactly what you get – a **professional**, so the speaker should be asking you a lot of questions. If not, I'd be wondering why not.

This is also the time to discuss if the speaker is permitted to promote their product on stage, if you agree to this you may want to be specific for instance – no hard selling. Are you planning to record the speaker? This is the time to discuss this as some speakers will not allow this.

I cannot stress enough the importance of communicating exactly what you want the speaker to say.

## Budget

You decided on your speaker based on whether he or she is going to meet your objectives. You feel happy that you have found the perfect speaker and then you hear the fee, and you didn't realize how much a good speaker costs.

Professional speakers are paid for their expertise. They are experts who speak. They are paid to deliver. It takes years of experience to become a professional speaker and the higher the fee, normally the more experienced the speaker is.

There are many options you can consider to help with justifying the fee for the speaker.

Here are some ideas:

- Is there a sponsorship involved in the conference – approach the sponsors to see if they will fund the speaker?
- Can you negotiate a reduction of the speaker fee with the speaker, in return of guaranteed sales of their product?
- Can you offer the speaker follow on training after the conference – the speaker will often 'package' up several guaranteed engagements?
- Will you buy online training as a follow-up after the conference? The speaker may be able to 'package' this for you.

## Back of Room

"Back-of-room sales" refers to the speaker selling books or products, usually after the presentation. Establish with the speaker before the event if he or she wants to have back-of-room sales. This of course is entirely at your discretion as it may not be appropriate.

If the speaker is permitted to have back-of-room sales, a covered table will need to be provided and placed either inside the conference room or immediately outside near the registration table.

## Break Out Sessions

Break out sessions are when the group splits into smaller working groups. This is often in a team-building session or when attendees are offered different subject topics.

## Bureau

See Speakers Bureau

## Checklist

- ✓ **Contract** – Do you have the contract in place? Your bureau should arrange all this for you.
- ✓ **Materials** – Has the speaker sent up the materials for the conference i.e. workbooks? Have arrangements been made for distribution?
- ✓ **Signage** – Ensure that the event is clearly signposted.
- ✓ **Finalise numbers** – how many people attending and have sent an RSVP.
- ✓ **Phone numbers** - Do you have the speaker's mobile number, work number, home number and emergency number i.e. the bureau?
- ✓ **Dress code** - Have you informed the speaker of this?
- ✓ **Emergency** – have you briefed the speaker what to say in an emergency situation? Does the speaker stand aside and let the CEO or the venue management be responsible for delegate evacuation?
- ✓ **Have you allowed for breaks?** Make sure that the delegates have something refreshing during the presentation. Most keynotes only last for 60 minutes but anything beyond that, plan for some interaction with the audience.
- ✓ **Have you advised the catering staff NOT to serve food whilst the speaker is presenting?** If you are going to serve food have you checked with the speaker?
- ✓ **Contact on arrival** - Have arrangements been made for the speaker to make contact when they arrive on site?
- ✓ **Speaker's introduction** - Has the speaker's introduction been given to the MC or introducer? Ideally, the speaker should brief the introducer.
- ✓ **Are you recording the presentation?** If yes, have you written agreement with the speaker?
- ✓ **Have you promoted the speaker?** You can ask the speaker to write an article or press release.
- ✓ **Brief** - Have you discussed in detail the speaker's brief?
- ✓ **Check in** - Have you checked with the speaker at least two days before the event?

## Contracts

Always ask the speaker or bureau for a contract. Our bureau has a standard practice of issuing the contract between the client and the speaker. Ensure that the following clauses are included in the contract.

**Material Costs:** If workbooks are being provided who is paying for them? Is it included in the speaker's fee? Also, stipulate who will distribute the workbooks, will this be the responsibility of the speaker or will the meeting planner organise to have them distributed?

**Travel Expenses:** Is the airfare business or economy? Most Australian professional speakers fly business class. The meeting planner/client are not responsible for paying for fares other than the speaker, e.g. spouse, unless that is part of the contractual arrangement.

**Speaker transportation:** It is standard practice for the meeting planner/event organiser to arrange for transfers to and from airport and venue.

**Props:** What equipment is needed, i.e. projector, whiteboard, what type of microphone? etc. Stipulate this in the contract.

**Assistants/Staff:** Will the speaker be bringing an assistant; is this necessary, and if so, is it included in the speaker's fee?

**Transport of Materials:** Costs should be arranged between the event organiser and the speaker.

**Recording:** Always obtain permission in writing from the speaker before the recording of any of the session.

**Promotion & Publicity:** Responsibility of the event organiser.

**Seating Arrangements:** Ensure that you have discussed the layout of the meeting room with the speaker and put this in the contract.

**Audio-Visual Needs:** Discuss with speaker and have requirements stipulated in the contract.

**Lectern, Podium:** Discuss with speaker and have requirements stipulated in the contract.

**Meeting Room Check:** Stipulate in the contract what time you want the speaker to arrive and whom to contact on arrival with phone number.

**Meals:** Appropriate meals are required as part of the accommodation expenses.

**Contact details:** Always have both speaker and client mobile phone numbers in the contract.

**Date of meeting:** Ensure this is written in the contract.

**Duration of the presentation:** Ensure this is written in the contract.

**Guarantee:** Is there a guarantee from the speaker if the conference organizers are not happy with the outcome?

**Fee:** Always stipulate the fee and include any other costs, ie. accommodation, meals etc.

**Cancellation Fee:** Have this stipulated in the contract. Most speakers will charge a 50% cancellation fee if the engagement is cancelled.

## Deposit

Most speakers and bureaus require a 50% deposit to secure the date when you make a booking. Some require 100% of the fee as a deposit.

The reasons:

- Secures your date and you receive a written contract. It gives you a commitment to your event. Speakers book months in advance.
- The speaker could be offered another engagement. In-demand speakers are often asked to perform on the same date. The deposit is your guarantee.

## Demo

A demo DVD or CD is made to promote the speaker. Many speakers have a demo created. If it helps you to make a decision, ask your bureau or speaker if one is available.

Some speakers will have their demo as a downloadable file on their website. If you are referred to the speaker's website by a bureau, still book through the bureau.

## Expert

Professional speakers are experts. You are paying for an expert. When deciding on a speaker, unless you want a specific speaker you have used before or know of, the best way to start the process is to choose by category.

Professional speakers are "Experts Who Speak". There are many categories of speaker. Some categories are:

- MC
- Hoax and Humour
- Inspirational
- Motivational
- Time Management
- Strategy and Development

- Communications
- Creative Thinking
- Customer Service
- Personal Empowerment
- Marketing
- Branding

## Entertainers

Corporate Entertainers are also popular at events and conferences. Many of them will tailor-make their show to the theme of the event.

If you are using a bureau you may find that they also provide the services of entertainers.

## Fees (your investment)

Professional speakers know what they are worth and have “fee integrity”. This means that the speaker does not usually negotiate the fee, with a few exceptions. Remember the fee is an investment not an expense.

For example:

- Charity event – the speaker may not charge a fee at all, or reduce it considerably.
- You have offered the speaker several dates for the year and the speaker has ‘packaged’ a special price for you.
- Ask your speaker for value added – i.e. negotiate that they offer an extra service at the event. Maybe the conference is lasting for a few days...can the speaker MC at the dinner? Can the speaker facilitate a workshop? Can the speaker help with publicity spots? Maybe you can use the same speaker for two spots at the conference and save hiring another one, and other expenses such as airfares.
- Bartering – do you have something to trade with the speaker to lower the fee? Maybe you are able to offer free advertising in a trade magazine for the speaker.
- Save on airfares and accommodation. Most speakers tire of travelling and being away from their families? Can you use a professional speaker who is local to the area?
- Bureau fees – Do not use a bureau or speaker who inflates the fee to cover the bureau’s fee. The speaker pays the bureau out of the standard fee and this should not be charged to you.

- Find out if the speaker is intending to increase the fee, if so, secure the current fee by paying a 50% deposit.
- Speaker Product Sales – Maybe you can guarantee the speaker a certain amount of sales of their products? Can it be that you purchase a book for each of the participants? If you are allowing the speaker to sell product, please establish the guidelines with the speaker so that you are both comfortable on how much of a sale the speaker makes whilst speaking to the audience. Ensure your audience doesn't feel pressured or embarrassed into buying product.
- Buy the speaker's educational materials. Can you negotiate that the speaker reduces the fee but you will pay for the educational material that the speaker provides?

## Guarantees

Who Pays When Disasters Occur When Hiring Presenters, Speakers, Motivational Keynotes, Trainers, or Seminar Leaders?

### **The Speaker's plane is delayed and he/she misses the engagement?**

A full refund should be given. It is the speaker's responsibility to ensure that they allow sufficient time.

### **The speaker is ill and misses the engagement?**

A full refund should be given. If you have booked through a bureau, every effort should be made to get a replacement speaker and discount offered.

### **The speaker has prepared materials to your brief and you cancel?**

It is usual practice that a 50% cancellation fee is put in place or you could re-book the speaker for another engagement.

Our objective at True Colours Keynotes is to work with you to choose the most appropriate speaker for your conference. We take away your pain in having to search, meet budget, check testimonials, arrange contracts and all the other time-consuming things involved in finding a speaker.

To do this, we will ask you a lot of questions before we shortlist the appropriate speaker for your needs.

When your conference is over, that won't be the last you hear from us because we want to build a lasting relationship with you.

If we have provided you with a speaker that 75% or more of your participants believe did not meet your brief then ***WE WILL REFUND YOUR INVESTMENT.***

## **Gig**

In the speaking and entertainment industry the word "gig" is slang for booking engagement.

## **Hoax/Hoaxer**

This is a specialised field where the speaker plays a character to mislead the audience. Often this is tailor-made for the conference.

Be prepared for some audience members to be initially shocked and some even annoyed. This usually passes quickly once the speaker de-briefs what he/she just conveyed.

Obviously if you hire a Hoaxer you will only be able to reveal this to senior management and key players of the conference. You will need to be careful that the speaker's website is not revealed or any other indiscretions occur.

The hoaxer will guide you on what to say and put on the conference papers. A keynote must support the main message of the convention.

## **Handouts**

The educational and worksheet material which will be given to the audience. Often given out before the speaker starts the presentation.

## **Head Table**

This is the table at the front of the room usually reserved for the VIP's or key people. If the speaker will be attending a dinner either before or after the presentation, the speaker will usually sit here too.

## **Hotels and Accommodation**

If the speaker is required to travel a reasonable distance from home, and the speaker needs to spend the night before or after the presentation, the planner covers the costs. Sometimes the speaker might stay on for personal reasons; you are not responsible for the additional accommodation but the airfare home is still paid by you. If the speaking engagement is overseas and the speaker needs to spend a stop-over night on the way to the event, you, the planner are responsible for this too, both ways.

## **Introduction**

The speaker will arrange to send his or her introduction to you before the event. This is a small bio detailing the speaker's credentials, achievements and why the speaker is relevant to the conference or event.

## Integrity

Speakers and bureaus work on trust and integrity.

A bureau invests a lot of money on promotional material, marketing and printing. This is why the speaker pays the bureau a fee to market them. Sometimes a bureau may have contacted a potential client, and the client, not realizing how the industry works, contacts the speaker directly and books them.

The speaker should still pay the fee to the bureau as the bureau introduced the speaker to the client. Speakers also pay bureaus for any follow-on engagements resulting from an event booked for the speaker through them. Most speakers and bureaus have a great deal of integrity and trust with each other.

## Justifying the Fee

Sometimes a client may wonder how the speaker can justify such a fee. Please remember that when you are booking a speaker, you are booking “An Expert who Speaks”. Ask the speaker for testimonials on how they have helped their other clients and what the results were for the client from booking the speaker. Some speakers have managed to increase profits for their clients that otherwise would never have happened.

## Keynote

A keynote usually lasts up to one hour. A speaker will ask you for a brief before the session and work to that. Most speakers will tailor-make their keynote to suit your brief. Keynotes are harder for the speaker, as they have to convey a message within a short time this is why sometimes keynotes can cost the same or more than a half day training.

## Laughter

If you are after a particular speaker to lighten up your conference but still give a profound message, you could consider:

- A Hoaxer – This type of speaker will pretend to be an expert on a particular subject and fool the audience. A good hoaxer delivers a very powerful message during the hoax and will provide a debrief after.
- Humour Speakers – again these speakers can lighten up a conference with their humour but be warned, establish the ground rules before the speaker presents. It is not good practice to engage a speaker that is smutty. Make sure you establish what sort of humour the speaker uses.
- Some speakers specialize in bringing laughter to the workplace – this is a very valuable tool to help corporations increase productivity and help morale.

## Master of Ceremonies, MC or Emcee

### What makes a good MC?

- ✓ Researching – All of the people and programs to be introduced. A good MC will appear that he/she personally knows the people being introduced.
- ✓ Timing – Running to schedule and ensuring other speakers do not go over their allotted time.
- ✓ Humour – Using humour and interesting comments as segues from one person/program to the next.
- ✓ Comments: On what just happened. Mentioning something about the previous presenter/event.

## Microphone

Always check with the speaker well before the event on what type of microphone is required. Some speakers don't mind but most have a preference and you will need to ensure this is discussed with the Audio Visual people.

Some speakers like to wear a lapel mic, some only use hand held and some not only want a hand-held but want one with a cord attached.

Ensure you have the audio visual requirements detailed in the contract.

## Noise

There is nothing more frustrating than to have interruptions when the speaker is performing. As the meeting planner, it is a good idea to check before the event that catering staff do not interrupt and that the audience members are instructed to turn off mobile phones.

I once attended a 3 day seminar with a very well-known speaker. The speaker had to ask the organizers numerous times to go backstage and ask the staff to be quiet. This was at one of the most notable venues for conventions. The speaker lost focus and it was quite distracting. At the same event, one of the conference organizer's staff went backstage to ask them to be quiet and, had a door fall on her! Not a good look or the venue, meeting planner or speaker.

As the meeting planner, try to ensure things like this don't happen at your event. You are paying big dollars for a good speaker and you want to get your money's worth.

## Objectives – establishing your objectives for the meeting

Why are you having a conference, event or meeting? What outcome does your planning committee desire? Is it to get us many delegates along to the conference? Are you launching

a new sales program? Is it a gala dinner, or awards night? Are you trying to build the team? Increase moral? Write down the objectives of the conference.

Now you have the objectives of the conference, what type of speaker do you want? Be careful here, you may choose a celebrity or football staff, but in doing so, are they going to deliver the message?

Write down the 'type' of speaker who would be most suitable to achieve the objectives.

What other services do you want your speaker to help you with? Are you having breakout sessions, do you want follow up training? Do want access to online training to follow through with what the speaker has talked about?

### **One-pager or One-page Information Sheet**

This refers to the speaker's promotional material. Usually on an A4 sheet of glossy paper with the speaker's bio, photograph, credentials and some testimonials. Sometimes the one-pager will have printing on both sides. They should also be available on pdf for emailing.

### **Professional Speaker**

Scenario – You are in charge of organising a conference. You are already busy enough in your job, and this challenge is daunting. Where do you start? Venue, budget, catering, entertainment, MC, audio visual, gala dinner to arrange, games if applicable, team building exercises if applicable, logistics, travel... this list is extensive. This book is to take away some of the pressure above from you. It's your ABC Guide of working with a professional speaker.

Professional speaker – in other words “An Expert Who Speaks”. A professional speaker gets paid for speaking on a topic. Whether it is an MC you are looking for or an expert in motivation, sales, team building...the list is endless. One thing you will be assured of if you hire a professional speaker, is that they have been in this industry for a while, they have built up a reputation and they know what they are doing. The majority of professional speakers will have authored a book, have produced training manuals and maybe even been a presenter on television. They will be an expert of their topic.

### **Question Time**

Establish, with your speaker, before the event, if he or she will be conducting a 'question time'. You can then establish how much time will be needed.

A good speaker should have the audience attention for the entire presentation. If the keynote was good, the audience will want to expand their knowledge more and ask questions.

If there is a question time, have a couple of 'runners' ready to quickly take the microphones around the audience as hands go up. Ensure you organize this with your Audio Visual people first.

## Role Play

This is where participants will "act" as another in a make-believe situation. Often done in sales training.

## Roast

This is where the presenter, usually a humourist will give some attention to the guest of honour or other participants in the audience. A roast should never make anyone feel uncomfortable or humiliated. It should be done in fun and good taste and the roaster will be given a 'lowdown' on the roastee. The person being roasted should be made to feel 'popular or liked by peers' for having been chosen.

## Recording the Speaker

Please do not record either visually or with audio the speaker's presentation without their written prior permission. Some speakers will be very open to you taping and others guard their material. It is unlikely in Australia that a speaker would litigate over taping without prior permission but it has been done elsewhere in the world.

Some speakers will allow taping for an additional fee (usually half the standard fee) or as a per delegate royalty. You could offer the speaker a certain amount of the CD's once they are produced, for the speaker to sell as their own product.

Some speakers won't charge you at all, but please make sure you have it written in the contract before any recording takes place.

## Seminar

Seminars are more education-focused. Sometimes at conventions, breakout sessions are referred to as seminars. Seminars are more lecture-orientated than workshops.

## Segue

A link from one segment to another and is necessarily used by MC's.

## Speaker Bureau

What exactly does a bureau do? In a nutshell, a good bureau will save you time, save you hours on research and lessen your stress in organizing your event.

At True Colours Keynotes we

- Ask you a lot of questions about your event and establish your objective.
- Save you hours in time.

- Already know who is who on the speaking circuit and have already done the research and checked testimonials.
- Ensure both speaker and client have each other's contact numbers on the day.
- Check in with the speaker as close as possible to the event to make sure everything is in order.
- We will know who we can call as an emergency replacement in the unlikely event the speaker cannot make the engagement.
- Will follow up after the event with the client.
- Will offer a money back guarantee in the unlikely event that the client is dissatisfied with the speaker. Conditions apply, i.e. more than 75% of the participants complain, the speaker was rude, the speaker totally ignored the brief and did not deliver.

### **Training**

Some professional speakers also conduct training. This can often follow-on from a keynote, or the speaker may be hired specifically to run a training session or sessions over weeks and even months, or perhaps only once.

Training takes many forms such as sales, team building, time management, writing skills, strategy implementation, management skills, presentation skills, communication skills, marketing and branding, occupational health and safety including dealing with workplace bullying.

Usually participants attending a training session will breakout into groups, complete assignments then reform and report. Sometimes a speaker will offer follow-on training online. This is becoming a popular choice and can add real value.

As already discussed in the "justifying the fee" section, you might be able to negotiate a package deal with the speaker for a keynote and follow on training at a reduced rate.

### **Tailoring**

The speaker usually makes adjustments to his/her material to meet the needs of the audience in order to work to the brief.

### **What if the Speaker Lets You Down**

It is rare that a professional speaker will let you down, as their livelihood and reputation is on trial EVERY time they perform.

The true professional speaker will always provide you with a contract and discuss your brief with you. If you have used a bureau, the bureau will ensure that the speaker complies; their reputation too, is on the line.

Your strategy is to have in place systems to ensure things go the way you plan. Here are some scenarios.

### **The Speaker Uses Inappropriate Material Not Specific To Your Brief**

**Ensure the speaker is aware of the outcomes you want for your event.**

You can ask your speaker or bureau to put a specific clause in your contract on 'forbidden' topics.

If you are a meeting planner and you have put a speaker on stage who is offensive to the audience – fire the speaker! No matter what the cost.

### **Ensuring the speaker does not go over or under time**

- Inform your speaker of his/her allotted time and ask them to keep to it.
- If the speaker goes over, and you are on a tight schedule, there is only one thing to do. Cut them off. Have your MC or announcer walk over to the speaker and indicate to the audience to start clapping.

TIP: Always have a contract and have your brief summarized in it.

### **Using other speaker bureau services**

Some bureaus will offer the services of:

- Entertainers
- Bands
- Violinists
- Magicians
- Coaching
- Sells Speakers Products

### **Venue**

#### **Setting the Stage**

Does the speaker require a lectern, PowerPoint, table? Ensure you sort this out with the speaker well before the presentation.

#### **Seating Styles**

*U shape* – Equal sight lines. Tables are formed as a “U”.

*Classroom* – Tables set up in rows as in a classroom.

*Theatre* – Seating without the tables. The stage is usually best situated in the middle of one of the long walls.

*Cabaret* – Groups of separate round tables

### **Audio Visual**

Most venues have in-house AV equipment or preferred suppliers.

### **Emergency Exits**

Take note of Emergency Exits in the venue and brief the Speaker as to what to do if an emergency situation arises.

## **You!**

You, the meeting planner have many deadlines and very little time. You don't have to work alone in finding an appropriate professional speaker. In fact, you really don't have to work much at all. Just pick up the phone and dial your favourite bureau.

When selecting a bureau, choose one that doesn't add on handling fees or other "administration charges", so that you are paying the same rate as you would if you booked a speaker direct. Choose a bureau that makes you feel like you are their most important client. Choose a bureau that will give you the contact number of the person who heads the bureau – even out of hours, 24/7!

By choosing a good bureau you buy yourself a lot of time and save yourself a lot of worry. The bureau knows the speaking industry. Your bureau will take your brief and work from it while you get on with the other important issues in organizing your meeting.

True Colours Keynotes prides itself on customer service. Customer Service features many times in our Business Plan. We have two roles, one is to market professional speakers and the other is to ensure the client, you, gets the right speaker within budget. Our service is free to you because we are paid by the speaker. The speaker doesn't pay us a retainer, we are compensated by speaking engagement secured. If we are to keep getting speaker engagements and repeat business, we have to do our job right.

We look forward to working with you next time you are looking for a professional speaker.

## Ending with Useful Resources

Resources:

### **Speaker Bureaus**

True Colours Keynotes  
[www.truecolourskeynotes.com](http://www.truecolourskeynotes.com)

Coyote Management International  
[www.coyote.com.au](http://www.coyote.com.au)

World Times & Australian Postcodes  
<http://www.utech.net.au/>

Airlines  
<http://www.airlinetimetables.org/>

Exchange Rates  
<http://www.exchangerate.com/>

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