

LIVINGSTONE 35

INTERVIEW
BOŽOSKOKO





PIŠE | TEXT BY:
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BOŽOSKOKO

Vjerovati u sebe i biti svoj; imati visoke ciljeve, obrazovati se i uporno raditi, ali pritom biti dobar čovjek i ne misliti samo na sebe. U tom slučaju i Bog će biti uz vas - riječi su kojima je moj sugovornik dr. sc. Božo Skoko zaključio naš razgovor u zagrebačkom Sheratonu, ali koje nedvojbeno zaslužuju početak priče o ovom profesoru na Fakultetu političkih znanosti u Zagrebu i jednom od vodećih stručnjaka za odnose s javnošću. Bio je novinar i urednik, a još uvijek ima savjetodavnu funkciju u jednoj od vodećih agencija za odnose s javnošću "Millenium promocije", čiji je jedan od utemeljitelja. Savjetovao je mnoge menadžere, političke dužnosnike, korporacije i institucije u Hrvatskoj i susjednim zemljama, uključujući i Delegaciju Europske komisije u Hrvatskoj. Božo Skoko je autor prve knjige posvećene identitetu i imidžu Hrvatske "Hrvatska - identitet, image i promocija", "Priručnika za razumijevanje odnosa s javnošću", a na pomolu je i izdavanje treće knjige. Odrastao je u slikovitom mjestu Klobuk pokraj Ljubuškog, uz samu granicu s Hrvatskom; u obitelji koja nije bila bogata, ali ga je naučila da ulaganjem u sebe, upornim radom i poštovanjem drugih (maka mu vratili i drugačije) može ostvariti sve ciljeve.

LivingStone: O Hercegovcima u Zagrebu ispričani su mnogi vicevi.

Božo Skoko: Ti stereotipi su se prilično "istopili". Biti Hercegovac, Dalmatinac, Zagrepčanin ili Istranin u Zagrebu danas je sasvim jednako. Možda je Zagreb postao istinska metropola ili su neki manipulatori shvatili da ne mogu dio naroda procjenjivati po dva, tri glasna i polupismena pojedinca, zanemarujući vrhunske znanstvenike, sportaše ili kulturnjake iz toga kraja. Ovih dana iz tiska izlazi monumentalna fotomonografija Ive Pervana posvećena Hercegovini, za koju sam imao čast napisati tekst. Uvjeren sam kako će ta knjiga, koju je dizajnirao Boris Ljubičić, uvelike pridonijeti rušenju tih stereotipa.

Believe in one and be oneself; have high goals, educate oneself and work hard, but at the same time be a good person and not think only of yourself. In that case even God will be with you. These are the words with which my collocutor, Mr. Božo Skoko, PhD, concluded our conversation at the Zagreb Sheraton, but they undoubtedly deserve to be placed at the beginning of the story about this professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb and one of the leading experts for public relations. He used to be a journalist and editor and he still holds an advisory post in one of the leading public relations agencies, "Millennium promotions", of which he was also one of the founders. He has advised many managers, political officials, corporations and institutions in Croatia and the surrounding countries, including also the Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Croatia. Božo Skoko is the author of the first book dedicated to the identity and the image of Croatia "Croatia - identity, image and promotion", of the "Manual for understanding public relations", and the publication of a third book is imminent. He grew up in a picturesque place called Klobuk near Ljubuški, on the very border with Croatia, in a family that was not rich, but that has taught him that by investing in himself, working hard and having respect for others (even if it is not mutual) he can realise his goals.

LivingStone: In Zagreb, many jokes have been told about people from Herzegovina.

Božo Skoko: These stereotypes have quite "melted". To be a person from Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Zagreb or Istria in Zagreb today is absolutely the same. Perhaps Zagreb has become a true metropolis or some manipulators have got it through their heads that they cannot judge a part of the nation based on two or three loud and half-literate



LS: Novinarsku karijeru započeli ste vrlo rano. Bili ste jedan od najmlađih suradnika dječjega katoličkoga mjesečnika - *Maka*, gdje ste uz *Glas Koncila* "ispekli zanat".

B. S.: Dobro ste informirani! Čim sam naučio pisati, počeo sam surađivati s *Makom*, najnakladnijim hrvatskim dječjim listom. Tijekom osnovne škole pisao sam i za sarajevske *Male novine*, a u srednjoj školi počeo sam raditi kao radijski voditelj, brinući i o marketingu svojih emisija, i od toga sam - moram priznati – zarađivao pristojan džeparac. Kad sam s 18 godina preselio u Zagreb i upisao studij novinarstva, uredništvo *Glasa Koncila* mi je ponudilo suradničko mjesto i stipendiju. Bilo je to odlično iskustvo. Osim što sam naučio pisati za ozbiljne novine, jako dobro sam upoznao zagrebački Kaptol, te sudjelovao na mnogobrojnim projektima – od vjeronaučnih olimpijada do posjeta papi Ivanu Pavlu II.

LS.: Kako tumačite jaki utjecaj Crkve i franjevaca na ljude u Hercegovini, iako se danas često govori o tome da smo moralno potonulo društvo?

B. S.: To je razumljivo kad se zna da su Hrvati u Hercegovini stoljećima bili pod tuđinskom vlašću, a jedini istinski zaštitnici, prosvjetitelji i skrbnici koji su ostali uz narod bili su franjevci. Franjevci su i da-

individuals and ignore top scientists, sportsmen or cultural workers from that region. These days the monumental photo-monograph of Ivo Pervan will be published, which is dedicated to Herzegovina and I was honoured to be able to write a text for it. I am convinced that this book, which was designed by Boris Ljubičić, will greatly contribute to the disintegration of these stereotypes.

LS: You began your journalist career very early. You were one of the youngest associates of the children' catholic monthly - *Mak*, where, with *Glas Koncila* you "learned the ropes".

B. S.: You are well informed! As soon as I could write, I began to cooperate with *Mak*, the top-of-the-list Croatian children's magazine. During the primary school I also wrote for *Male Novine* from Sarajevo and in high school I began to work as a radio host, taking care of the marketing for my shows, and I must admit that from this I earned good pocket-money. When I was 18, I moved to Zagreb and enrolled in journalism. The editor's office of *Glas Koncila* offered me an associate post and a scholarship. It was an excellent experience. Besides learning how to write for a serious paper, I have acquainted myself with the Zagreb Kaptol, and participated in numerous projects – from the religious-instruction Olympics to the visit of Pope John Paul II.

” *Imam tek 33 godine i prerano je za bilo kakvo bavljenje ozbiljnom politikom. Dugoročno se želim baviti znanošću i raditi sa studentima...*

I am only 33 years old and it is too early for me to enter into serious politics. In the long-run I want to engage in science and work with students...

Ije uz narod, ali očito su se okolnosti njihova djelovanja promijenile. Nekadašnje vrijednosti su se poljuljale i izgubile. Ljudi tragaju za duhovnošću više nego ikada, ali očito na pogrešan način i s pogrešnim motivima.

LS: Tijekom studija dobili ste dvije Rektorove nagrade: za doprinos znanosti iz povijesti novinarstva i iz međunarodnih političkih odnosa.

B. S.: Studij vam daje onoliko koliko vi želite od njega uzeti. Možete uistinu studirati, širiti vidike i stvarati mrežu poznanstava, a možete se i “provući”. Tulumario sam, ali i puno čitao i pisao. Napisao sam rad o razvoju katoličkoga tiska u Hrvatskoj i za to dobio prvu Rektorovu nagradu na drugoj godini. Kasnije sam istraživao ulogu hrvatskih iseljenika u SAD-u i njihov utjecaj na američku politiku prema našim prostorima i ponovno dobio nagradu. Iseljništvo me dugo privlačilo

LS: How do you explain the strong influence of the Church and the Franciscans on the people in Herzegovina, although today it is often said that we are a morally sunk society?

B. S.: This is understandable since it is a known fact that Croatians in Herzegovina had been under foreign rule for centuries, and the only true protectors, enlighteners and guardians that had remained with the people were the Franciscans. The Franciscans continue to be with the people, but obviously the circumstances of their mission have changed. Former values have been shaken and lost. People are searching for spirituality more than ever before, but obviously in a wrong manner and with the wrong motives.

LS: During your studies you have been granted two Rector's awards for the contribution to science, one in the area of journalism history and the other in the area of international political relations.

B. S.: The study will give you as much as you are willing to take from it. You can really study, widen your horizons and create a network of friendships, but you can also “slip through”. I have partied, but I have also read and written a lot. I have written a paper on the development of catholic print in Croatia and I have received the first Rector's award for it in my second year. Later on I researched the role of Croatian immigrants in the United States and their influence on the American policy towards our regions and again received the award. Immigration as a topic has been attracting me for a long time and I was a scholarship holder of the prestigious Croatian-American foundation the Croatian Scholarship Fund from San Francisco. Thanks



kao tema, a bio sam i stipendist prestižne hrvatsko-američke zaklade Croatian Scholarship Fund iz San Francisca. Zahvaljujući poznavanju te problematike, nekoliko godina sam surađivao i s Hrvatskom maticom iseljenika.

LS.: Na Fakultetu političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu zaposleni ste od 2001. godine kao stručnjak za odnose s javnošću i brendiranje odredišta. Tada ste imali samo 24 godine. Zašto ste odabrali upravo to područje?

B. S.: Tražio sam nove izazove. Dekan Fakulteta, prof. dr. sc. Ivan Šiber, nastojao je pomladiti fakultet i našao sam se među kandidatima za asistente. Tu sam već bio na poslijediplomskom iz međunarodnih odnosa. Odnosi s javnošću su bili struka koja se na Fakultetu tek počela izučavati, pa mi je bila prilično zanimljiva.

LS.: Paralelno s odlaskom u znanost posvetili ste se odnosima s javnošću u praksi. Jedan ste od utemeljitelja Millennium promocije, jedne od prvih agencija za odnose s javnošću u zemlji?

B. S.: U genima nosim i poduzetnički duh, pa sam s kolegom Marijem Petrovićem utemeljio PR agenciju u vremenu kad su ljudi pitali: "Što je to?". Uložili smo svu ušteđevinu, bili uporni, puno učili i prilagođavali se klijentima... Do poslova smo dolazili isključivo preporukom. Nakon otprilike pet godina postali smo druga po snazi PR agencija u zemlji. Potom smo razmijenili udjele s tada najvećom konkurencijom - vodećom hrvatskom PR agencijom Premisa i postali smo dio Digitel-Pristop skupine, najveće komunikacijske grupacije u ovom dijelu Europe. Angažman na Fakultetu me je natjerao da se povučem iz agencijske operative, ali surađujem na nekoliko važnih projekata kao savjetnik za strateško komuniciranje.

LS.: Napisali ste i "Priručnik za razumijevanje odnosa s javnošću", a taj predmet predajete i na Fakultetu. Jesu li oni koji se time bave u našoj zemlji svjesni pravog značenja tog posla?

B. S.: Odnosi s javnošću su postali nužnost, a nikako luksuz. Kao što imamo menadžere financija ili prodaje, tako imamo menadžere koji upravljaju svim komunikacijskim procesima i brinu o najdragocjenijoj imovini tvrtke – njezinu ugledu! Ova struka u Hrvatskoj je relativno mlada i zato tek posljednjih godina imamo dovoljan broj stručnjaka školovanih za ovo područje. Ova će struka i dalje rasti, a od onih koji se njome budu bavili tražit će se još više znanja, brzine i poznavanja medija, te branše za koju rade. Kroz Hrvatsku udrugu za odnose s javnošću uvest ćemo i licenciranje.

LS.: Zašto oglašavanje kroz reklame u medijima gubi pozornost publike i kredibilitet?

B. S.: Zato što nas reklame zasipaju s radija, televizije, jumbo plakata, iz poštanskih sandučića, mobitela... Zar mislite da netko ima volje i živaca sve to analizirati? Stoga morate biti drugačiji, originalni. Zbog toga se budžeti preusmjeravaju na druge oblike komuniciranja, osobito odnose s javnošću, koji ne uvjeravaju, već samo informiraju i educiraju.

to my acquaintance with this problem area, I have also, for several years, worked with the Croatian Heritage Foundation.

LS: You have been employed at the Faculty of Political Science since 2001, as an expert for public relations and destination branding. You were only 24 at that time. Why did you select particularly this field?

B. S.: I was looking for new challenges. The Dean of the Faculty, Professor Ivan Šiber, PhD, was trying to make the Faculty younger and I found myself amongst the candidates for the post of an assistant. I was already undertaking my post-graduate studies in international relations. Public relations were a field that was just beginning to be studied at the Faculty, so it was very interesting to me.

LS: Concurrently with your withdrawal into science you have dedicated yourself to public relations in practice. You are one of the founders of the Millennium promotions, one of the first agencies in the country for public relations?

B. S.: In my genes I carry an entrepreneurial spirit, so with my colleague Mario Petrović, I founded a PR agency at the time when people used to ask: "What is this? ". We invested all our savings, were persistent and we learned a lot and adapted to our clients ... We were getting jobs wholly through recommendations. After about five years we have become the second strongest PR agency in the country. After that, we have exchanged shares with our largest competition at the time – the leading Croatian PR agency Premisa and become a part of the Digitel-Pristop group, the largest communication group in this part of Europe. My engagement at the Faculty has forced me to retire from the agency operations, but I work as an advisor for strategic communications on several significant projects.

LS: You also wrote the "Manual for understanding public relations" and you also teach this module at the Faculty. Are those who are in PR in our country aware of the real meaning of this job?

B. S.: Public relations have become a necessity, not a luxury. Just as we have financial or sales managers, we also have managers who manage all communication processes and take care of the most valuable asset of a company – its reputation! This profession in Croatia is relatively young, which is why only in the last few years we have had a sufficient number of educated experts in this field. This profession will continue to develop and of those who will be engaged in it, it will require even more knowledge, speed and expertness of the media and the line of business in which they are working. Through the Croatian Public Relations Association we shall introduce licensing.

LS: Why is advertising through commercials in the media losing audience and credibility?

B. S.: Because we are buried in commercials from the radio, television, jumbo posters, mailboxes, cell phones... Do you think someone is willing and patient enough to analyse all of this? This is why you have to be different, original. This is why budgets are directed

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grand PR ix



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For my doctor's thesis I had conducted an extensive field research on the image of Croatia. The neighbours have quite a good opinion of Croatia, but we are not using this good image sufficiently. In the race for membership in the EU, we keep forgetting to use the opportunities that the region, in which we are the leader, offers...

LS.: *Stječe se dojam da hrvatski političari Vaše i usluge i znanja Vaših kolega nedovoljno koriste?*

B. S.: To najbolje možete procijeniti na temelju njihova ponašanja. Iskreno, rijetki političari prihvaćaju kritiku, a bez suočavanja s vlastitim pogreškama nema pomaka nabolje. Međutim, imam i dobrih iskustava. Moramo shvatiti da nitko od nas nije nadaren baš za sve i da za neke stvari moramo angažirati stručnjake. To je uvijek najisplativije.

LS.: *Kako ocjenjujete kredibilitet hrvatskih medija?*

B.S.: Često se kaže da društvo ima onakve medije kakve zaslužuje. Hrvatski mediji su u krizi, a posebice novine. Previše je žutila i crnila, tračeva, poluinformacija i crne kronike. Većina informacija je površna, neprovjerena, polupismena i beskorisna. Sve više ljudi nema vremena ni volje čitati takve informacije. Zbog toga padaju naklade naših dnevnih i tjednih novina. Mislim da će na cijeni dobiti kvalitetni sadržaji, koji ne podcjenjuju publiku, već nam pomažu da lakše donosimo ispravne odluke i nazore o svijetu oko nas. Vrijeme je da se naši mediji uozbilje i postanu profesionalniji.

LS.: *Stalno se govori o nedostatku etike u novinarstvu. Kako biste riješili taj problem?*

B.S.: Zakonskim rješenjima. Kad pravosuđe profunkcionira, novinari će redovito tražiti informacije s obje strane i dodatno provjeravati činjenice, a urednici će dvaput razmisliti kakav će naslov sutra objaviti. I strukovna udruga bi novinaru koji je prekršio profesionalna načela morala uskratiti licencu za rad, kao što je to slučaj u zapadnim zemljama. Kad struka bude dovoljno zrela za podizanje standarda, vratit će se i povjerenje u hrvatske medije.

LS.: *Prošle ste godine doktorirali na temu "Komparativna analiza imidža Hrvatske u državama nastalim na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije. Pa kakav nam je imidž?*

into other means of communication, especially public relations that do not convince, but only inform and educate.

LS: *One seems to get the impression that Croatian politicians do not use your services and services of your colleagues sufficiently?*

B. S.: You can best evaluate this on the basis of their conduct. Frankly, very few politicians accept a critique, but without facing one's own mistakes, there is no progress for the better. However, I also have good experiences. We must understand that no-one is talented for everything and that for some things we must engage experts. That is always most cost-effective.

LS: *How do you evaluate the credibility of Croatian media?*

B.S.: It is often said that the society has such media which it deserves. The Croatian media are in a crisis, especially the newspapers. There are too many yellow pages, too much gossip, half information and bad news. Most information is superficial, half-literate and useless. More and more people have less time and will to read such information. Due to this, circulations of our daily and weekly papers are decreasing. I believe that higher quality content will gain them status; the ones that do not underestimate the audience, but help us make proper decisions and opinions of the world around us more easily. It is time for our media to get serious and become more professional.

LS: *The lack of ethics in journalism is constantly being discussed of. How would you solve this problem?*

B.S.: With legal regulations. When justice begins to function, the journalists will regularly seek information on both sides and additionally check the facts, and the editors will think twice what headline they will print the next day. In addition, the professional association would have to cancel the working license of a journalist who offended professional principles of morale, just as is the case in western countries. When the profession will be ready to raise the standards, trust in Croatian media will also return.

LS: *Last year you submitted your doctor's thesis on the topic "Comparative analysis of the image of Croatia in the states that emerged from the region of ex-Yugoslavia. Well, what is our image like?*

B. S.: For my doctor's thesis I conducted an extensive field research on the image of Croatia. The neighbours have quite a good opinion of Croatia, but we are not using this good image sufficiently in the "conquering" of the region. The Adriatic Sea, the coast and the islands are the most powerful Croatian brand in the region, but also within the global frameworks. In the race for a full membership in the EU, we keep forgetting to use the opportunities that the region in which we are the leader offers.

LS: *Do you think there is a way in which the Croatian society can once again morally and spiritually elevate itself?*

B. S.: Za potrebe doktorata proveo sam opsežno terensko istraživanje o imidžu Hrvatske. Susjedi imaju prilično dobro mišljenje o Hrvatskoj, ali mi taj dobar imidž nedovoljno koristimo u "osvajanju" regije. Jadransko more, obala i otoci najmoćniji su hrvatski brend u regiji, ali i globalnim okvirima. U utrci za punopravnim članstvom u EU zaboravljamo iskoristiti šanse koje nam pruža regija, gdje jesmo lider.

LS.: Mislite li da postoji način na koji se hrvatsko društvo može ponovno moralno i duhovno uzdignuti?

B. S.: Naravno, prije svega ako u društvu afirmiramo istinske vrijednosti. To ćemo postići i ako budemo više poštovali i cijenili sebe i svoje kvalitete, a manje kopirali nazadne trendove koje nam drugi prodaju kao "cool" robu. U svemu tome presudnu ulogu imaju obiteljski odgoj, obrazovanje i mediji.

LS.: Gost ste predavač na Diplomatskoj akademiji Ministarstva vanjskih poslova i europskih integracija RH. O čemu tamo govorite?

B. S.: Budućim diplomatima govorim o načinima i modelima promocije vlastite zemlje u svijetu. Često se pozivam na iskustva drugih zemalja, koje su shvatile da je moderan diplomat istinski promotivni i gospodarski agent svoje zemlje.

Televizijsko iskustvo počeo sam stjecati početkom 1997. odradivši praksu u Zagrebačkoj panorami. Očito su kolege bile zadovoljne, pa su mi ponudili i trajniji angažman. Počeo sam raditi u tadašnjem programu za dijasporu, a kasnije u Vijestima i Dnevniku. U vanjsku politiku prešao sam 2000. godine. Biti honorarac u to doba na HTV-u uistinu je bilo naporno. Sve odrađujete, a prava su bila minimalna. S druge strane, zapošljavalo se uglavnom po prijateljskim, stranačkim i rodbinskim vezama. To vas žvcira kada imate osjećaj da ste dovoljno obrazovani, imate iskustvo i profesionalno odrađujete svoj posao; hvale vas, a onda ostave na cjedilu. Napravio sam rez i otišao dalje.

B. S.: Of course, provided that before everything else in the society we establish the true values. This we shall also achieve if we shall respect and value ourselves and our qualities more, and copy less the backward trends that others sell us as "cool" goods. In all of this, family upbringing, education and the media play a crucial role.

LS: You are a guest lecturer at the Diplomatic Academy of the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. What are you lecturing about there?

B. S.: To the future diplomats, I speak about the way and model of promoting one's country in the world. I often refer to the experiences of other countries that have understood that a modern diplomat is a true promotional and economic agent of a country.

LS: In a TV show where you were a guest together with presidential candidates, you thrilled the spectators with your eloquence to such an extent that many suggested you should become a candidate for the president of the state. Can we expect this in the near future?

B.S.: I am only 33 years old and it is too early for me to enter into serious politics, but it is nice to hear this. Evidently people are yearning for new faces and new ideas.

I have begun to acquire television experience at the beginning of 1997, while I was working in the Zagreb panorama. Obviously the colleagues were satisfied, so they offered me a more permanent arrangement. At that time I started working in a program for Diaspora, and later on in the News and the Main News. I moved to Foreign policy in the year 2000. At that time having a part-time job on Croatian Television was really strenuous. You had to do everything and the rights were minimal. On the other side, people were employed mostly through amicable, political and family ties. It can irritate you, because you have the feeling that you are sufficiently educated, you have experience and you professionally perform your tasks; you are being praised and then let down. And I made a break and went on.



*Božo Skoko proputovao je gotovo cijeli svijet, a u Dominikanskoj republici imao je vremena za svoj omiljen sport - jahanje
Božo Skoko has travelled almost the entire world, and in the Dominican Republic he had enough time for his favorite sport, horse riding*


LS.: Gostujući u jednoj TV emisiji s predsjedničkim kandidatima svojom ste elokventnošću oduševili gledatelje do te mjere da su mnogi sugerirali da se kandidirate za predsjednika države. Možemo li to očekivati u dogledno vrijeme?

B. S.: Ja imam tek 33 godine i prerano je za bilo kakvo bavljenje ozbiljnom politikom, ali je to lijepo čuti. Očito su ljudi željni novih lica i novih ideja.

LS: Čime se dugoročno želite baviti?

B. S.: Znanošću i radom sa studentima. Vjerujem da ću napisati još poneku knjigu. Trenutačno s Maticom hrvatskom pripremam opsežnu teorijsku knjigu o upravljanju identitetima i imidžima država. Sigurno se neću smiriti ni kad su u pitanju poduzetničke ideje. Uz sve to nadam se da ću jednog dana moći raditi odnose s javnošću za hrvatsku državu. To mi je poseban izazov.


LS: Za kraj, kako provodite slobodno vrijeme?

B. S.: Savjest me peče jer nemam dovoljno slobodnog vremena. A kad ga imam, volim ga provoditi s obitelji i prijateljima ili putovati. Bez prijatelja i obitelji sve bi bilo besmisleno. Oni su mi pokretačka snaga. Obožavam dobre filmove pa često idem u kino, a bez glazbe ne bih mogao funkcionirati. Prije nekoliko godina počeo sam jahati na zagrebačkom hipodromu i otkrio uistinu sjajan sport. 

LS: What would you like to do in the long-run?

B.S.: Science and work with students. I believe I will write a few more books. At the moment, I am preparing an extensive theoretical book on managing identities and images of states with the Matica Hrvatska. I will certainly not calm down in relation to business ideas. With all of this I hope that one day I shall be able to work in public relations for the Croatian state. That is a special challenge.

LS: And finally, how do you spend your free time?

B. S.: I feel bad about not having enough free time. And when I have it, I like to spend it with family and friends or travel. Without friends and family, everything would be absurd. They are my motivating spirit. I love good films, so I often go to the movies, and without music I would not be able to function. Several years ago I started horse-riding at the Zagreb hippodrome and I discovered a really great sport. 

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