AlayaCare

How To Make The Most Of Your Home Care Data

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Introduction

Our experts at AlayaCare know that home care agencies are working tirelessly to manage the growing demand for service – and we're here to help. In this guide, you'll get a deeper understanding of how to authentically transform the data you're collecting into real, actionable change. Learn what metrics to look for, what challenges to plan for, and how to ensure your data is being put to optimal use.

The home care industry is growing exponentially, and with aging populations that are living longer, that demand will continue to increase as will the need to finetune operations and attract and retain skilled staff. Still, there is plenty of room to meet demand without adding burden to your teams or losing any traction on high quality care.

But where is this room to grow? How can we do more with less? Traditionally, information technology in the medical field has lagged behind the times. There's always been a healthy commitment to data collection and precision but changing formats and the sheer volume of information have made it difficult to use the data to even near its full extent.

For owners and administrators at home care agencies, priorities start with keeping up with the day-to-day requirements of running operations, managing schedules, and keeping tabs on client service and employee expectations. It is hard to find time to dig into your own data.
But it is invaluable to take the time to build data use into your business strategy. Understanding how to analyze and interpret your data is essential for maintaining current operations, pursuing business growth, and meeting the evolving demands of home care recipients and payers. Knowing how to maximize the value of the information at hand, and how to make data-backed decisions about the future of your agency, can be the difference between modest growth and a leap skyward.

The Benefits of Data-Driven Business Intelligence

Business intelligence (BI) is the act of putting data to use. Tools to make that happen are gaining steam in home care, and for good reason. Not only can they reduce the strain from common pain points that come with managing the complexities of home care, they also can expand the horizons of providers and administrators.

For too many agencies, reporting is time-consuming, inconsistent between departments, and tricky to compile. Legacy solutions can bring delays, meaning that the data you're accessing often isn't the most current. Solutions that put BI first have functionality like real-time updates and consistent formatting to make it easier to leverage what the data is telling you. It can free up cumbersome data into accessible intel, presented in a way that is easy to read and simple to manage.

By properly utilizing a BI tool, leadership in your agency can discover new insights with reports that can be produced in minutes, not hours. Key stakeholders will now be able to target and access readable visualizations of whatever key performance indicators (KPIs) are most important to them. Routine but often time consuming tasks, such as managers completing performance evaluations, can become much simpler through optimized workflows.

There are also, of course, financial incentives to making the most of your BI. Being able to track potentially wasteful spending, excess overtime, and excess inventory are examples of areas that you could assess to reduce costs, while also identifying other areas where resources are better allocated.

It's more important than ever to make sure that you're delivering the best possible outcomes. Turning KPIs into evidence-based reports, and then acting on them, makes it more certain if there are operational gaps affecting clients or caregivers.

At AlayaCare, we are particularly excited about using data to forecast the future. Through BI systems, it's possible to tap predictive analytics to focus on key trends and expected outcomes – and that enables you to make precision risk assessments and take action well before a problem (e.g. staff churn, lost client) drops in your lap.

Leverage the Data you Have Right Now

Okay, so you may be collecting reams of data without too much of a strategy in place. This chapter leans right into the key considerations on putting that data to use. Step one is getting the right people together and brainstorming the places/themes/targets where data can make the biggest impacts to what your priorities are. At AlayaCare, we know there are three main drivers of change right now:

- Addressing the shortage of skilled workers;
- The rise of value-based purchasing; and
- The sweeping trends of consolidation happening in the industry.

For all three drivers, actionable metrics can guide the way.

1. Shortage of labor

Addressing the shortage of skilled workers can feel daunting. As demand for home care rises, that shortage accelerates. Churn is a persistent problem throughout the industry. Scheduling difficulties, inconsistent hours, or schedules that don't match with a caregiver's preferred lifestyle dampen satisfaction and threaten retention.

If data on your turnover rates is inaccessible or hard to pin down, it's time to take a closer look and help mitigate the factors that cause burnout before skilled staff leave. A strong software system can make it possible for you to measure and assess early warning signs of churn: increased lateness, sloppy note taking, accepting fewer home care shifts, and more.

Staying on top of these metrics, month over month, enables you to be proactive in supporting employees when they need it most. Actionable steps range from having managers phone employees at risk of churn and understanding their current pain points to implementing new elements that make their life easier. For instance, having the data generate shift offer reports empowers caregivers to access vacant shifts and tweak their schedules to their preferences.

For more tips
on **addressing churn**

See This Article

2. Value-Based Purchasing

Quality of care has always been important, but with the rise of value-based purchasing, it is more crucial than ever. Payors expect that home care services are legitimately promoting better outcomes. This model of care is leaving fee-for-service in the dust. Now agencies must meet defined, measured goals around their client experience, quality of care, outcomes, resources used, and more.

Indeed, as of this year, a survey by AlayaCare and Home Health Care News reported that 51 percent of respondents expected more than half of their income to come from VBP within five years.

Thus, agencies are very motivated to deliver positive outcomes, and for that, it is integral to be data-driven. On one hand, having the data to demonstrate to payers that client outcomes are at optimal levels, is vital. It also enables you to identify and proactively manage any factors that are preventing high-quality care. Many such reports are useful to stay on top of what's happening in client homes, including Care Plan Adherence Reports, Continuity of Care Reports, and Client Vitals Reports.

3. An Industry That Is Consolidating

Clearly, mergers and acquisitions are a hot topic in home care. Those in need of the service are expanding at a far quicker pace than those providing the service – and agencies and investors across the U.S. are looking to seize on our industry's seismic momentum. We're seeing deals happening across all types, including medical, nonmedical,
private pay, and Medicaid/Medicare.
If a merger or acquisition strategy is on your radar it's vital to not only strike the right partnership, but ensure data underpins it. Collecting the right metrics over time, and generating reports that show your operations ensure full visibility into what's happening right now inside your agency and predict what may happen after a consolidation.

Data tied to key performance indicators also help transparently prove that you are hitting the targets that represent success as it relates to clients, employees, operations, and revenue. It clearly follows that having a system that collects and collates important metrics ensures that nobody has to take anyone's word for it amidst such a high-stake major move.

Thus, it's important to target data that demonstrates areas such as growth, employee retention, client satisfaction, and all the metrics you are collecting to prove better outcomes. Show, don't tell that you are profitable today and into the future: margins, revenue, and cost data all show that your agency is primed for growth. For instance, Margin Reports show how profitable you are, while Premium, Mileage, and Overtime Reports prove that your budgets are on point – or not – exposing the areas where finances could be more efficient.

Top 10 Key Reports For Agency Owners

1. Employee Retention

Are you losing caregivers? How long are they staying with you? Keep an eye on the needs of your caregivers and see what your agency is doing right (and where you can improve).

2. New Client Pipeline and Referrals Report

A holistic view of your client pipeline over months or years or custom ranges. Find out exactly where your clients are coming from, and who is referring them. This can help you nurture reliable referral sources, or bolster those that seem to be lagging behind.

3. Client Satisfaction

Tracking positive and negative feedback from clients via feedback reports helps you to see what's going right, and what could use tweaking.

4. Hospitalizations/ Worsening Outcomes

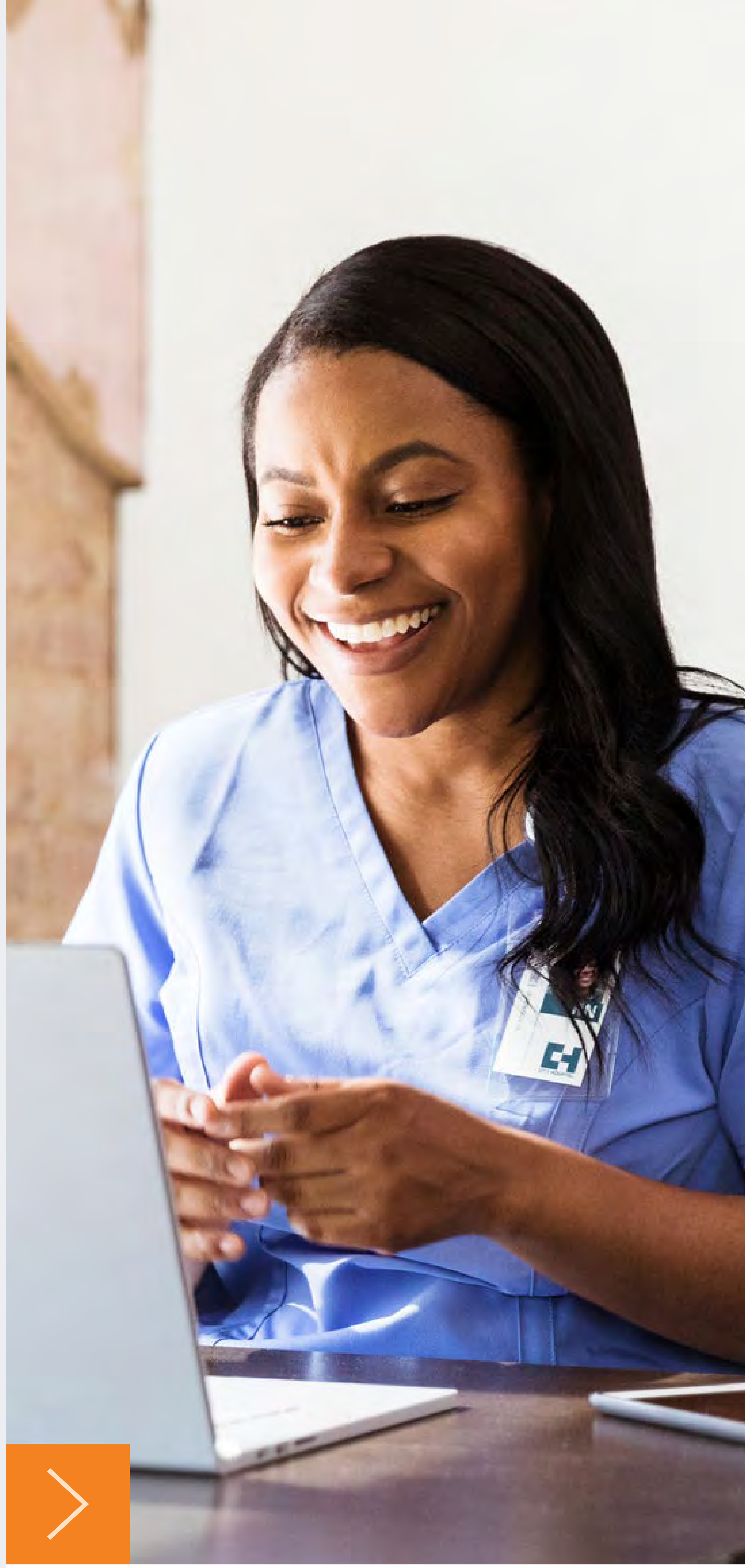
As VBP becomes more common, these reports provide proof of strong client outcomes at both broad and individual levels.

5. Care Plan Adherence

Tracking task completion to ensure that caregivers are completing their visit requirements, and easily see if clients' care plan goals are being met. Essential for VBP

6. Location or Department Performance

These reports reveal what each department is clocking, specifics about caregiver hours, and much more. If you have multiple offices, this dataset can help you identify high or low demand and make informed decisions.



Top 10 Key Reports For Agency Owners

7. Premium, Mileage, and Overtime

Track your budgetary line items to find where small changes can be made to cut costs without negatively impacting the performance of your staff.

8. Margin

These offer insight into caregiver mileage and overtime hours, with a detailed view of which client visits in which districts are costing at the margins of spreadsheets. Essential for any M&A activity.

9. New Client Status

How are new clients transitioning from status to status? You could generate reports that reveal Active, On-Hold, Discharged, and Waiting List – and both spot and correct any lags in the process to ensure new clients are moving efficiently through your intake channel.

10. Labor Cost Analysis

What is your cost per hire? What about turnover? How well is your payment system working?

Top 10 Key Metrics For Administrators

1. Scheduler Utilization

How are they using the scheduler? What are their average hours? Measure which caregivers are working most and least and shift responsibilities to prevent burnout and boost employee satisfaction.

2. Service Hours

Track how home health aids, nurses, and other care workers are performing over time.

3. Caregiver Capacity

Tracks each person's capacity also helps prevent burnout and reveal who needs extra support.

4. Shift Offer Reports

Tracks the rates at which caregivers accept/reject shifts, and which shifts they prefer. Another useful tool for identifying potentially overworked caregivers.

5. Time Per Visit

Not only a measurement of efficiency, but a critical scheduling tool.

6. Visit Approval Reports

Ideally this will run like clockwork, but understanding which of your visits are approved and which require manual inspection can reveal valuable trends. E.g. which care providers may benefit from more oversight and support?

Top 10 Key Metrics For Administrators

7. First and Subsequent Visits

Review how many new clients' first visits occurred in one month, and then when their next visit was. This can help ensure that every client receives timely care.

8. Skills and Competencies Reports

These keep track of your caregivers' credentials. Knowing when credentials will expire and exactly what skills new staff bring to the table helps to ensure that every client is matched with the right caregivers.

9. Caregiver Satisfaction

Using AI algorithms, satisfaction scores pinpoint causes of churn, examining factors that include recurring shifts and scheduled hours. This can help to identify trends and take preventative action on churn.

10. Continuity of Care

Valuable metric on achieving client-caregiver chemistry. By taking a holistic look at how clients and their caregivers are connecting you can create a more accurate understanding of what the ideal matchup looks like.

Lessons from a Leader

Bien Chez Soi is a successful home care franchise founded in 2008. This Canadian agency now counts over 40 locations throughout the province of Quebec.

Bien Chez Soi has spent the past five years capturing the right data and using it to improve services, forecast, trendspot, and scale. Here, we present some of their key learnings around the effective use of data, courtesy of Ashley McLellan, VP, Operations.

- To gain buy-in from all stakeholders throughout the agency, it is important to manage expectations around the value of data, and the impacts both small and wide of not having this level of information. Once the value is sold, opportunities are endless.

- You have an enormous ecosystem of data at your fingertips that you can use to analyze the business. This enables you to be far less reactive, and far more proactive. If I have a good pulse on new clients on a weekly basis, then I can gauge how many employees I need to recruit to service those clients' needs.

- The ability to create custom reports to analyze the issues you want to prioritize is important. Find a software system that easily enables you to build these reports.

- So much time and energy is invested in attracting and retaining talented employees. Putting the right data in place can reveal satisfaction rates, and how empowered your caregivers feel. Use the data to maximize employee schedules according to their preferences. It's low-hanging fruit that tells the story of where your retention and turnover rates are trending. (The last time they assessed this, Bien Chez Soi was at 80% retention – a high mark.)

- Contract sign rates can be quite valuable in quantifying how long it takes for a new client lead to translate into a closed deal, creating percentages over time. From here, you can create closing rates, which are great for forecasting. If one location/franchise takes 10 days to close a contract and has a closing rate of 25%, you can start to see what percentage of leads will get closed. Then you can consider how many employees you'll need to recruit to service any growing needs.

- The month-over-month or year-over-year numbers can reveal stories across departments as well as overall business growth. You invested X% in marketing – has that translated into more sales in the months afterward? Are employee satisfaction rates changing? How do they compare to churn rates? On and on down the list, you can track growth over time on any metric you are collecting.

- Avoid getting lost in the data, or interpreting it forever. Identify what really matters to your agency – and make sure you capture the metrics that support those answers. Have the right people dissect it and interpret it properly. Then, based on what the data is saying, take action.

- Get an early start on making sure you have data that's reliable and trustworthy. Test any data point by creating a report around it, and then try to analyze it. What does this mean to me? If the answer is unclear, have someone else lend their perspective. Good clean data should tell a story.

How to Take Action on Your Data

The prime challenge in Business Intelligence is not accessing the data but taking it and making data-informed decisions. Find a way to incorporate these metrics into your workflow. Don't just see reports as data; see them as a call to action. Your overall software system needs to be flexible enough to enable all of this in one place.

For example, with AlayaCare's AlayaCare Connector, you can build on workflows. It takes existing software and lets you integrate multiple apps into one smooth, automated process. For example, if your report identifies a patient as at high risk of rehospitalization, you can create an alert or a watch list that sends out an email, documents the occurrence, and makes sure whoever needs to know what's happening is made aware. It lets you take your data and construct an action plan within the app.

But to easily turn data into action, you'll need a system that contains everything you need to run the reports you want. What is important to a larger agency dealing primarily with Medicare won't be equal to what's important for a smaller shop that focuses on private duty. You'll want software that makes it easy to filter data from a larger pot of raw data and generates calculated results.

But technology can't do everything on its own. To get the most out of it, you need to have a data-driven mindset. Software can only work with the data it is given, so if the system is operating using outdated information, the results may be compromised. Get into the habit of making sure your data is up to date and work on implementing data capture mechanisms as early as possible.

Conclusion

Those in the business of launching or operating home care agencies are likely not data scientists. So the idea of leveraging Business Intelligence and really taking control of your data can seem intimidating.

To that, we reiterate one message that we've come to learn is critical: don't just find a technology vendor, but instead a technology partner. One that actively supports you in the use of data within the system you've purchased. One that is invested in your success, which cares about your clients' outcomes. You shouldn't have to be data experts and shouldn't have to work through this alone.

At AlayaCare, our staff includes people who've worked in agencies for decades. With their expertise, we have been able to innovate and meet the needs of our partners whether they are huge operations or more niche providers. We're available to help streamline your data-driven processes and make the changes that will maximize the potential of your home care agency.

It is this expectation you should hold any software provider to.

Looking Ahead: What Our Data Scientists are Working On

Our data engineers have three main projects in mind at the moment. The first is to address caregiver turnover more directly by creating a predictive model that identifies changes in behavior or key variables that would pinpoint employees at risk of leaving and point to mitigation strategies.

We are leveraging schedule optimization technologies to increase the ease and speed with which vacant visits can be scheduled. The goal is to consider an agency's objectives, such as minimizing travel time or maximizing continuity of care, and have an algorithm automatically find the best matches to all vacant visits and assign or send bulk shift offers. This frees up time for administrators to manage more complex cases.

Lastly, we are working on models to predict which patients are at risk of hospitalizations. With this, you will be able to identify who is at risk, what their risk level at intake and at any point during their episode of care. It will compile notes, vitals, medical data, activities, and use a machine learning model to determine risks and help to identify paths you can take to mitigate them.

AlayaCare

About Alayacare

AlayaCare is the proud provider of revolutionary cloud-based home health care software. It is our mission to give care providers the tools they need to achieve better health outcomes by helping to streamline their workflow so that they can focus on what's truly important. With a team of dedicated experts working to change the home health care industry for the better, our clients count on us to offer personalized software and expertise that will result in better outcomes and a stable path into the future.

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