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AUTHOR   Johnston, Robyn; Chappell, Clive
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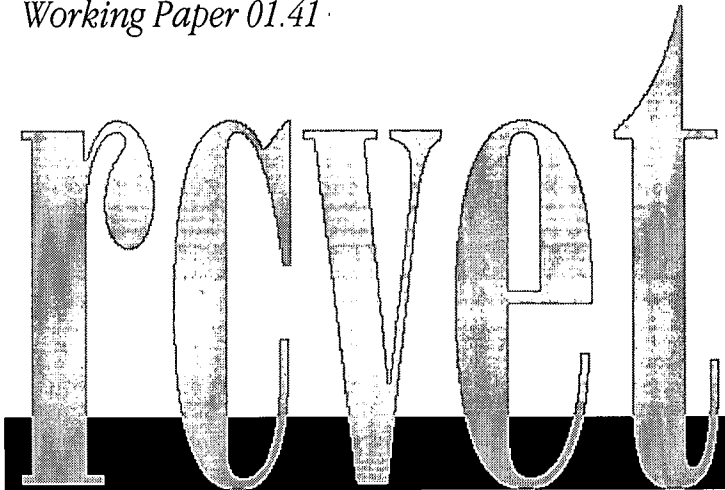   Training

ABSTRACT
            A survey was designed to assist in constructing a picture of
new vocational education and training professionals working in organizational
settings in Australia. They were practitioners whose positional titles
included training and development (T&D), human resource development, or human
resource practitioners who work within organizational settings or as
consultants to organizations. The subscriber data base for "Managing T&D" was
used as a research sample. Of 1,200 surveys circulated throughout Australia,
197 usable responses were received. Results indicated respondents perceived
that training is increasingly being afforded a high priority in Australian
workplaces; 80 percent worked in organizations that employed T&D staff; the
naming or labeling of the profession as practiced in organizations is not
consistent and could be seen as an indicator that this is still an evolving
field of practice in organizations; the lack of requirement by organizations
of a constant or specialist qualification of its practitioners could also be
seen as supporting the claim the field is still evolving; there was
considerable consistency in the nominated current skill requirements for
practitioners and in perceptions about current areas of high importance to
organizations and predictions about future areas that would be of high
importance to organizations; and there was a relatively commonly held sense
of the purpose of this field of professional practice. (YLB)

Constructing a picture of the organisational training and development professional

Robyn Johnston and Clive Chappell
UTS Research Centre Vocational Education & Training

Working Paper 01.41

UTS RESEARCH CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
A national key centre supported by the Australian National Training Authority

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BACKGROUND

Governments, educational institutions and organisations have made a considerable effort in recent years to build workforce capability in Australia largely as a response to the challenges of more competitive globalising market conditions. One aspect of such effort has been the attempt to integrate the various forms of work related learning (publicly and privately provided, formal and informal, structured and unstructured) into a coherent unified Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.

Changes emerging from the re-thinking of the vocational education and training system during this period have also resulted in much more extensive data gathering and reportage about the contemporary education and training market. Such data gathering is providing greater transparency about the complex nature of skill building in the Australian workforce. Such data gathering has revealed for example that while most structured work-related training that leads to an award (58.5%) is provided through TAFE , a substantial amount of structured training occurring in industry is not linked to gaining an award (41.5%). Such 'non award' training is supplied by a myriad of providers as shown in table 1 with a large proportion of this training occurring in house and delivered by in house trainers.

Table 1: Structured Non award Training Provision

Provider of structured non award training	Percentage %
University	1.8%
TAFE/ Technical College	5.3%
Business College/ACE	1.9%
Industry Skill Centre	1.0%
Skillshare /government training centre	2.9%
Professional/ industry/association	11.3%
Equipment product supplier	3.1%
Private training organisation	9.1%
Other external provider	5.0%
In house training course	58.6%

(Chappell 2000; Dumbrell 1988 based on data in ABS Report on Education and Training Experience Australia 1997)

Moreover the data presented above provides only part of the picture of workplace capability building in Australia. For it fails to reflect any perspectives on the unstructured informal learning and development that takes place in workplaces. This type of learning and development is increasingly recognised as contributing to the individual upskilling and organisational productivity needed in the knowledge-driven economy which is seeing the emergence of new forms of work organisation and the need for workers with new working knowledge, skills and work dispositions.

In such an environment both employee and organisational development are often fostered not only through traditional training approaches but also through the creation of various organisational structures and conditions which result in individuals claiming they are learning from their work place experiences and relationships. (eg Senge, 1991; Castells, 1993; Watkins and Marsick, 1996; Garavan,1997; Hager,1997; Denton 1998)

In summary there have been considerable changes occurring in vocational education, training and workforce capability building. Along with these changes, there has been more comprehensive record keeping and data gathering about skill building and quite extensive analysis and commentary about the efficacy of the approaches being used. There has however been less exploration of the impact such changes have had on the role of the professionals who work in an increasingly wide range of contexts to develop workplace capability. This gap in the research is the focus of a 3 year research project being undertaken by researchers from the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training (RCVET), University of Technology, Sydney with funding support from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). This project entitled 'The New Vet Professional' is investigating through a series of related research studies the role of those involved in skill formation and workplace capability building in a period of both organisational, institutional and skill formation policy change. The project considers how the changing contexts of work, expanding knowledge about skill formation and workplace capability building and changing expectations of organisations or educational institutions are impacting of the role, identity and careers of those involved in work-related learning in the various sites in which they work.

WHO IS THE NEW VET PROFESSIONAL?

One of the first challenges for this project has involved clarifying which occupational practitioners should be the focus of a study entitled 'The New VET Professional' given the proliferation of practitioners working in the area of skill formation and workplace capability building and the fact that this term is not commonly used by such practitioners what ever their work context. The term 'New Vet Professional' is being used in the initial phases of this research as a 'catch all' term to refer to those practitioners who engage in a variety of education and training and development activities that focus on preparing or developing workplace capability. These practitioners work in an increasingly diverse range of sites and settings and their work includes activities that extend well beyond traditional or orthodox training or teaching roles. This term is being used in the study therefore to

include TAFE teachers who undertake a variety of activities both within and beyond the classroom, laboratory or workshop. It is also includes practitioners in organisations whose primary function is to enhance individual group and organisational learning within enterprises. These professionals usually work under positional titles such as Training and Development or Human Resource Development or Human Resource officer, consultant, coordinator. It is also seen as including those who work with organisations and their employees as independent consultants. Additionally the term is also seen as including those in the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector who practise in the vocational workskill formation side of ACE business, and employees who manage Registered Training Organisations.

This term is therefore is not being used within this research project to imply a new occupational title or position. It is being used as a label, which encompasses a group of practitioners who may be engaged in common tasks, and who require common capabilities and have to consider matters of common interest at a time of considerable change in their sites of practice. The research investigates the existence of commonality of tasks and required capabilities and explores the possibility of the existence of common occupational identities. It will also examine the tensions created by the changing world of vocational educational and workforce capability building for the professionals in this field.

THE VET PROFESSIONAL IN ORGANISATIONS

This report presents some key findings from the first research activity of this large project. It reports findings of a survey which aimed to assist in the constructing of a picture of 'new VET professionals' working in organisational settings. They are the practitioners whose positional titles include Training and Development (T&D), Human Resource Development (HRD) or Human Resource (HR) practitioners who either work within organisational settings or as consultants to organisations. The survey provided opportunities for respondents to present their perspectives on the purpose of their work activity as well as to provide some indications as to the directions the field of professional practice was moving and the work skills such practitioners needed. In so doing this study contributes to the construction of a picture of this group of practitioners as well as the area of practice in organisational settings.

Data for this survey was gathered with the assistance of CCH Australia using their subscriber data base for *Managing Training and Development* as a research sample. The respondents for this survey were not necessarily Training and Development (T&D) practitioners. In many cases the respondents were HR (or other) managers who had responsibility for the T & D specialists and function in an organisation. In other cases respondents were in fact the training and development specialists within the subscribing organisation. All respondents had an awareness of their organisation's training and development activities, and directions for practice and requirements of practitioners from their organisation's perspective and as such were able to provide an up-to-date perspective of what this role currently entails.

Of the 1200 surveys circulated throughout Australia usable responses were received from 197 respondents providing a response rate of 16.5 % %.

Profiling detail of the respondents' organisations is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Size of respondents' organisations (n=197)

Size	0-19	20-99	100-199	200-1000	1000+
% of responses	6% (7)	16% (32)	16 (31)	43% (85)	21% (42)

Table 3: Distribution of industries represented in responses (n =197)

Industry	No and (%)of responses
Building and construction	2 (1%)
Financial Services	31 (16%)
Communication and Information Technology	10 (5%)
Community Services	14 (7%)
Education	9 (4.5%)
Energy (electricity, gas, water)	6 (3%)
Leisure, Tourism, Hospitality, personal services	9 (4.5%)
Manufacturing	30 (15%)
Primary production	10 (5%)
Public Service and Administration	35 (18%)
Transport and storage	14 (7%)
Other	27 (14%)

One third of the respondents came from public sector organisations, 57% identified themselves as coming from the private sector and 18 respondents (10%) nominated that they were from a not-for-profit or other category of organisation.

Approximately twenty nine percent of the respondents (57) indicated that the organisation for which they were working was operating as a registered training organisation (RTO). Many of these respondents indicated that their organisations were either in an expansionary stage (38%) or in a period of stability (43%). The remaining respondents who indicated that their organisations were RTOs identified their organisations as being in a contractionary phase.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the priority training and development activity was currently being accorded in their organisation and whether such activity had increased or decreased over the past 3 years. A large majority of respondents reported they worked for organisations in which the priority given to training had increased or at least remained the same over the previous three years. Responses also show that in most of the organisations

where there was a high priority for training this had also increased in the past three years. Only a very small percentage of respondents perceived that training had a low priority and that training activity had decreased in the previous 3 years. The relationship between these two organisational dimensions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Amount of and priority accorded to training and development within respondents' organisations

	Amount of training over past 3 yrs				
Organisational Priority for training	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same		Grand Total
High	67	2	15	1	85
Medium	42	8	39		89
Low	4	8	10		22
Grand Total	113	18	64	1	196

Interestingly data analysis showed that there was little difference between those organisations which had become RTOs and those which had not in terms of priority to given training and development. Respondents indicated that 42% of RTOs had a high priority for training and 43 % of those organisations which were not RTOs also had a afforded training and development a high priority.

The survey results also showed that in 88% of the organisations surveyed employed specialist or dedicated training and development staff with most employing one or two training staff members. As expected respondents from some of the very large organisations (>1000) employed large numbers of T&D specialists.

ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF THIS ROLE

To construct a more complete picture about the Training and Development professionals who practice within organisations, this survey sought to reveal dimensions about how this occupational role and the practice field are perceived within organisations. Such insights can be partially seen through the qualifications organisations expect of those acting in this role and the labelling organisations give to those in this role (as this has the potential to indicate the major focus of positional roles). Who the organisation enlists to carry out tasks associated with training and development and the reporting arrangements for this group of professionals also provides insights into the importance of T&D within the organisations surveyed.

Responses to such questions arguably can yield insights as to whether there is any consistency about how this occupational role is seen or positioned within organisations, or

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whether workforce capability building within organisations can be seen as a 'messy area of occupational practice', which lacks any consistency in practice or positioning across organisations.

Qualification required of practitioners

Respondents were asked to nominate, the qualifications expected by their organisations of T and D practitioners using a list of qualifications. One group of respondents (63%) nominated only one of listed qualifications as being required in their organisation for T and D specialists.

The two qualifications most frequently identified by this group of respondents were degree level qualifications (33%) or Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment (28%). The third most frequent response was that no training related qualification was expected at all for those in this occupational role (16%). The remaining 37% of respondents indicated that more than one qualification was accepted within their organisation for Training and Development positions. Once again the most commonly appearing qualifications when respondents nominated multiple qualifications were a degree and or a Certificate IV. A similar number from this category indicated that no formal qualification was acceptable to the organisation.

From these responses it would seem that organisations do not expect specialist degree in Training and Development for those holding positions in this field even though such degrees are readily available from universities throughout Australia. It would seem from these responses that a degree from any field is acceptable for most organisations. Certificate IV in Workplace Training is the highest level of qualification related to training and development most frequently required of practitioners from this field. The comparatively large number of organisations not requiring any specialist qualification for this practice area is also noteworthy.

Labelling of positions by organisations

The lack of consistency in the labelling used to describe positions associated with this occupational grouping within organisational settings alluded to at the beginning of this paper could be seen as being confirmed from this survey. The most frequently used descriptors of positions used for training and development staff in organisations as shown from the survey included Human Resource (HR) manager, /officer/consultant/co-ordinator, Training or Training and Development manager (T&D), /officer/consultant/co-ordinator. Descriptors also reported include Learning and Development, Human Resource Development, Employee Development and Staff Development officer/manager/co-ordinator or consultant.

In a number of responses there was a linkage between Training and Occupational Health and Safety perhaps reflecting the major emphasis of the training staff in specific organisations. Several responses also identified team leaders / site manager/ line manager

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as those responsible for training and development indicating that training was seen as a function shared by a range of positions and perhaps not necessarily a specialist position. Such variation in labelling may be completely serendipitous or may reflect a difference in practice or factors specific to particular industry sectors or industry size. It might also reflect that many in this role, working under the descriptor of HR, maybe expected to undertake a range of roles/ task that extend beyond orthodox training processes. This in turn suggests a blurring of clear occupational boundary roles, a position which has been reported in much contemporary literature.

Reporting lines for T and D

In response to questions about reporting relationships most responses suggested that T and D staff reported through their manager if they had one and then to the Human Resources Manager. This clearly suggests that the training function is most frequently seen and positioned as a sub-function within the Human Resources portfolio. The other fairly frequent responses to this question included that T and D staff reported to line managers or site managers, and sometimes, site/ line managers and HR managers were jointly nominated.

The distribution of the responsibility for T and D activities and staff at both central and divisional levels was also reflected in answers to questions about site at which training and development activity was arranged. Approximately 60 % of responses to this question indicated that training and development activities are arranged at both a central functional level and at the business unit or divisional level.

Use of non-specialist T &D staff or external providers of training and development

Much contemporary organisational literature suggests a move to more flexible, less permanent employment practices and a much greater use of outsourcing of non-core functions. There is some evidence to suggest that as this approach to employment becomes more common, specialist T and D services within organisations are often seen as 'non core' and replaced by 'as needed' and 'just in time' training provision. This survey attempted to gain some insights of this phenomenon at least from the perspective of HR/ HRD practitioners. It also sought to reveal the use of other non-specialist T and D staff by organisations for training purposes.

A large number of responses (86%) revealed that non specialist T and D staff were used to deliver training and to contribute to workforce capability development. The most frequently used sources other than internal T and D specialists included private providers/ private consultants. Approximately half of the respondents indicated that some training and development of staff was provided by TAFE and approximately one third of the respondents also reported using product suppliers.

58% of the respondents who stated that non-training specialist internal staff were used as trainers within their organisations indicated that such internal staff did not require a

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workplace training qualification. This high percentage could be seen as suggesting that organisations do not require the role to be solely performed by internal learning specialists.

A question later in the survey also sought to ascertain organisational preferences when Training and Development activities were out-sourced. 5% of respondents nominated that they preferred to use a public provider, 35 % nominated they preferred to use a private provider . 60% indicated they had no particular preference. The most frequent explanations for choice of provider was selection was based on the extent to which a provider best fitted the organisation's need. Many respondents also indicated that flexibility and quality were important characteristics required of providers.

PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE SKILL REQUIREMENTS OF T AND D PRACTITIONERS

Several questions revealed respondents' perceptions of current and future skill needs of T and D specialists. Such information provides insights into perceptions about the nature of this role in organisations. Responses to one question in this vein revealed that organisations rated the following skills as being highly important for specialist T and D practitioners: the capacity to conduct organisational training needs; to evaluate training outcomes; to facilitate team building and communication; to manage learning activities, and to provide customer service and client service training.

It is interesting to note that capacity to 'present training' was not frequently rated as a skill of high importance for T and D practitioners in organisations with only 30% of respondents rating this capability as being of high importance. Slightly more respondents rated skills of 'liasing with external providers of training' as being of high importance for organisations. These findings raise questions about the perceived importance of some of the more traditional roles skills usually required of internal training and development specialists.

While there is a growing prominence being afforded to on-line learning and the involvement of internal T and D providers in information technology in much of the training literature, only 25% of respondents rated the capacity 'to design on line/ e learning activities' as highly important for their organisation. 38% of respondents indicated that their organisation was using this approach to learning in some of its training programs. However in a later question most respondents indicated that external providers were developing these programs. It seems that this training innovation remains the province of specialist providers.

Current and future importance of T and D practice areas

A further question investigating perceived current skill requirements for these practitioners also asked respondents to predict the possible importance of certain practice areas for organisations over the next 3 years. Responses to this question provided some indications

of the new knowledge or specialists skill areas these practitioners think they require for future practice.

Table 5 provides results of responses to these two questions.

Table 5:Current and predicted importance of training and development in specific areas

Activity	High	High in coming 3 years	Medium	Medium in coming 3 years	Low	Low in coming 3 years
Introduction of new employees	114	108	52	62	22	19
New product/ equipment training	56	70	91	90	38	21
Management Development	48	119	78	64	65	8
Occupational health & safety	79	93	72	71	41	24
Computers/IT training	50	76	82	81	59	32
Recruitment/ selection / promotion	12	38	66	96	110	53
Performance appraisal	37	82	81	82	69	25
Technical skill development	45	75	93	90	39	18
Quality processes and procedures	35	62	66	84	85	42
Change management/ re-organisation	25	74	54	79	110	36
Customer/ client service	40	85	67	75	80	27
Team building/ communication	32	91	81	73	74	21
Introduction of new technology	32	61	75	74	76	47
EEO/ AA Programs	21	35	59	90	100	59
Performance improvement	34	61	78	93	76	22
Other						

The above data presents some interesting findings both in terms of the picture they present about current areas of training activity and perceptions about the areas in which training and development will become important within the next three years.

Of particular note are the differences between the current perceived importance of particular T&D tasks and predictions for the future in terms of training areas. For example in areas such as Management development, Change management, Team building and communication, Introduction of new technology the results are somewhat surprising. Firstly , these results indicate that a comparatively small number of respondents see these areas as of current high importance. It seems that over the past decade the focus on management development (as indicated by the Karpin Report) has been slow to infiltrate the thinking of T&D professionals. The introduction of new technologies together with structural and cultural change management also appears less prominently in current perceptions of T&D activities.

There have been in fact a number of studies that have highlighted the supposed amount of activity happening in these areas. These results raise a number of questions that warrant further investigation. For example, do reported results of high levels of activity in the above areas in other studies pertain mainly to large or best practice, prominently profiled companies and hence are not spread widely across the total organisational landscape? Or alternatively is training and development activity in the above areas not necessary the province of those dedicated training and development staff? Have specialist change teams or quality teams been established to facilitate change process that have not necessarily included training and development staff?

A further question revealing perceptions of how the role of T & D practitioners has changed in recent years indicates that the following work activities have become more important for T and D practitioners.

- To provide proactive services that identify and resolve problems
- To bring about improvements in individual performance
- To develop performance solutions for business units, and,
- To integrate learning with normal work activities.

It is important to note that in a number of these activity statements there is an emphasis on both solution and performance perhaps indicating the greater level of accountability and outcome achievement expected by contemporary organisations and reported widely in literature about this field. It is also interesting to note the perceived growing importance of integrating learning with normal work activities perhaps providing an indication of recognition of the value of work-based learning also reported in the literature.

A COMMON SENSE OF PURPOSE

This survey also attempted to gain some understanding of how the respondents saw the purpose of training and development. Results indicated that there was considerable agreement of respondents to statements about the purpose of training and development within organisations. The following lists show the percentage of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with a list of statements describing the purpose of training.

NOTE: While the conflating of the agreement tables (strongly agree- agree) intensified to some extent the level of agreement, the first 4 ranked items attracted the least disagreement further suggesting a level of consistency in these results.

Table 6: Perceptions of purpose of training and developments contribution to organisations

The purpose of training and development is to contribute to	% agreeing	Rank
Organisational and work performance	95%	1
Individual development of employees	93%	2
Maintaining technical skills	88%	3
Building productive work teams	87%	4
Introduction and use of new technology	87%	4
Job satisfaction	87%	4
Career development of employees	85%	7
Managing organisational change	82%	8
Developing a positive working environment	79%	9
Sharing organisational knowledge	79%	9
Organisational competitiveness	78%	11
Succession planning	74%	12
Solving organisational problems	72%	13
Increase qualification level of workforce	70%	14

WHAT DO SUCH RESULTS SHOW US?

The findings reported above represents the initial analysis of the survey data exploring the role of 'the New Vet Professional' and construct a picture of the professional responsible for workplace up-skilling in organisations other than educational institutions. These findings do provide some insights about the role and common occupational characteristics of those working in this area in organisations and provide a basis for comparison with VET professionals working in other work sites who could be seen as part of the new VET professional occupational grouping.

One of the first findings of note is the perception of respondents that training is increasingly being afforded a high priority in Australian workplaces. While information about hours or financial resources devoted to training and development in organisations was not sought from this survey, the survey findings did reveal that 80% of respondents worked in organisations that employed training and development staff. Such findings reveal that despite the opening up of the training market; the outsourcing of many organisational functions and the changing nature of workplaces there remains a role within organisations for specialist training and development staff.

Some problems however exist in terms of the clarity with which this role has been established. Firstly, as indicated earlier in this report, the naming or labelling of the profession as practised in organisations is certainly not consistent and could be seen as an indicator that this is still an evolving field of practice in organisations. Such variability in

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labelling may help to explain some of the lack of understanding of this area as a professional field by those outside the field and some of the inconsistency in terms of practices or emphases in practice in various organisations.

A second finding which could in some ways be seen as supporting the claim that the field is still evolving is the lack of requirement by organisations of a constant or specialist qualification of its practitioners. While degree level studies in T and D are available in many universities throughout Australia, they are not seen as essential for practice by employing organisations. Any type of degree seems to be seen as satisfactory by most organisations. Secondly the most common sub degree level qualification is the Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment. However this is not required by all employers. The survey provides ample evidence of many workplaces requiring no specialist qualification at all, which raises questions of the extent to which specialist trainers are seen by organisations as needing to possess some forms of specialist knowledge.

Despite such inconsistency in terms of labelling or qualification, there was considerable consistency in the nominated current skill requirements for practitioners both in terms of the skills respondents identified as important for current practitioners, the skills which had become more important for practitioners over the past years and the skills not seen as highly important in the process of workplace upskilling .

There was also reasonable consistency in perceptions about current areas of high importance to organisations and predictions about future areas which would be of high importance to organisations providing some indications of areas in which trainers and developers may need to acquire more skills. Further analysis of nominated areas by industry sector and size may yield additional insights about this role in various industry sectors. Survey responses also suggest that there is a relatively commonly held sense of the purpose of this field of professional practice which could arguably be seen as contributing to a sense of common professional identity.

Further analysis of such findings by industry and organisational size may yield more detailed conclusions, and indeed there is a wealth of material available in some of the qualitative responses included in this survey that require further analysis. However the findings to date reveal the areas of change being experienced by those practicing in organisations. Such findings also provide useful benchmarks against which future research findings gleaned from studies of 'New VET professionals' engaged in building workplace capability in other contexts can be interpreted.

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AUTHORS

Dr Clive Chappell is an Associate Professor at the University of Technology and Senior
Researcher with the RCVET .

Robyn Johnston is a lecturer in Adult Education at University of Technology and Senior
Researcher with the RCVET .

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