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Booking Path Magic Converts Consumers

Examples from easyJet, Jet2.com, Jetstar, Ryanair, Singapore, and Wizz Air reveal responsive retailing methods for airline websites.



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Driving Successful Partnerships

CarTrawler is the leading B2B technology provider of car rental and mobility services to the global travel industry. Our purpose is driving successful partnerships.

Delivering unparalleled performance for the biggest brands in travel through end-to-end car rental and mobility solutions. Combining leading B2B technology with revenue management and data science capabilities that maximises ancillary revenue for our partners while helping them to deepen relationships with their customers.



About Jay Sorensen, Writer of the Report

Jay Sorensen's research and reports have made him a leading authority on frequent flyer programs and the ancillary revenue movement. He is a regular keynote speaker at ancillary revenue and airline retail conferences and has testified to the US Congress on ancillary revenue issues. His published works are relied upon by airline executives throughout the



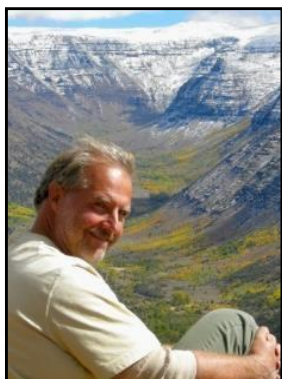
Jay with sons Anton and Aleksei at Artist Point in Yellowstone National Park.

world and include first-ever guides on the topics of ancillary revenue and loyalty marketing.

Mr. Sorensen has 38 years experience in product, partnership, and marketing development. As president of the IdeaWorksCompany consulting firm, he has helped boost airline revenue, started loyalty programs and co-

branded credit cards, developed products in the service sector, and helped start an airline and other travel companies. His career includes 13 years at Midwest Airlines where he was responsible for marketing, sales, customer service, product development, operations, planning, financial analysis and budgeting. His favorite activities are hiking, exploring and camping in US national parks with his family.

About Eric Lucas, Editor of the Report



Eric Lucas is an international journalist whose work has appeared in Michelin travel guides, Alaska Airlines *Beyond Magazine*, *Epoch Times*, *Westways* and many other publications. Founding editor of *Midwest Airlines Magazine*, he is the author of eight books. Eric has followed and written about the travel industry for more than 30 years. He lives on San Juan Island, Washington, where he grows organic garlic, apples, beans and hay; visit him online at TrailNot4Sissies.com.

Eric, at his favorite summer retreat, Steens Mountain, Oregon.

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Booking Path Magic Converts Consumers

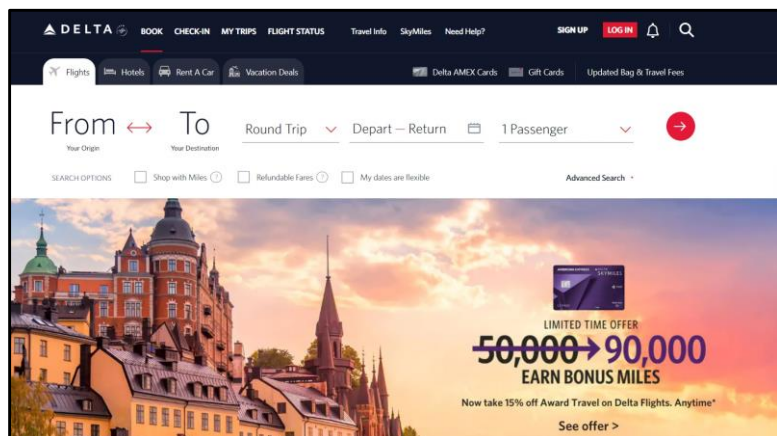
GREAT SALESPEOPLE RESPOND TO THE CUSTOMER

Cashiers and clerks just take customer orders. True salespeople identify the individual needs of a customer, and do their best to provide a solution. A visit to my local Honda dealership revealed management hasn't used the title "salesperson" for a decade. They call their sales staff ESPs, or Expert Solution Providers. Rather than simply "making the sale," this enlightened dealership works to ensure a customized experience. This is something the six airlines featured in this report already know. They have built logic into their booking paths that responds to what a customer wants.

When I asked the sales manager at the Honda dealer to describe the hallmarks of a great ESP his first word was "transparency." That's how trust is established with the customer. He added, "There's plenty we must learn about a person before they become a buyer. This includes identifying a deal-stopping issue, such as credit problems or something as simple as a preference for cloth or leather seat covers."

He surprised me with a final observation, "Of course, everyone always wants to buy a better car than they are driving now." I reacted with a confused look, and he added, "Why would someone trade down, why would you buy something less?"

This is an observation that's often lost on the travel industry. Too often, we operate under the belief that everyone wants to spend less. When we take the time to ask, we will learn our customers are eager to spend more money for something better. There's much the travel industry can learn from the everyday art of a salesperson to create responsive booking paths.



Quo vadis? The eternal question of "From To" as portrayed by the ever present search box, which is the front door to the booking path on the home page of every airline site.

EASYJET MAPS OUT MORE

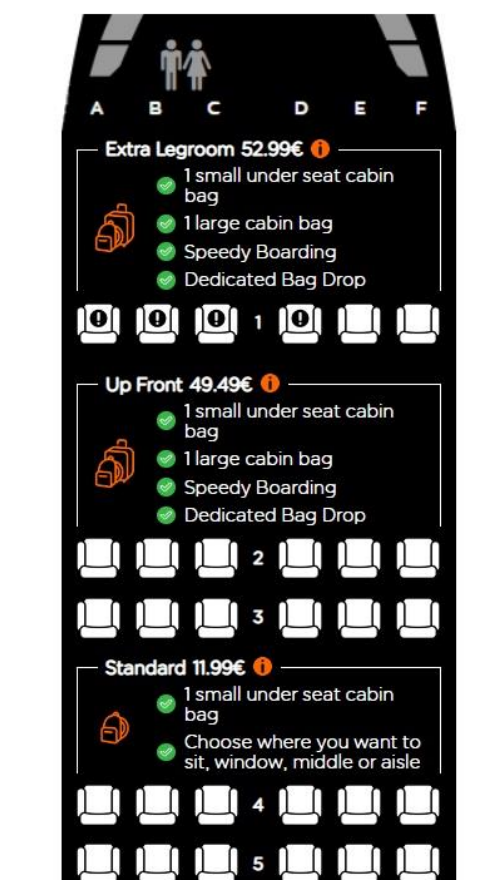
Seat maps in the booking path usually have colors, arrows, and prices. The primary intent is to encourage consumers to seek the peace of mind offered by knowing in advance where you will sit. It's a place where many consumers pause to consider their comfort on departure day. EasyJet changed this one-shot approach by adding more. Their seat map engages the consumer in a second opportunity to upgrade from the fare bundle they just selected on the prior screen (see below).

Standard	Standard Plus	Essentials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One small under seat cabin bag (max 45 x 36 x 20 cm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One small under seat cabin bag (max 45 x 36 x 20 cm) One large cabin bag (max 56 x 45 x 25 cm) Up Front seat Speedy Boarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One small under seat cabin bag (max 45 x 36 x 20 cm) 23kg hold bag Standard seat
Continue with Standard fare	LIMITED AVAILABILITY + 49.49 € per person	+ 52.98 € per person

EasyJet's seat map is very different from those used by other airlines. In the example on this page, the consumer has selected the Standard fare, which creates the seat map shown to the right. The Standard fare allows a small carry-on bag with a fee charged for pre-assigned seating. In this example, that could be a row 4 seat for €11.99 on this Barcelona to London Gatwick flight.

Moving up to row 2 has the consumer buying the Standard Plus fare for €49.49, which is the same upgrade price displayed on the prior branded fare screen. The same applies for the extra legroom seating of row 1, which represents the Essentials fare for €52.99.

When consumers choose Standard Plus on the prior screen, the seat map removes the Up Front offer, and just provides the ability to upgrade to Extra Legroom seating (the Essentials fare). EasyJet has designed a booking path that doubles the opportunity to sell higher priced bundles, while preserving transparency.




JET2.COM SERVES UP CHILD MEALS

Family friendly restaurants train waiters to automatically give kids menus, coloring books, and crayons when young diners are seated. Offering discounts for children is a kindness that acknowledges finances can be strained when feeding a family. It's also a courtesy that acknowledges kids as worthy customers in their own right with a menu tailored for their tastes. Plus, we all know the coloring book and crayons distract the kids while mom and dad view the adult menu. Why can't an airline do the same?

Jet2.com, a holiday airline in the United Kingdom, embraces this good practice in the booking path and onboard their flights. Adding a child, age 11 or younger, to the itinerary enables the kids' pre-order meal option. Adults can pre-order a meal for £10 (\$12), and for children the booking path reveals kids' meals for £7.50 (\$9) as shown below. The booking path serves up a banner promoting kids' meals, which replaces the standard pre-order message.

Add meals to your flight

Our kids meals include Cadbury's chocolate buttons, a Pip Organic fruity water and other tasty treats. View allergen information [here](#).



*KIDS MEAL BOXES ONLY AVAILABLE WITH KIDS HOT MEALS

✓Pre-order only ✓Served within 40 minutes after take-off ✓Drink and snacks included


Manchester ✈ **Majorca**
Flying at: 17:15 In the air: 2 hrs 45 mins

Abraham
Lincoln Choose meal

Robert Todd
Lincoln Choose meal


Going out

Kids meals(from) £7.50



All Day Breakfast (Kids)
£7.50
[Meal info](#)

+



Macaroni Cheese (Kids)
£7.50
[Meal info](#)










+

But wait, there's more! To ensure the little ones are entertained for the flight, Jet2.com includes an activity pack and coloring pencils with kids' meals. Pre-order meals are available on flights having a minimum duration of 2 hours and 25 minutes. As a bonus, the carrier's meal boxes are 100% recyclable which includes single-use wood cutlery to replace the usual plastic.

WIZZ FEATURES FAMILY BRANDED FARES FOR LESS

Family oriented services are perfect candidates for responsive booking paths. That's because most websites ask consumers to select how many children are included in the booking request. This allows the logic of the booking engine to populate subsequent pages with tailored offers. This is also a timely development as regulators begin to question pre-assigned seating fees for families. While Wizz Air is not waiving these fees, it does offer some relief for family travel budgets.

The addition of children (age 2-14) to any booking query triggers WizzAir.com display Wizz Plus Family and Wizz Go Family fares as upgrade options to the Travel Light fare. For the Wizz Plus Family fare shown below, the fare decreased to €174.79 from €181.99, which is a €7.20 savings. For this particular Barcelona – Vienna flight example, this is a modest 4% reduction. The appearance of a strike-through price and savings might be sufficient to attract consumers to upgrade from the Travel Light fare. However, the magic is having the mechanism in place to potentially deliver larger savings based upon demand and implementing more aggressive pricing policies.

ALL IN & FULL FLEX WIZZ Plus Family	PACK & SAVE WIZZ Go Family	TRAVEL LIGHT Basic
 32 kg checked-in bag	 20 kg checked-in bag	 Free carry-on bag placed under the seat
 Free premium or normal seat selection	 Free seat selection excluding row 1 to 4 and extra legroom seats	
 Free carry-on & Trolley bag on board 40 x 30 x 20 cm & 55 x 40 x 23 cm	 Free carry-on & Trolley bag on board 40 x 30 x 20 cm & 55 x 40 x 23 cm	
 Online flight change without flight change fees		
 Refund to WIZZ account Within 72 hours		
show detailed list of 6 more benefits	show detailed list of 5 more benefits	show detailed list of benefits
per passenger on this flight €181.99 €174.79 FAMILY DISCOUNT	per passenger on this flight €158.98 €154.08 FAMILY DISCOUNT	per passenger on this flight €109.99

The website page titled “Wizz for Families” does not include the family branded fare as a benefit. The airline has neglected to list this unique benefit. The page does describe a policy for no-charge early boarding for families that include infant travelers.

SINGAPORE SEATS KIDS FOR FREE

While Wizz Air provides a modest discount associated with higher priced branded fares, Singapore goes all the way. The carrier adds free standard seat assignments for all passengers in an itinerary (adults and children) when a child is included in the itinerary for the lowest-priced Lite and Value fares. No-charge seat assignments are already included for the Standard and Flexi fares. When a child age 2-11 is included in a booking query, the booking path displays the message below:



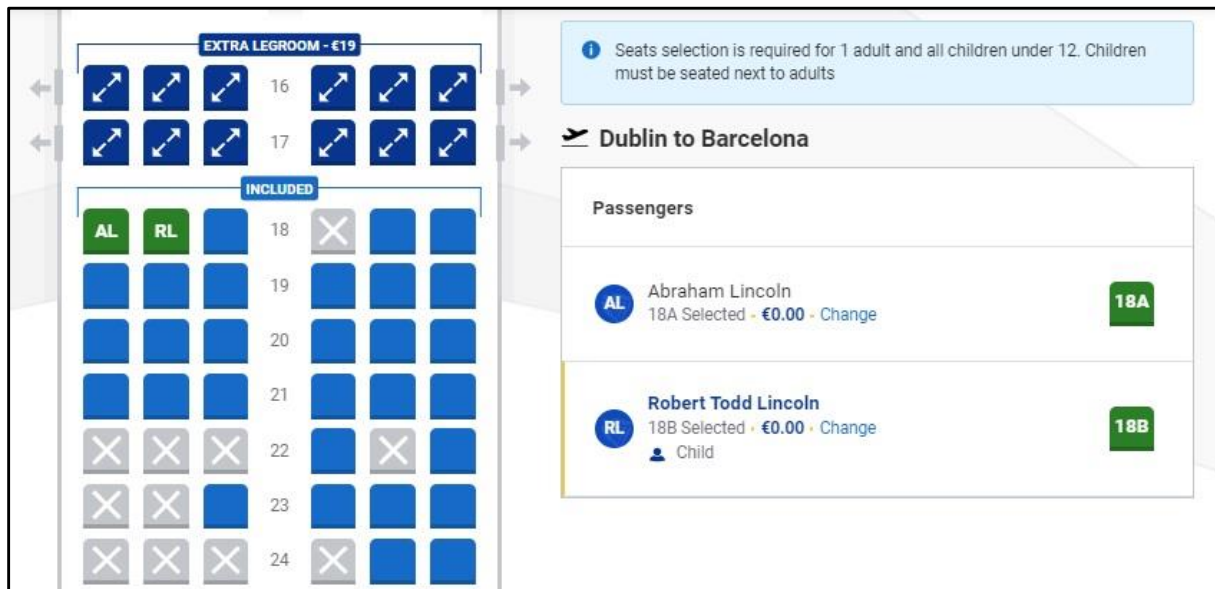
The fare display appears after a flight is selected. This display does not reflect the free pre-assigned seating offer for the Lite and Value fares, which undoubtedly causes confusion. For example, in the image below, a minimum seat selection fee of SGD 13.20 is displayed (highlighted by our red box). However, the subsequent seat map does display a zero fee for standard seats. Consumers may upgrade to extra legroom and forward zone seats for an additional fee. Inclusion of children also prompts the booking path to solicit a choice of menu for kids' meals.

FARE CONDITIONS	ECONOMY LITE	ECONOMY VALUE	ECONOMY STANDARD	ECONOMY FLEXI
Baggage	25kg	25kg	30kg	30kg
Seat selection	From SGD 13.20	From SGD 13.20	Complimentary (Standard Seats)	Complimentary (Standard & Forward Zone Seats)
Earn KrisFlyer miles	1,437 KrisFlyer miles	1,437 KrisFlyer miles	2,156 KrisFlyer miles	2,874 KrisFlyer miles
Upgrade with miles	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Allowed ⓘ	Allowed ⓘ
Booking cancellation fee	Not Allowed	SGD 200	SGD 130	SGD 70
Booking change fee (a fare difference may apply)	Not Allowed	SGD 70	SGD 30	Complimentary
No show fee	Not Allowed	SGD 130	SGD 130	SGD 130
View PPS Club / KrisFlyer privileges	SGD 730.60 SELECT	SGD 804.60 SELECT	SGD 964.60 SELECT	SGD 1,270.60 SELECT

RYANAIR IS FAMILY FRIENDLY

Europe's largest low cost carrier proves an airline can be family friendly and profitable at the same time; Ryanair had a €1.37 billion (\$1.46 billion) profit for the 6-month period ended 30 September 2022. Its investment in Ryanair Labs, which employs hundreds to boost its digital capabilities, has paid off with very compelling family travel deals generated in its booking path. The carrier's family seating policy is exceptional because it requires seating of children next to an adult in the itinerary at time of booking. But even better, Ryanair waives pre-assigned seating fees for children – a surprising gesture for a low cost carrier. In addition, the inclusion of a child in the itinerary also generates a special branded fare: Family Plus.

An adult traveler qualifies up to four children for free pre-assigned seating. The booking path automatically enters child friendly mode when a child age 2 to 11 is included in the itinerary. The ability to “skip” seat assignment for a later date (after booking) is blocked as described in the blue shaded box on the right side of the seat map displayed below.



After passenger names are entered, the booking map provides free pre-assigned seats for rows 18-33, which creates a quasi kids' zone in the aircraft. In the event this zone is filled, the airline opens up rows 11-15 for additional free pre-assigned seating. The shopping cart reveals one confusing element of the process. The pre-assigned seating fee paid by the adult displays as €0.00 next to the seat map; the adult fee appears in the final price breakdown box at the end of the booking path. Using the example of the Dublin to Barcelona flight, the adult fee was €6.00. Consumers might feel they got a freebie from Ryanair, when in fact the adult fee has been applied.

The genius of the process is the check performed by the seat map to determine whether children are properly seated next to the adult. And in case you are wondering what happens when an adult travels with four children on an aircraft having 3-across seating? The seat map requires all family members to be seated in the same row. The system does not accept seat assignments in a row just behind the adult. Sorry kids, dad or mom can keep their eyes on you during the entire flight.



“Stop, look, and listen” is a phrase used by teachers to command the attention of students. The pop-up box gives a similar warning to adult consumers.

The Family Plus branded fare, which is an addition to the Value, Regular, and Plus fares, appears when children are in the itinerary. It's a complex and premium priced fare, and in the example of the Dublin – Barcelona flight, the cost approaches that of the Plus fare.

The fare does not improve the pre-assigned seating deal for children, nor does it include an assigned seat for an adult. It does provide a 10kg (22 pound) checked bag for all persons in the itinerary plus a single 20 kg (44 pound) checked bag. The fare does not reference priority boarding which is included as a Regular and Flexi Plus branded fares feature.

As an additional consideration for strained family budgets, Family Plus provides an installment plan. 50 percent of the booking cost is paid upon completion of the booking process. The remaining balance is due a minimum of 40 days before departure. Ryanair discloses the customer is not charged added fees or interest for the installment option.

Failure to make a timely final payment results in a cancellation of the booking. But surprisingly, the installment is not lost. It's transferred to the wallet of the consumer's MyRyanair account as a travel credit to be used within 12 months.

The potential savings offered by Family Plus, when compared to other fare options, are not described by airline. But the installment plan adds the flexibility of providing a refundable alternative (as a travel credit) for families. This is not a feature of Ryanair's other branded fares.

**50% now and the rest later**

NEW

Pay half of your booking now and the rest later. [More info](#)

Family Plus

Recommended for you!


-  **1 Small Bag**
Must fit under the seat (40cm x 20cm x 25cm)
-  **Free seats for kids under 12**
For up to 4 kids on your booking
-  **10kg Check-in Bag for all**
Must be dropped at check-in desk
-  **1 x 20kg Check-in Bag**
1 large Check-in Bag for your family trip
-  **Pay 50% Instalment**
Pay half now and the rest later



€46.50 more
per person on each flight

Family Plus is offered as a fourth branded fare in the booking path when an itinerary includes a child. For other itineraries, Ryanair displays Flexi Plus as the fourth fare.

JETSTAR PLACES CLUB MEMBERSHIP IN THE PATH






Subscription programs, which charge an annual fee for a year of benefits, are offered by many airlines. Jetstar has made an exceptional effort to promote its Club Jetstar program in the booking path. The message fills the screen and forces consumers to pause and consider spending AUD 55 (\$38) for membership.

 **You can save \$8 on your flights!**

Regular price	\$198.00
Club Jetstar price	\$190.00
Plus \$55.00 AUD for membership	
 Melbourne to Brisbane	\$198.00 \$190.00
 Club Jetstar membership*	\$55.00

Become a member now and save on future trips!

What can \$55 a year get you?

-  **Member-only fares***
Save on selected Starter fares
-  **20% off bags and seats**
Discounts on bags and seats selection every time you fly
-  **Early access**
Get in first for our biggest flight sales
-  **Share the benefits**
Discounts for up to 4 others when you book together
-  **Exclusive partner offers**
Great deals from travel and lifestyle brands

\$55.00 AUD

Add Club Jetstar






Already a member? [Sign in](#)

The appearance of the message has been slightly modified to fit on this page. Suffice to say, the graphics dominate the full screen in the booking path.

The responsive functionality displays the discounted fare for the flight selected. Clicking the “Add Club Jetstar” button instantly opens an enrollment screen to gather first and last name, email address, and to establish a password. Thereafter, the booking path delivers the discounts promised by the subscription. The prices displayed for carry-on and checked baggage (see below) and pre-assigned seating display the discounted Club Jetstar pricing with a strike-through of the regular price.

Checked Baggage

Checked baggage must be checked in before you go to the gate, and will not be carried onto the aircraft. [More info](#)

 0 kg	 15 kg	 20 kg	 30 kg	 40 kg
	\$38.00 each \$30.40 each	\$42.00 each \$33.60 each	\$63.00 each \$50.40 each	\$84.00 each \$67.20 each
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Jetstar's usual checked baggage options with the Club Jetstar 20% discount applied for each.

The AUD 55 fee is clearly noted in the final shopping cart with the provision to instantly remove the subscription for all prices to change back to the un-discounted amounts. The latter functionality is a people pleasing feature of the Jetstar booking engine which honors the transparency referenced at the beginning of this report by the Honda dealer as a key ingredient for a great sales experience.

AIRLINE RETAIL WILL EVOLVE TO BE MORE

The booking path begins with the search box – the simple device in which you enter your departure, destination, travel dates, and passenger types. It has been the focal point of airline websites from the beginning; but it should not be permitted to define the travel retail process. The carriers in this report are enhancing the capabilities of the booking path by making them more responsive to consumers.


Much has already been accomplished. For example, booking paths have harnessed the complexity of revenue management that is workable for consumers. Branded fares and a la carte services are now embedded in websites and producing billions in revenue for airlines. Self-service capabilities for booking changes and the development of mobile apps have placed the power of a reservation agent in the palm of a traveler's hand. The responsive booking path methods described in this report add yet another layer of retail sophistication.



Those were the days . . . Ryanair.com from 2008.

These are good and necessary steps, but the humble search box retains its role as the front door of our storefronts. As the 2008 Ryanair.com image shown on this page demonstrates, the basic elements of this box remain unchanged. The Honda sales manager said, “Almost all customers come into the showroom knowing which car they want to buy.” If travelers also arrive to our storefronts equipped with knowledge of where they want to go, then the booking box remains a key tool.

But I believe there are many consumers who are waiting for the airline industry to inspire them and woo them to consider new destinations and activities. Our current methods attract those who have a plan, and repel those who don't. Our websites should encourage consumers to discover and identify their perfect travel experience. Responsive booking paths can be wonderful revenue machines, but only after the consumer knows what they want to buy.

A portrait of Jay Sorensen, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, smiling. He is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt under a dark gray V-neck sweater. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Chief Revenue Officer

Jay Sorensen's consulting work, research, and reports have made him the **leading authority** on ancillary revenue, a la carte pricing, loyalty marketing, and airline retail.

Jay has the hands-on-experience of 13 years as an airline executive and the innovative spirit of 25 years as an industry consultant. Since 1996 IdeaWorksCompany has helped 70 client companies including airlines, loyalty programs, passenger railroads, and hotel brands. Jay has presented on-site workshops in Europe, the Middle East, South America, Asia, and North America, and has issued 96 reports, 15 yearbooks of ancillary revenue, and more than 20 other publications on frequent flyer programs and travel industry statistics.

IdeaWorksCompany clients do better.

CONTACT JAY SORENSEN FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jay "at" IdeaWorksCompany.com

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