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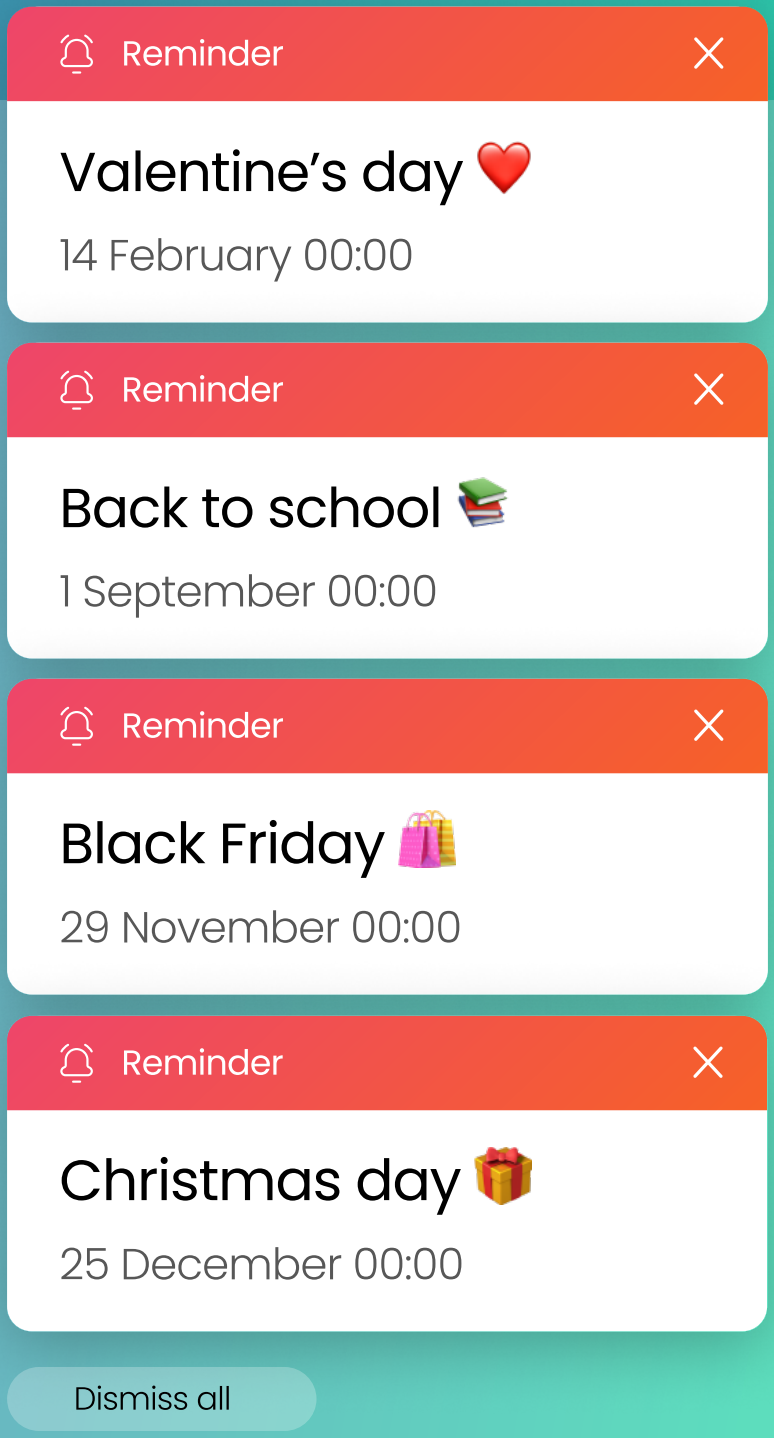
The 30-day guide for peak season success

The final hurdle



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1.0 Introduction

Peak season can be overwhelming for many retailers. With over **2.7 billion** people shopping online annually, peak season now extends beyond November, encompassing festive periods, national holidays, and brand-specific events. So how do you make sure every detail is handled flawlessly after all your planning for success?

Unfortunately, many retailers check out at checkout, missing opportunities to close the post-purchase loop. To have a competitive advantage in the marketplace, retailers must go beyond trying to convert a customer and focus on building a higher customer lifetime value. And with AI influencing **over 51 billion sales** in Cyber Weekend alone, it can feel difficult to keep up and factor advancements into your strategy.

Underwhelming customer experiences don't occur because brands don't care, they just haven't yet been empowered to deliver the bold, yet strategic and scalable ways they can keep shoppers happy and excited to spend with them after the first purchase. The interactions customers remember, are the last ones they have with you. How you get their items to them is the new battlefield for customer loyalty.

What does an excellent experience look like?

This means already having in place the warehouse setup that keeps the order process seamless, and when things go wrong, which can happen in high traffic periods, your customer service and marketing teams are equipped with clear communication and updates on order status.

Given customers' growing demand for personalization, transparency, and speed, how can you effectively meet and exceed their expectations?

The race to give your customer the best experiences and set yourself apart from your competitors is one riddled with challenges. We're here to help you from tripping at the final hurdle.



AI influences **over 51 billion sales** in Cyber Weekend alone.

2.0

Customer Service teams

2.1 6 challenges for Customer Service teams

As members of the customer service team, you are the embodiment of the brand, and how you interact with your shoppers can set the tone for how they see the brand and whether they return. So, what are common challenges that this team faces during Peak Season?

1. During any Peak season, whether it be during Cyber Weekend, Christmas, or Back-to-School periods, there is a significant surge in customer inquiries, delivery issues, and delays.

2. If you are not sending post-purchase communications proactively, your team will get an influx of WISMO (Where Is My Order?) inquiries. With multiple requests for order information, this only overwhelms your team even further.

3. Due to challenges (1) and (2), inevitably the team is also faced with longer resolution times for customers. This means more delays and more complaints.

4. Sometimes additional staff are hired to plug the gaps and cut through the surge of requests, but temporary staff may not match the level of efficiency that more permanent staff possess, leading to inconsistency in customer service quality.

5. When systems are overwhelmed by high traffic, technical failures may occur. Real-time, centralized data is critical and without it teams can struggle to function during peak season.

6. During the rush, it's easy for communication to become unclear and inconsistent, and transparency is a challenge. Miscommunication is a common occurrence with customers receiving incorrect shipping updates or conflicting information.

So, how do you avoid these common challenges so close to customer interaction surge?

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2.2 30-day prep checklist for Customer Service teams

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Use this checklist in the month leading up to your peak season event.

- Have you made sure that all customer service agents, both permanent and temporary, are well-trained on handling peak season inquiries?
- Has the team coordinated with the fulfillment team and shipping partners to make sure their delivery estimates are accurate?
- Have you created an optimized schedule with sufficient coverage during peak times to prevent agent burnout?
- Have you conducted system load testing on all customer service tools including live chat, email workflows, and phone systems?
- Do you have a system that can provide real-time tracking information; do all team members have appropriate access?
- Do you have tools that can provide actionable historical data; are you analyzing it in debriefs for learnings ahead of peak season?
- Are templates and automated responses for FAQs in place to mitigate call loads on the team and help prioritize complex issues?



Over 44% of consumers say good customer service is crucial to peak season.

Source: https://www.tidio.com/blog/black-friday-trends/

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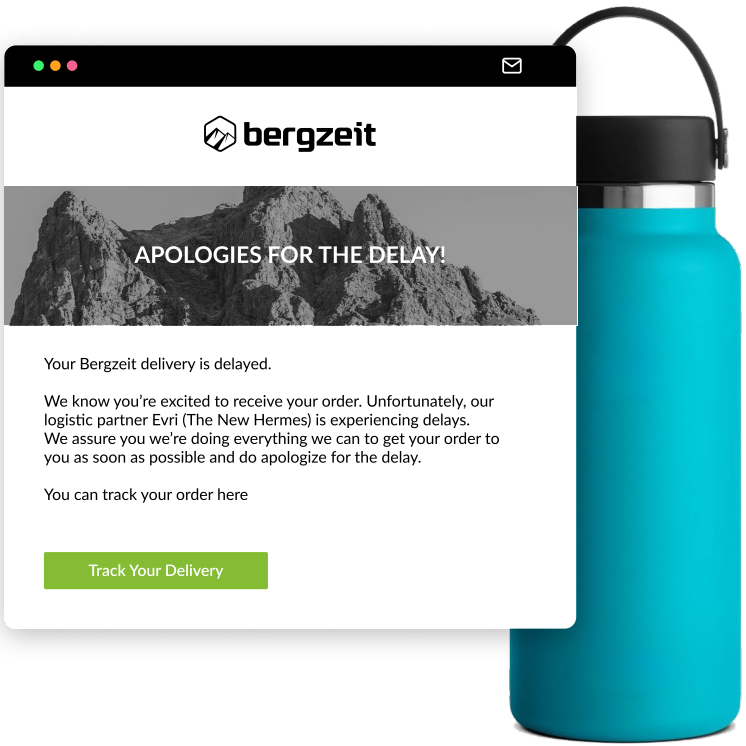

Bergzeit reduces customer inquiries by 21.5%

Bergzeit, a leading retailer in the outdoor goods sector, leverages parcelLab's platform to enhance its customer service operations during peak times. **parcelLab Engage** offers proactive post-purchase updates for customers, which can significantly reduce the number of inbound WISMO inquiries. This enhanced approach allows Bergzeit to handle more complex issues that require personal attention and helps boost customer satisfaction and loyalty.

parcelLab solutions used:

Convert **Engage** **Retain**

For more details on our solutions, refer to the appendix.

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3.0

Marketing and Digital teams

3.1 7 challenges for Marketing or Digital teams

During peak season, marketing efforts must focus on driving traffic, boosting sales, and strengthening brand visibility. Consistency, timing, and cohesive messaging are critical to maintaining a strong customer perception of the brand. This period also creates opportunities to win over new shoppers and increase customer lifetime value. However, it's easy to get this wrong. This may look like:

1. Oversaturating marketing and communication channels leading to higher ad costs, lower engagement, and overall customer fatigue.

2. Misalignment between marketing and inventory data causing promotion of out-of-stock items.

3. Disjointed cross-channel marketing initiatives, such as including an offer on social media that's different than what's presented in an email, can hinder a brand's ability to deliver authentic and cohesive messages to customers.

4. Struggling with conversions at checkout as website traffic spikes and acquisition costs rise can lead to more scrutiny over UX and marketing campaigns.

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3.1 7 challenges for Marketing or Digital teams

5. Inability to monitor the large increase in data and insight created during peak season.

6. Difficulty scaling personalization that resonates with customers during the large influx of traffic.

7. Struggling with flexibility during peak seasons as some campaigns need to pivot in real-time.

So, how do you avoid these common challenges that impact the overall image of your brand?

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3.2 The 30-day prep checklist for Marketing and Digital teams

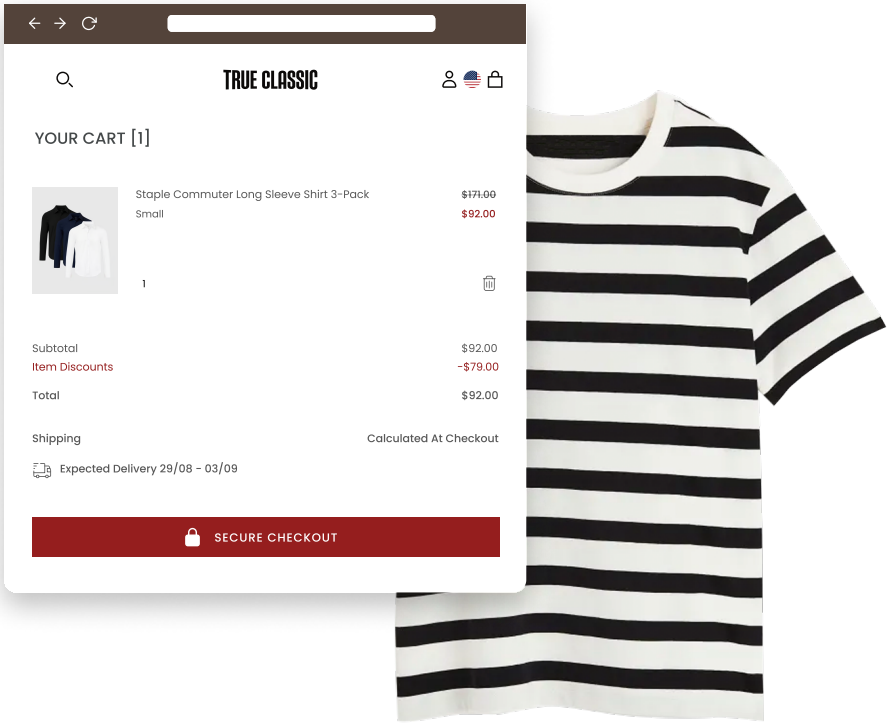
Use this checklist in the month leading up to your peak season event.

- Have you made sure that all marketing campaigns are linked to up-to-date inventory data?
- Has all past data been analyzed and ad spend adjusted across the channels with the highest conversions?
- Have you A/B tested your ads for optimized performance; do you know which formats lead to the best engagement?
- Does your marketing strategy prioritize cohesive messaging both offline and online; is there a consistent tone of voice?
- Have load tests been conducted; is your site prepared for the traffic surge?
- Do you have a communications platform that can personalize messaging at scale?
- If so; have you had multiple eyes on all copy and code so that accurate communications get to customers?



80% of consumers enjoy shopping from brands that offer personalized experiences.

Source: https://www.demandsage.com/branding-statistics/



True Classic increased revenue per email by 29%

True Classic leverages parcelLab's Engage and Retain product suites to deliver personalized post-purchase emails, boosting cross-sell opportunities and reducing WISMO inquiries. By automating customer communications and directing them to a tracking page embedded on their own website, True Classic improved conversion rates and customer satisfaction.

parcelLab solutions used

Convert **Engage** **Retain**

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4.0

Supply-Chain and Logistics teams

4.1 6 challenges for Supply-Chain and Logistics teams

Supply-Chain and Logistics managers face intense pressure during peak season. The smooth operation of their department can be the deciding factor between a spike in WISMO (Where Is My Order?) inquiries and enhanced customer satisfaction. Overseeing inventory management, logistics, and returns, their success directly influences every touchpoint of the customer journey. But when this team is overwhelmed and unable to perform efficiently, it can result in:

1. Imbalance in stock with increased demand, having too much or selling out too early.

2. A lack of coordination or communication with suppliers, leading to an inability to confirm if they can meet demand.

3. Bottlenecks with logistics and transportation with increased transport challenges as delivery networks get overwhelmed.

4.1 6 common challenges faced by Supply Chain and Logistics teams

4. Sudden labor shortages and no process to make sure you have temporary skilled workers who can step in.

5. A disorganized warehouse with poor layouts which caussing the increase more complications when attempting to meet order volumes.

6. Lack of visibility which makes it challenging, if not impossible, to accurately forecast and plan for returns.

So, how do you manage these backend challenges which can disrupt the overall success of your peak season?

4.2 30-day prep checklist for Supply-Chain and Logistics teams

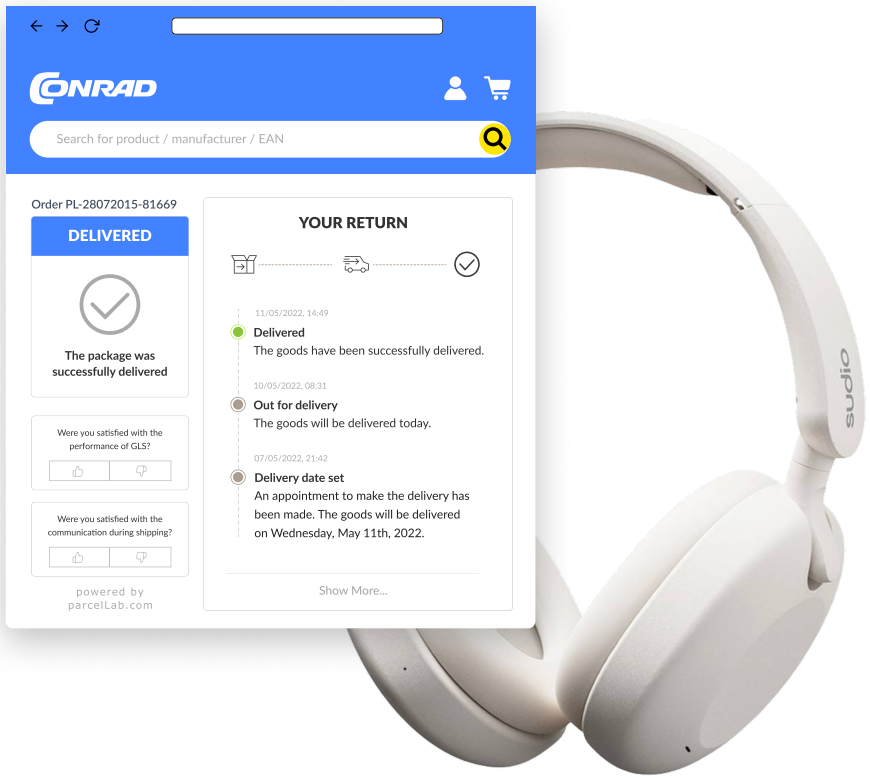
Use this checklist in the month leading up to your peak season event.

- Are you using a platform that can provide predictive analytics and help to plan inventory levels accurately?
- Are your delivery dates dynamic and flexible to meet the expectations of front-end teams and customers?
- Have you made sure to have temporary staff available to meet the predicted demand, hiring, if necessary?
- Have you tested and checked transportation routes to mitigate delivery delays?
- Do you have strong communication with suppliers to confirm readiness and get ahead of any sudden changes?
- Is your warehouse organized to facilitate the most efficient method to process returns?
- Have you partnered with multiple logistics providers to provide multiple options for customers?



UPS handles over 32 million parcels during peak season.

Source: https://www.how.fm/library/black-friday-2023-impact-on-the-logistics-industry/#impact-on-logistics-industry-during-black-friday



Conrad reduces returns by 18%

Conrad Electronics leverages parcelLab's Retain solution to predict returns coming back to the warehouse, streamline reverse logistics, enable their customers to easily register returns via a digital self-service portal, and track the status of their returns online. By proactively managing returns, Conrad reduced warehouse bottlenecks, overall returns volume, and improved customer satisfaction.

parcelLab solutions used

Convert **Engage** **Retain**

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5.0

E-Commerce and Operations teams

5.1 5 challenges for E-Commerce and Operations teams

Similarly to supply and logistics teams, the success of this department can have a long-lasting effect on the overall perception of a brand, impacting WISMO inquiries and overall customer loyalty. This department touches all other departments and liaises with multiple team members to ensure the smooth running of the online experience for customers. Signs the team is unable to run effectively are:

1. Incorrect demand forecasting and stock allocation leading to inaccurate stock predictions with too much or too little.

2. Website crashes as traffic surges with blocks to completing checkout or registering returns.

3. Reverse logistics unprepared to manage the surge of returns alongside the increase in purchase orders.

4. Struggles to meet fulfillment deadlines with items delivered later than communicated to the customer.

5. Lack of personalized customer communications and details including expected delivery date, time, and provider.

So, how do you manage these operational challenges which can disrupt the overall success of your peak season?

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5.2 The 30-day prep checklist for E-Commerce and Operations

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Use this checklist in the month leading up to your peak season event.

- Have you used historical sales data to plan demand?
- Are fulfillment centers able to meet demand; have they been checked to be fully operational, and if not, have any issues been flagged?
- Do you have a post-purchase platform that can send proactive communications, manage returns, and help with restocking planning?
- Is there cross-departmental communication between Marketing, Logistics, and Customer Services?
- Has the website been stress tested and all customer UX experiences checked for bugs or blockages?
- Over 40% of all total order volume takes place during Q4 when multiple Peak Seasons - Thanksgiving, Christmas and Cyber Weekend take place.

Source: https://www.meteorspace.com/2022/08/25/ecommerce-peak-seasons-statistics-all-online-businesses need-to -know#:~:text=The%20fourth%20quarter%20of%20the,in%20November%20and%20December%20alone.

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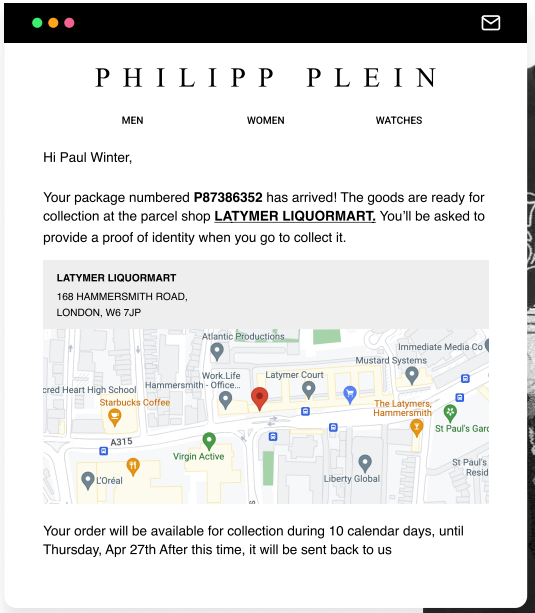

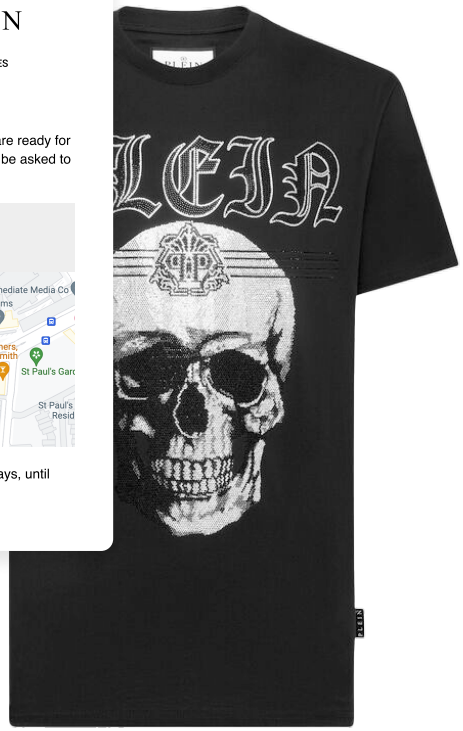

Philipp Plein reduced customer service tickets by up to 20%

Philipp Plein, a luxury fashion brand with over 100 stores globally, leverages parcelLab's Engage and Retain suites to create and maintain a personalized post-purchase experience that aligns with their brand's premium standards. By offering a seamless and branded post-purchase journey, Philipp Plein empowers its customer service teams to focus on building lasting relationships and providing the personalized attention expected of a luxury brand.

parcelLab solutions used

Convert **Engage** **Retain**

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6.0

Appendix

6.1 parcelLab solutions overview

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Convert

parcelLab Convert helps retailers improve cart conversion and boosts repeat purchases by providing accurate and predictive delivery information. It further drives customer confidence through personalized recommendations and optimized journey touchpoints.

Learn more

Engage

parcelLab Engage empowers brands to fully own their post-purchase experience, delivering seamless, branded order tracking and personalized communications. From easily configurable campaigns to proactive customer engagement, Engage ensures every interaction after purchase enhances customer satisfaction, drives loyalty, and strengthens brand identity.

Learn more

Retain

parcelLab Retain empowers retailers with higher visibility, more control, and deeper understanding of the returns process. With a fully digitized returns experience that can be personalized to different customer segments, retailers can reduce operational costs and unlock new sales opportunities.

Learn more

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