

**the OFFICIAL**  
**MEDIA times**

YOU THOUGHT THAT  
THIS IS A NORMAL  
NEWSPAPER RIGHT?

**WELL, YOU HAVE BEEN  
TRICKED MY FRIEND!**

HI tHERE!

## SPOILER ALERT!

This is an experimental urgent publishing project  
where we learn the tricks of media to play with it  
to create our own newspaper platform.

# What will you find in this publication?

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# INTRODUCTION

message from the editor

This publication's idea started from a realization I had in my everyday life. I learned about a very awful incident that happened recently in my country which caused people to die and how this was written on New York Times was very opinionated, inconsiderate, and biased. Which made me reconsider the news media we read, scan, and learn from every day.

We as humans live in a system which has been designed in many aspects and the news media is definitely one of them. In the past I would think of the news as independent and full of true information. Well, this was before I started studying design. During my education I realized how design and media, medium can influence our behavior and thoughts. How typography,

grids, visuals, hierarchy, words and way they displayed are all things designers and creators look out for. Design has always been used as a tool to spread ideas and messages. I can say this in the way of designing the news. Most of the commercial marketing-based news have a very bureaucratic format making as believe what it says is true as you already saw on the cover.

You will be surprised throughout this publication when you learn about the strategies, disciplines, and goals most of the press platforms have. I collected the text and edited it in the way to make the viewer (you in this case) become more aware. The texts are from *Shadowbook* by Miriam Rasch, *Trust Me I Am Lying* by Ryan Holiday, and *Inventing Reality the Politics of Mass Media* by Michael Parenti.

**“DESIGN CREATES  
CULTURE. CULTURE  
SHAPES VALUES.  
VALUES DETERMINE  
THE FUTURE.”**

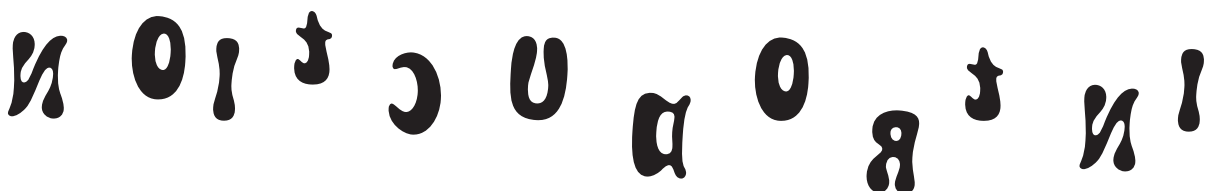
—ROBERT L. PETERS

All three of these sources make great points of the media and its control over us.

Technology provides us with different medias and mediums which we scroll through every day and absorbing its contents. It shapes the way we think and act. It influences in our lives, society and culture is more than we imagine. Throughout this publication I wanted to give awareness and look from another perspective while considering what we see in the (news) media. I hope you enjoy!

*from the editor Karya Anliak - December 2022*

*Karya Anliak is a third year graphic design student in Willem de Kooning Academy.*



# WHY? *the basics* ?

text by  
Ryan Holiday

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Our news is what rises, and what rises is what spreads, and what spreads is what makes us angry or makes us laugh.

Businesses designed to make money, the way in which they do business is the main filter for how they do the news. Every story they produce must contort itself to fit this mold —whatever the topic or subject. Remember: Every person (with the exception of a few at the top layer) in this ecosystem is under immense pressure to produce content under the tightest of deadlines. Yes, you have something to sell. But more than ever they desperately, desperately need to buy.

The flimsiest of excuses is all it takes. It freaked me out when I began to see this sort of thing happen without the deliberate prodding of a promoter like myself. I saw media conflagrations set off by internal sparks. In this networked, interdependent world of blogging, misinformation can spread even when no one is consciously pushing or manipulating it. The system is so primed, tuned, and ready that often it doesn't need people like me. The monster can feed itself.

## THE TRICKS

It's basically possible to run anything through this chain, even utterly preposterous and made-up information. But for a long time I thought that fabricated media stories could only hurt feelings and waste time. I didn't think anyone could die because of it.

Our media diet is quickly transformed into junk food, fake stories engineered by people like me to be consumed and passed around. It is the refined and processed sugars of the information food pyramid—out of the ordinary, unnatural, and deliberately sweetened. Inside the chaos, it is easy to mislead. Only the exciting, sensational stuff finds readers—the stories that “blow up.” Reporters don't have time for follow-ups or reasoned critiques, only quick hits.

## THE “HEADLINES”

Their job is to think about the headline above all else. The medium and their bosses force them to. So that's where you make the sale. Studies that have tracked the eye movements of people browsing the web show the same fickleness. The biggest draw of eyeballs is the headline, of which viewers usually see only the first few words before moving on. After users break off from the headline their glance tends to descend downward along the left hand column, scanning for sentences that catch their attention. If nothing does, they leave.



For media that lives and dies by clicks it all comes down to the headline. It's what catches the attention of the public—yelled by a newsboy or seen on a search engine. In a one-off world there is nothing more important than the pitch to prospective buyers. And they need many exciting new pitches every day, each louder and more compelling than the last. Even if reality is not so interesting.

# THE TRICKS

## THE TOP AND

Does it mean it's a good story or just a seductive one? Isn't my purpose on this earth, at least professionally, precisely to read the most unpopular stories? Shouldn't I ignore this list? Shouldn't I roam through the news unconcerned and maybe even uninformed of how many other people read this same news and "voted" for it?

POPULAR

## THE LATEST

BREAKING NEWS

How do our readers know what's new? To solve this, programmers first tried "New!" icons, but that didn't work. It was too difficult to tell what the icons meant across many blogs—on one site "New!" might mean the latest thing published and on another it could be anything written within the last month. What they needed was a uniform way to organize the content that would be the same across the web.

They won't be able to ignore you, because you keep turning up at the top of their feed all the time.



**“ALIENS, OR  
THE DEAD, OR  
ZOMBIES, OR  
GODS” “DEATH  
IS THE END,  
THAT’S ALL.”**

**“FUCK YOU SUN”**

**“AN EXPLODING  
SUN” “100 X 100**

**EUROS CHANG-  
ES EVERY-**

**THING” “ALL**

**CREATURES DIE  
ALONE”**

# WTF

*the economics*

text by  
Ryan Holiday

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Tim Berners-Lee, one of the founders of the web, set a procedure in motion that would be copied by most everyone after him: New stuff goes at the top. The reverse chronological order on one of the web's first sites—called “stacking” by programmers —became the de facto standard for blogging. Because the web evolved through imitation and collaboration, most sites simply adopted the form of their predecessors and peers. Stacking developed as an implicit standard, and that has had extraordinary implications. When content is stacked, it sets a very clear emphasis on the present. For the blogger, the time stamp is like an expiration date. It also creates considerable pressure to be short and immediate.

The economics of online news —the way blogging really works—is a shocking thing. I've never been desperate enough to need to work inside the system as a lowly (un-) paid blogger, but as an outsider (a press agent and a media buyer), I saw plenty. What I learned is the ways that sites such as AOL, the Huffington Post, and even the website of the New York Times make their money, and how much money they actually make. I will show you this by explaining exactly how I have exploited these economics for my own personal gain. You're free to view these lessons as opportunities or as loopholes that must be closed. I see them as both. Traffic is money.

**This is how it works: you are able to do something others can't. You get something others miss. It brings in a lot of money. You are a front runner.**

On the face of it, blogs make their money from selling advertisements. These advertisements are paid for by the impression (generally a rate per thousand impressions). A site might have several ad units on each page; the publisher's revenue equals the cumulative CPM (cost per thousand) multiplied by the number of pageviews. Advertisement x Traffic = Revenue. An ad buyer like me buys this space by the millions—ten million impressions on this site, five million on another, fifty million through a network. A few blogs produce a portion of their revenue



## THE GOAL: MONEY



through selling extras—hosting conferences or affiliate deals—but, for the most part, this is the business: Traffic is money.

A portion of the advertising on blogs is sold directly by the publisher, a portion is sold by sales reps who work on commission, and the rest is sold by advertising networks that specialize in the remaining inventory. Regardless of who sells it or who buys it, what matters is that every ad impression on a site is monetized, if only for a few pennies. Each and every pageview is money in the pocket of the publisher. Publishers and advertisers can't differentiate between the types of impressions an ad does on a site. A perusing reader is no better than an accidental reader. An article that provides worthwhile advice is no more valuable than one instantly forgotten. So long as the page loads and the ads are seen, both sides are fulfilling their purpose. A click is a click. Knowing this, blogs do everything they can to increase the latter variable in the equation (traffic, pageviews).

## GOAL : TRAFFIC

It's how you must understand them as a business. Every decision a publisher makes is ruled by one dictum: traffic by any means.

Blogs are built on scoops and traffic, and this is made possible by big names. The economics of the Internet values consistent hitters, and so one of the safest bets a site can make is to lock up an all-star or A-list blogger to helm their business.

I've written about how sites engage in an endless chase for revenue through pageviews, and that is what they do. However, blogs are not intended to be profitable and independent businesses.

The tools they use to build traffic and revenue are part of a larger play. Blogs are built to be sold. Though they make substantial revenues from advertising, the real money is in selling the entire site to a larger company for a multiple of the traffic and earnings.

Established media doesn't have this problem. They aren't anxious for name recognition, because they already have it. Instead of bending the rules (and the truth) to get it, their main concern for their business model is to protect their reputations. This is a critical difference. Media was once about protecting a name; on the web it is about building one.

*wtf?*

AD X TRAFFIC = REVENUE  
(the basic math)

# ENTER: THE MEDIA MANIPULATOR.

The assumptions of blogging and their owners present obvious vulnerabilities that people like me exploit. Their loyalty is not to their audience but to themselves and their con. While ultimately this is reason to despair, I have found one small solace: Conning the conmen is one of life's most satisfying pleasures. And it's not even hard.

Bloggers eager to build names and publishers eager to sell their blogs are like two crooked businessmen colluding to create interest in a bogus investment opportunity—building up buzz and clearing town before anyone gets wise. In this world, where the rules and ethics are lax, a third player can exert massive influence.

The flipside of this communal pattern is a kind of limitation to one's freedom. It is the paradox of the post-digital condition: you are supposed to be free and autonomous but you cannot escape all the external and uncontrollable influences that come from the world we live in. The community is both desired and feared, we suffer because of it but at the same time, we seek it.

They allow us to control what is in the media, because the media is too busy chasing profits to bother trying to stop us. They are not motivated to care...

# HOWWWW?

*the strategy?*

text by  
Ryan Holiday

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Bloggers have a direct incentive to write bigger, to write simpler, to write more controversially or, conversely, more favorably, to write without having to do any work, to write more often than is warranted. Their paycheck depends on it. It's no wonder they are vicious, irresponsible, inaccurate, and dishonest. They call it a "digital sweatshop" for good reason. "Ceaseless fight for table scraps" might be another phrase for it.

Journalists are rarely in a position to establish the truth of an issue themselves, since they didn't witness it personally. They are "entirely dependent on self-interested 'sources'" to supply their facts. Every part of the news-making process is defined by this relationship; everything is colored by this reality. Who are these self-interested sources? Well, anyone selling a product, a message, or an agenda. People like me.

When the New York Times publishes leaked documents there is an implicit understanding that they have at least attempted to verify their validity. The same goes for the identity of the source who gave it to them.

Online, anonymous means something else entirely. Quotes and tips are drawn from unsolicited, untraced e-mails or angry comments pulled from comments sections, or sent in by people who have something to gain from it. I know, because I have been this kind of source dozens of times, and it was never for anything important. My identity is never verified. Today, the online-driven news cycle is going a million miles a minute in a million directions.

The New York Times may still try to verify their sources, but it hardly matters, because no one else does. This creates endless opportunities for people like me to slip in and twist things to my liking. If

Howwwwwww

produce  
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you're a public company with a stock symbol, the good news in any release you put out shows up right in front of your most important audience: stockholders. Minutes after you put it out, it's right there on the company's stock page in the "Recent News" section, eagerly being read by investors and traders.

Not even needing to be a source: Bloggers are under incredible pressure to produce, leaving little time for research or verification, let alone for speaking to sources. From my experience, bloggers operate by some general rules of thumb: If a source can't be contacted by e-mail, they probably can't be a source.

I've talked to bloggers on the phone only a few times, ever—but thousands of times over e-mail. If background information isn't publicly or easily available, it probably can't be included. Writers are at the mercy of official sources, such as press releases, spokesmen, government officials, and media kits. And these are for the instances they even bother to check anything. Most important, they're at the mercy of Wikipedia, because that's where they do their research. Too bad people like me manipulate that too.

It's not a stretch to convince anyone that it's easy to become a source for blogs. Cracking the mainstream media is much harder, right? Nope. There's actually a tool designed expressly for this purpose. It's called HARO (Help a Reporter Out), and it is a site that connects hundreds of "self-interested sources" to willing reporters every day. The service, founded by PR man Peter Shankman, is a wildly popular tool that connects journalists working on stories with people to quote in them. It is the de facto sourcing and lead factory for journalists and publicists. According to the site, nearly thirty thousand members of the media have used HARO sources, including the New York Times, the Associated Press, the Huffington Post, and everyone in-between.

# HARO? ..?

What do these experts get out of offering their services? Free publicity, of course. In fact, “Free Publicity” is HARO’s tagline. I’ve used it myself to con reporters from ABC News to Reuters to the Today Show, and yes, even the vaunted New York Times . Sometimes I don’t even do it myself. I just have an assistant pretend to be me over e-mail or on the phone. The fact that my eyes light up when I think of how to use HARO’s services to benefit myself and my clients should be illustrative.

If I was tasked with building someone’s reputation as an “industry expert,” it would take nothing but a few fake e-mail addresses and speedy responses to the right bloggers to manufacture the impression. I’d start with using HARO to get quoted on a blog that didn’t care much about credentials, then use that piece as a marker of authority to justify inclusion in a more reputable publication. It wouldn’t take long to be a “nationally recognized expert who has been featured in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.” The only problem is that it wouldn’t be real. Journalists say HARO is a research tool, but it isn’t. It is a tool that manufactures self-promotion to look like research.

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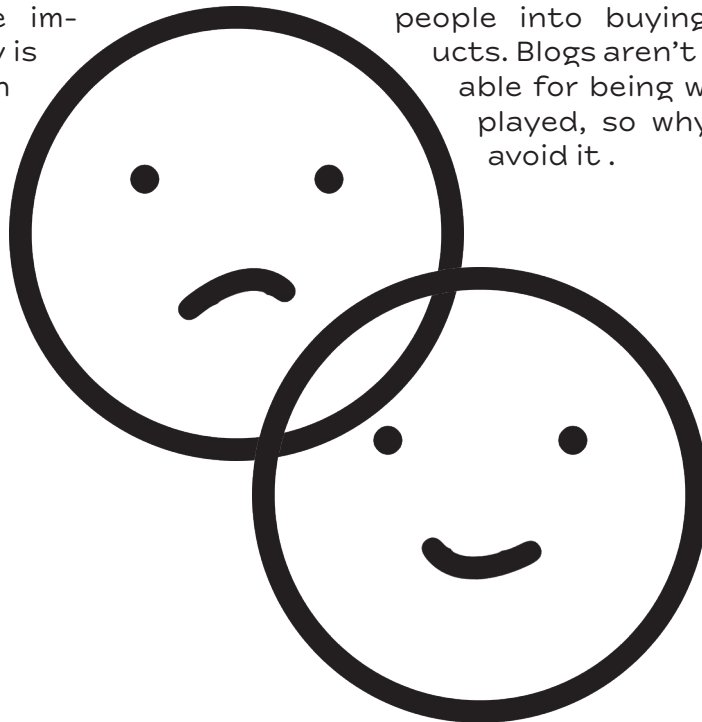
# WHAT IS IT?

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There you have it—how your bogus trend-story sausage is made. In fact, I even saw one HARO request by a reporter hoping “to speak with an expert about how fads are created.” I hope whoever answered it explained that masturbatory media coverage from people like her has a lot to do with it. What HARO encourages—and the site is filled with thousands of posts asking for it—is for journalists to look for sources who simply confirm what they were already intending to say. Instead of researching a topic and communicating their findings to the public, journalists simply grab obligatory—but artificial—quotes from “experts” to validate their pageview journalism. To the readers it appears as legitimate news. To the journalist, they were just reverse engineering their story from a search engine-friendly premise. HARO also helps bloggers create the false impression of balance. Nobody is speaking to sources on both sides. They’re providing token space to the opposition and nothing else. It is

a sham. I constantly receive e-mails from bloggers and journalists asking me to provide “a response” to some absurd rumor or speculative analysis. They just need a quote from me denying the rumor (which most people will skip over) to justify publishing it. Most stories online are created with this mind-set. Marketing skills masquerade as legitimate experts, giving advice and commenting on issues in ways that benefit their clients and trick people into buying their products. Blogs aren’t held accountable for being wrong or being played, so why should they avoid it.



For someone tasked with advancing narratives in the media, the flip side of this advice is equally straightforward: If it spreads, you're golden. Blogs don't have the resources to advertise their posts, and bloggers certainly don't have the time to work out a publicity launch for something they've written. Every blog, publisher, and oversharer in your Facebook feed is constantly looking to post things that will take on a life of their own and get attention, links, and new readers with the least work possible. Whether that content is accurate, important, or helpful doesn't even register on their list of priorities. If the quality of their content doesn't matter to bloggers, do you think it's going to matter to marketers? Again, extremes in any direction have a large impact on how something will spread, but certain emotions do better than others. For instance, an equal shift in the positivity of an article is the equivalent of spending about 1.2 hours as the lead story. It's a significant but clear difference. The angrier an article makes the reader, the better.

## emotions?



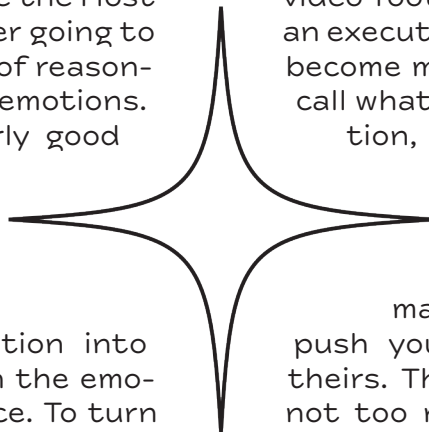
The researchers found that while sadness is an extreme emotion, it is a wholly unviral one. Sadness, like what one might feel to see a stray dog shivering for warmth or a homeless man begging for money, is typically a low-arousal emotion.

Such emotions trigger a desire to act—they are arousing—and that is exactly the reaction a publisher hopes to exploit. In turn, it's what marketers exploit as well.

# the PERFECT

A powerful predictor of whether content will spread online is valence, or the degree of positive or negative emotion a person is made to feel. Regardless of the topic, the more an article makes someone feel good or bad, the more likely it is to make the Most E-mailed list. No marketer is ever going to push something with the stink of reasonableness, complexity, or mixed emotions. Yet information is rarely clearly good or bad. It tends to have elements of both, or none of either. It just is. Navigating this quandary forces marketers and publishers to conspire to distort this information into something that will register on the emotional spectrum of the audience. To turn it into something that spreads and to drive clicks. Behind the scenes I work to crank up the valence of articles, relying on scandal, conflict, triviality, titillation, and dogmatism. Whatever will ensure transmission.

The media is in the evil position of needing to go negative and play tricks with your psyche in order to drive you to share their material online. For instance, in studies where subjects are shown negative video footage (war, an airplane crash, an execution, a natural disaster), they become more aroused, can better recall what happened, pay more attention, and engage more cognitive resources to consume the media than nonnegative footage. That's the kind of stuff that will make you hit "share this." They push your buttons so you'll press theirs. Things must be negative but not too negative. Hopelessness, despair—these drive us to do nothing. Pity, empathy—those drive us to do something, like get up from our computers to act. But anger, fear, excitement, or laughter—these drive us to spread.



They drive us to do something that makes us feel as if we are doing something, when in reality we are only contributing to what is probably a superficial and utterly meaningless conversation. Online games and apps operate on the same principles and exploit the same impulses: be consuming without frustrating, manipulative without revealing the strings. For those who know what levers provoke people to share, media manipulation becomes simply a matter of packaging and presentation. All it takes is the right frame, the right angle, and millions of readers will willingly send your idea or image or ad to their friends, family, and coworkers on your behalf. Bloggers know this, and want it badly. If I can hand them a story that may be able to deliver, who are they to refuse? I have my own analysis: When you take away the question mark, it usually turns their headline into a lie. The reason bloggers like to use them is because it lets them get away with a false statement that no one can criticize.

Readers might be better served by posts that inform them about things that really matter. But, as you saw in the last chapter, stories with useful information are less likely to be shared virally than other types of content. For example: Movie reviews, in-depth tutorials, technical analysis, and recipes are typically popular with the initial audience and occasionally appear on most e-mailed lists. But they tend not to draw significant

# Balance

amounts of traffic from other websites. They are less fun to share and spread less as a result. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but it makes perfect sense according to the economics of online content. Commentary on top of someone else's commentary or advice is cumbersome and often not very interesting to read. Worse, the writer of the original material may have been so thorough as to have solved the problem or proffered a reasonable solution—two very big dampers on a getting a heated debate going. For blogs, practical utility is often a liability. It is a traffic killer. So are other potentially positive attributes. It's hard to get trolls angry enough to comment while being fair or reasonable. Waiting for the whole story to unfold can be a surefire way to eliminate the possibility for follow-up posts. So can pointing out that an issue is frivolous. Being the voice of reason does also. No blogger wants to write about another blogger who made him or her look bad.

As a user, the fact that blogs are not helpful, deliberately misleading, or unnecessarily incendiary might exhaust and tire you, but Orwell reminded us in 1984: "The weariness of the cell is the vigor of the organism." So goes the art of the online publisher: To string the

# Let's GO

customer along as long as possible, to deliberately not be helpful, is to turn simple readers into pageview-generating machines. Publishers know they have to make each new headline even more irresistible than the last, the next article even more inflammatory or less practical to keep getting clicks.

It's a vicious cycle in which, by screwing the reader and getting screwed by me, they must screw the reader harder next time to top what they did before. And sure, sometimes people get mad when they realize they've been tricked. Readers don't like to learn that the story they read was baseless. But this is a calculated risk bloggers and I both take, mostly because the consequences are so low. In the rare cases we're caught red-handed, it's not like we have to give the money we made back.

# ALL the WAY BACK

The earliest forms of newspapers were a function of political parties. These were media outlets for party leaders to speak to party members, to give them the information they needed and wanted. It's a part of news history that is often misunderstood or misused in discussions about media bias.

These papers were not some early version of Fox News. They usually were one-man shops. The editor-publisher-writer-printer was the dedicated steward of a very valuable service to that party in his town. The service was the ability to communicate ideas and information about important issues.

## **FIRST NEWSPAPERS**

These political papers sold the service to businessmen, politicians, and voters. It was

# GOING VIRAL

sold on a subscription model, typically about ten dollars a year. A good paper might have only a thousand or so subscribers, but they were almost always mandatory for party members in certain areas, which was a kind of patronage. This first stage of journalism was limited in its scope and impact. Because of the size and nature of its audience, the party press was not in the news business. They were in the editorial business. It was a different time and style, one that would be eclipsed by changes in technology and distribution.

Just look at the top referring sources of traffic to major websites and blogs. Cumulatively, these referring sources almost always account for more visitors than the site's direct traffic (i.e., people who typed in the URL). Though it varies from site to site, the biggest sources of traffic are, usually, in this order: Google, Facebook, Twitter. The viewers were sent directly to a specific article for a disposable purpose: they're not subscribers; they are seekers or glancers. This is great news for a media manipulator, bad news for everyone else.



# OR LIFE OR DEATH

The death of subscription means that instead of attempting to provide value to you, the longtime reader, blogs are constantly chasing other Readers—the mythical reader out in viral land. Instead of providing quality day in and day out, writers chase big hits like a sexy scandal or a funny video meme. Bloggers aren't interested in building up consistent, loyal readerships via RSS (really simple syndication) or paid subscriptions, because what they really need are the types of stories that will do hundreds of thousands or millions of pageviews. They need stories that will sell. Outside of the subscription model, headlines are not intended to represent the contents of articles but to sell them—

to win the fight for attention against an infinite number of other blogs or papers. It must so captivate the customer that they click or plunk down the money to buy it. Each headline competes with every other headline. On a blog, every page is the front page. It's no wonder that the headlines of the yellow press and the headlines of blogs run to such extremes. It is a desperate fight. Life or death.

Blogs must fight to be that story. You can provide them the ammunition. Getting something "controversial" to blow up is easy, and it's the tactic I prefer to use over doing something "important." With limited re-

sources and the constraints of a tight medium, there are only a handful of options: sensationalism, extremism, sex, scandal, hatred. The media manipulator knows that bloggers know that these things sell.

Bloggers publish constantly in order to hit their pageview goals or quotas, so when you can give them something that gets them even one view closer to that goal, you're serving their interests while serving yours.

To ignore these numbers in an era of pageview journalism is business suicide for bloggers and media manipulators. And anything that pervasive presents opportunities for abuse. I see it like this: The Top 10 "Most Read" or "Most Popular" section that now exists on most large websites is a compass for the editors and publishers. Mess with the magnet inside the compass and watch as its owner goes wildly off track..

What gets measured gets managed, or so the saying goes. So what do publishers measure? Out of everything that can possibly be measured, blogs have picked a handful of the most straightforward and cost-effective metrics to rely on (wonderfulness is not one of them). They choose to measure only what can be clearly communicated to their writers as goals.

**The media manipulator knows  
that bloggers know that these  
things sell.**

# NEW POST!

## GOING EXTREME

Both extremes are more desirable than anything in the middle. Media manipulation becomes simply a matter of packaging and presentation.

After the reader clicks, they soon discover that the answer to the “question” in their headline is obviously, “No, of course not.” To understand bloggers, rephrase the saying as: “Simplistic measurements matter.” Like, did a shitload of people see it? Must be good. Was there a raging comments section going? Awesome!!

Remember, some bloggers have to churn out as many as a dozen posts a day. That’s not because twelve is some lucky number but because they need to meet serious pageview goals for the site. Not every story is intended to be a home run—a collection of singles, doubles, and triples adds up too. Pageview journalism is about scale. Sites have to publish multiple stories every few minutes to make a profit, and why shouldn’t your story be one of them? Once your story has gotten coverage, one of the best ways to turn yourself into a favorite and regular subject is to make it clear your story is a reliable traffic draw.

# New POST!

Not every story is intended to be a home run—a collection of singles, doubles, and triples adds up too. Pageview journalism is about scale. Sites have to publish multiple stories every few minutes to make a profit, and why shouldn't your story be one of them? Once your story has gotten coverage, one of the best ways to turn yourself into a favorite and regular subject is to make it clear your story is a reliable traffic draw. If you're a brand, then post the story to your company Twitter and Facebook accounts and put it on your website.

This inflates the stats in your favor and encourages more coverage down the road. There are also services that allow you to “buy traffic,” sending thousands of visitors to a specific page. At the penny-per-click rates of StumbleUpon and Outbrain, one hundred dollars means a rush of one thousand people or more—illusory confirmations to the

blogger that you are newsworthy. The stat counters on these sites make no distinctions between fake and real views, nor does anyone care enough to dig deep into the sources of traffic. The lure of the indirect bribe is all that matters. Once sites see there is traffic in something, they do not stop—often falling to new lows in the process. Companies enjoy the spotlight at first, until the good news runs out and the blog begins to rely on increasingly spurious sources to keep the high-traffic topic on their pages. What begins as positive press often ends in the fabrication of scandals or utter bullshit.

This content is attractive to blogs because the traffic it does is both measurable and predictable. Like a fish lure, it is not difficult to mimic the appearance of these kinds of stories and for unthinking writers to fall for it. They are looking to eat. They know what key words are lucrative, what topics get links, and what type of writing gets comments, and they'll bite without asking themselves whether the version of events you've presented is just a barbed trick. Metrics and measurements are a comfort to publishers. It takes the uncertainty out of their business. What can't be measured—or requires true editorial judgment—is scary and requires financial risk.

But be careful: This  
beast can bite you back  
if it feels like it.

Pageview journalism treats people by what they appear to want—from data that is unrepresentative to say the least—and gives them this and only this until they have forgotten that there could be anything else. It takes the audience at their worst and makes them worse. And then, when criticized, publishers throw up their hands as if to say, “We wish people liked better stuff too,” as if they had nothing to do with it. Well, they do.

The way news is found online more or less determines what is found. The way the news must be presented—in order to meet the technical constraints of the medium and the demands of its readers—determines the news itself. It’s basically a cliché at this point, but that doesn’t change the fact that Marshall McLuhan was right: The medium is the message.

## Marshall McLuhan **the MEDIUM IS the MESSAGE**

The world is boring but the news is exciting! It’s a paradox of modern life. Journalists and bloggers are not magicians, but if you consider the material they’ve got to work with and the final product they crank out day in and day out, you must give them some credit. Shit becomes sugar.

If there is one special skill that journalists can claim, it is the ability to find the angle on any story.

That the news is ever chosen over entertainment in the fight for attention is testament to their skill. High-profile bloggers rightly take great pride in this ability. This pride and this pressure is what we media manipulators use against them. Pride goeth before the fall. No matter how dull, mundane, or complex a topic may be, a good reporter must find the angle. Bloggers, descended from these journalists, have to take it to an entirely new level.

They need to find not only the angle but the click-driving headline, an eye-catching image; generate comments and links; and in some cases, squeeze in some snark. And they have to do it up to a dozen times a day without the help of an editor. They can smell the angle of a story like a shark smells blood in the water. Because the better the angle, the more the blogger gets paid.

Blogs will publish anything if you manufacture urgency around it. Give a blogger an illusory twenty-minute head start over other media sources, and they'll write whatever you want, however you want it. Publicists love to promise blogs the exclusive on an announcement.

The plural there is not an accident. You can give the same made-up exclusive to multiple blogs, and they'll all fall over themselves to publish first. Throw in an arbitrary deadline, like "We're going live with this on our website first thing in the morning," and even the biggest blogs will forget fact-checking and make bold pronouncements on your behalf. Since bloggers must find an angle, they always do. Small news is made to look like big news. Nonexistent news is puffed up and made into news. The result is stories that look just like their legitimate counterparts, only their premise is wrong and says nothing. Such stories hook onto false pretenses, analyze a false subject, and inform falsely.

# WHO

*the systems*

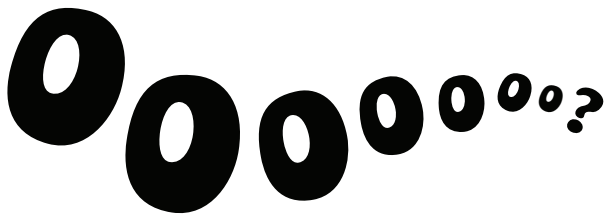
text by  
Micheal Parenti

For many people an issue does not exist until it appears in the news media. How we view issues, indeed, what we even define as an issue or event, what we see and hear, and what we do not see and hear are greatly determined by those who control the communications world. Be it labor unions, peace protesters, the Soviet Union, uprisings in Latin America, elections, crime, poverty, or defense spending, few of us know of things except as they are depicted in the news. Even when we don't believe what the media say, we are still hearing or reading their viewpoints rather than some other.

They are still setting the agenda, defining what it is we must believe or disbelieve, accept or reject. The media exert a subtle, persistent influence in defining the scope of respectable political discourse, channeling public attention in directions that are essentially supportive of the existing politico-economic system. Be this as it may, growing numbers of people are becoming increasingly aware that the media are neither objective nor consistently accurate in their portrayal of things. There seems to be a growing understanding that we need to defend ourselves by monitoring and challenging the misinformation we are fed.



To understand how the media function, we need to understand a few things about the capitalist system itself. Most of the land, labor, natural resources, and technology of this and other nations are controlled by a few giant corporations and banks for the purpose of making profits for their owners. This process of capital accumulation, the essence of the capitalist system, in turn, exerts a strong influence over our political and social institutions. The news media seldom talk about this (and we shall see why), but it is time we did.



One indication of how the press serves the privileged and the powerful is found in how it treats the underprivileged and the powerless.

The news media are largely an affluent White male domain. While having an abundance of numbers and giving an appearance of diversity, the mass media actually are highly centralized outlets that proffer a remarkably homogenized fare.

To think that information and viewpoints circulate in “a free market of ideas” is to conjure up a misleading metaphor. A “market” suggests a place of plenitude, with the consumer moving from stall to stall as

# the POWER

at any bazaar, sampling and picking from an array of wares. But the existing media market of ideas is more like the larger economic market of which it is a part: oligopolistic, standardized, and most accessible to those who possess vast amounts of capital, or who hold views that are pleasing to the possessors of capital.

To be sure, in this controlled market there is a vast array of publications—for motorcycle owners, dog owners, and homeowners, for brides and singles, for fishing, hunting, and dating, for camping and gardening, for weight watching and weightlifting, for karate and judo, for sailing, swimming, and jogging, for auto mechanics, auto racing, horse racing, and horse raising, for music fans, movie fans, television fans, soap opera devotees, and computer fanatics, for just about every conceivable diversion and taste. Relatively few of these have anything to do with meaningful political and social affairs. Most are devoted to mass media distractions and mass market consumerism. The diversity of publications, both serious and trivial, should not be mistaken for a plurality of ideas and ideologies, nor a wealth of political information.

OR

Viewpoints supported by money have no trouble gaining mass exposure and sympathetic media treatment, while those offensive to moneyed interests languish either for want of the costly sums needed to reach a vast public or because of the prohibitions exercised by media owners and management. In a word, the mass media are a class-dominated media—bound by the parameters of ownership in a capitalist society. The media play a twofold role. While seen as something apart from business, they actually are a big business. But like the “nonprofit” churches, universities, law schools, professional associations, arts and political parties, the media also are an institution geared for ideological control. Their role is to reproduce the conditions of social and class stability, to carry out the monopoly management of image and information, but in such a way as to engineer an appearance of class neutrality and an appearance of independence from the corporate class that owns them.

# OWNERS?

# OWNERS?

Some persons would deny that oligopolistic ownership fosters a uniformity of ideas. They argue

that even if the media do show a concentration of ownership, this does not explain everything about their content, for mass communication is influenced by an array of “Freedom of the Press Belongs to the Man Who Owns One” social, cultural, and psychological forces. For instance, the professional values of journalists ensure a good deal of independence in the media. To focus exclusively on the economic factor is to lapse into a simplistic materialist reductionism. Economic power is not everything, the argument goes. No one says economic power is everything, but it is quite a lot. And having taken note of the other factors, need we then hastily dismiss the material (and ideological) class interests that

result from capitalist ownership and control, as do more orthodox writers who prefer to blame, as the media's "shortcomings" on inept reporters, an ignorant public, and cultural biases?

Social experience is no less economic because it is also cultural and psychological. Life does not come in neatly divided and mutually exclusive subject areas as do academic departments. The "cultural" is not something to be counterposed as distinct from, and competitive with, the economic. How could there not be a linkage between cultural and economic interests? How could there be a viable society in which the two were chronically apart and opposed to each other?

Most things are simultaneously cultural and economic. An automobile, a television advertisement, a board of trustees, a cosmetic kit, and a tool kit are all cultural and economic. The technology, commodities, services, institutions, and systems of ownership and command have

# the DIMENSIONS

both a cultural and economic dimension, and for that matter a psychological one as well. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine any of the dimensions existing in a context devoid of the others.

This does not mean they operate with perfect coordination, but it is time we stopped thinking about them as being mutually exclusive and conceptually competitive.

Mainstream journalists are accorded a certain degree of independence if they demonstrate their ability to produce copy that is not only competently crafted but also free of any politically discordant tones.

Indeed, competence itself is measured in part by one's ability to report things from an ideologically acceptable perspective, defined as "balanced" and "objective." In a word, journalists are granted autonomy by demonstrating that they will not use it beyond acceptable limits. They are independent agents in a conditional way, free to report what they like as long as their superiors like what they report.

In regard to economic and class issues, however, most journalists are educated into a world view that supports rather than opposes the existing corporate system.

Most journalism schools offer politically conventional curricula. Under the name of "objectivity" and "professionalism," a journalist student can easily go through an entire program without ever raising critical questions about how and why the capitalist economic system functions and malfunctions as it does. Corporations and foundations have endowed journalism schools with courses and programs designed to make newspeople "more understanding" of the business viewpoint. For

most journalists, who have only a feeble grasp of economics, such programs influence their perceptions. In order

to operate effectively, the news media must have credibility; they must win a certain amount of trust from the public.



# CREDIBILITY?

To win that credibility they must give the appearance of objectivity as befitting a “free and independent press.” Were owners to announce that their media were the instruments of their own political biases and their class power, they would reveal themselves as they are, and they would weaken the media’s credibility and the media’s class control functions. Therefore, they must take care not to exercise too blatant a control over the news.

# ADVERTISEMENT?

# TRUST?

Needless to say, the frequent acts of news suppression they do perform are themselves rarely if ever reported as news. Much of our media experience is neither news nor entertainment. Some 60 to 80 percent of newspaper space and about 22 percent of television time (even more on radio) is devoted to advertising. The average viewer who watches four hours of television daily, sees at least 100 to 120 commercials a day, or 36,400 to 43,680 a year. Many of the images in our heads, the expressions in our conversation, the jingles and tunes we hum, and, of course, the products we find ourselves using, are from the world of the Big Sell. Advertising not only urges products upon us, we in part become one of its products. We are, if anything, consumers. And even if we have learned to turn away from the television set when commercials come on and pass over the eye-catching ads in our newspapers and magazines, we cannot hope to remain untouched by the persistent, ubiquitous bombardment.

Most of us think of advertising as the side-show we must tolerate in order to experience the media's more substantial offerings. Advertising picks up most of the costs of newspapers and magazines and all the costs of radio and television. Thus it is thought of as a means to an end. But a moment's reflection should tell us it is the other way round:

The media's content, the news and entertainment, the features and "specials," are really the means, the lures to get us exposed to the advertisements. The obvious purpose of ads and commercials is to sell goods and services, but advertisers do more than that. Over and above any particular product, they sell an entire way of life, a way of experiencing social reality that is compatible with the needs of a mass-production, mass-consumption, capitalist society.

Media advertising is both a propagator and a product of a consumer ideology. People have always had to consume in order to live, and in every class society, consumption styles have been a measure of one's status. But modern consumerism is a relatively recent development in which masses of people seek to accumulate things other than what they need and often other than what they can truly enjoy. Consumption is no longer just a means to life but a meaning for life. This is the essence of the consumer ideology.

**“ No one believes companies to really be your friend. The reverse might be true: we count companies to our friends because they're always there for us, always have something waiting for us, never disappoint us and are always ready to please us. You're always allowed to visit their website in the middle of the night. Friends could take that as an example. Can't they treat me a bit more like a product? ”**

There exists not only public opinion but opinions about public opinion. What the people think is one thing; what is publicized about what they think can be quite something else. The media cannot mold every political feeling we have, but they can fill the air with pronouncements about what our feelings allegedly are. The press may not be able to create a conservative mood within us but it can repeatedly announce that a conservative mood exists, thereby doing much to create the impression of such a mood and encouraging conservative forces to come to the fore. The press cannot stop protests, but it can discredit them, ignore them, and declare them to be things of the past, of no interest to people nowadays, thereby discouraging popular political actions.

In short, even more than manipulating actual opinions, the media have a great deal of power in controlling opinion visibility.

**They create a media image of public opinion that often plays a more crucial role in setting the issue agenda than does actual public opinion and which has a feedback effect on actual opinion.**



# the POWER STRUCTURES

While the news media never challenge the capitalist system, they do occasionally report things that seem to put business in a bad light. Media coverage of poisonous waste dumpings by industrial firms, nuclear plant accidents, price gouging by defense contractors, the bribery by corporations, of public officials at home and abroad, and the marketing of unsafe consumer products usually just scratches the surface of these problems; but even these limited exposures are more than business elites care to hear and are perceived by them as an antibusiness vendetta. By treating business wrongdoings as isolated deviations from the socially beneficial system of “responsible capitalism,” the media overlook the systemic features that produce such abuses and the regularity with which they occur. Business “abuse” is presented in the national press as an occasional aberration, rather than as a predictable and common outcome of corporate power and the business system.

We have noted the media’s tendency to favor personality over issue, event over content, official positions over popular grievances, the atypical and sensational over the modal and systemic. Supposedly these biases inhere in the nature of the media themselves, specifically the routine news-gathering practices of reporters, the visual nature of the camera, the limitations of media budgets, the limitations of broadcast time and print space, poor journalistic preparation, the market need to accentuate the sensational and eye-catching, and the need to reduce a complex happening to a concise story. Certainly these are real factors. But news production is not a purely autonomous process, responsive only to its own internal imperatives.

BEHIND

In accordance with the canons of good journalism, reporters are supposed to balance their stories, tapping competing sources to get both sides of a dispute. However, as we have seen, even when statements from both sides are presented, they often are not accorded equal space, positioning, and framing. Furthermore, the rule overlooks the fact that both sides may not be all sides, and that important but less visible interests, extending beyond the confines of the immediate issue, are habitually shut out of the news.

Much news media framing is designed not to excite or incite but to neutralize. While we think of the press as geared to crisis and sensationalism, often its task is just the opposite, dedicated to the greying of reality, blurring popular grievances and social inequities. In this muted media reality, those who raise their voices too strongly against social and class injustices can be made to sound quite shrill. Instead of neutralizing themselves as observers, reporters and editors are more likely to neutralize their subject matter, giving it an innocence it may not deserve.

**Aside from the coincidence of ideological perspectives, newspeople generally are attracted to power, finding it more comfortable to stand with than against it.**

The social institutions of capitalist society are the purveyors of its cultural myths, values, and legitimating viewpoints. To the extent that news producers—from publishers to reporters—are immersed in that culture, they may not be fully aware of how they misrepresent, evade, and suppress the news.

In sum, media owners—like other social groups—consciously pursue their self-interest and try to influence others in ways that are advantageous to themselves. They treat information and culture as vital instruments of class power. Even if they never put it in those words, they try to keep control of the command posts of social institutions and the flow of symbols, values, opinions, and information. In a professedly democratic society, they may seek to minimize their use of coercion, preferring a willing compliance to a forcibly extracted one. Yet when necessary they are not hesitant to occupy the visible positions of power. Regardless of what their academic and journalistic apologists say on their behalf, they have no intention of leaving public discourse and mass communication openly accessible to an unrestricted popular development.

misrepresent  
evade  
suppress  
manipulate

In sum, the capitalist monopoly culture, like its monopoly economy, suffers—shall we say—from internal contradictions. It can invent and control just so much of reality. Its socialization is an imperfect one and sometimes self-defeating. Like any monopoly it cannot rest perfectly secure because it usually does not serve the people and is dedicated to the ultimately impossible task of trying to prevent history from happening. The life of a people creates a reality that can only be partly explained away by the dominant cultural and communicational institutions. The struggle for social justice in this and other countries ebbs and flows but is never permanently stilled by police clubs nor forever smothered by the outpouring of propaganda machines. The longing for peace and betterment, for security and equality, found in the growing consciousness of people everywhere, bursts forth at unexpected times, as multitudes struggle to claim back their land and their productive capacity, their politics and their culture, their images and their reality. The democratic forces of this and other societies have won victories in the past against tremendous odds and will win more in the future. Indeed, the future itself depends on it.

**THAT NEEDS A CHANGE**

# nowww?

*time to make*

texts by  
Micheal Parenti  
Miriam Rasch  
Ryan Holiday  
Editor

---

**NOW  
IT'S  
TIME TO  
TAKE  
OUT THE  
PENS**

Or well, not the first step – there's never a first step – but through repetition minimal shifts can occur and precisely those shifts make change possible. Not every change happens with a leap, sometimes it's rather a matter of repeating the same movements over and over again, without seeing how they change, minimally.

**EVEN IF  
IT TAKES  
SOME  
TIME TO  
FIND  
OUR WAY**



**IF I TRY TO  
REVERSE  
THIS  
SCENARIO,  
I BEGIN  
TO DOUBT;  
WHOSE  
DOORBELL  
WOULD I DARE  
TO RING?**

Why does this matter? We've been taught to believe what we read. That where there is smoke there must be fire, and that if someone takes the time to write down and publish something, they believe in what they are saying. The wisdom behind those beliefs is no longer true, yet the public marches on, armed with rules of thumb that make them targets for manipulation rather than protection.

# TIME TO REVERSE



# LET'S CREATE OUR OWN SPACE

Bloggers lie, distort, and attack because it is in their interest to do so. The medium believes it is giving the people what they want when it simplifies, sensationalizes, and panders. This creates countless opportunities for manipulation and influence. I now know what the cumulative effect of this manipulation is: Its effect is unreality. Surrounded by illusions, we lash out at our fellow man for his very humanness, congratulate ourselves as a cover for apathy, and confuse advertising with art. Reality. Our lives. Knowing what is important. Information. These have been the causalities.

*Ryan Holiday*

“The web has only one currency, and you can use any word you want for it—valence, extremes, arousal, powerfulness, excitement—but it adds up to false perception. Which is great if you’re a publisher but not if you’re someone who cares about the people in Detroit. What thrives online is not the writing that reflects anything close to the reality in which you and I live. Nor does it allow for the kind of change that will create the world we wish to live in.”

*Miriam Rasch*

“Of course, nothing is ever plain and simple. ‘How do we write when we write online?’ was the question posed by Orit Gat in a project that stems from 2014. The responses to that question are manifold: Gat mentions the longform and the short form (like blogs or tweets), online writing is said to be networked, personal, speedy, chaotic and distracted, structured into semi-coherent forms like the listicle, written for as many readers as possible or just for yourself.”

**TRANSGRESSION IS MADE  
BETWEEN REALITY AND  
FICTION AS THE WRITER  
CONSTANTLY MOVES  
BETWEEN THE TWO**

text by  
Cool Australia Org.

## A SMALL GUIDE TO WRITING NEWS ARTICLE

( can be useful if you are interested definetely not mandatory )

### HEADING

**(SHORT, ATTRACTIVE, ATTENTION GRABBING AND GENERALLY NOT TRUE)**

News articles always start with a short, punchy attention-grabbing headline. Headlines are typically short, partly to keep them punchy, and partly because of a shortage of space.

### THE LEADING PARAGRAPH (LEAD)

The first paragraph of a news article is called the lead. The lead is usually less than 25 words, and gives an overview of the event or story. The lead will often explain WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY. The reason for this is that when many people read newspapers, they often only read the first few paragraphs of a story, so journalists try to present all the important information first.

### THE BODY

After the leading paragraph, the rest of the article should be written from most to least important information. You can organise your information according to the inverted pyramid (see following page). After you've listed all the most important facts in your news article, include any additional information that might help the reader learn more, such as contact information, additional facts about the topic or people involved, or quotes from interviews.

### THE TAIL

Conclude your article by giving it a good concluding sentence. This is often a restatement of the leading statement or a statement discussing potential future developments relating to the story. Where appropriate, you can direct readers to places where they can find out more information or can get help. You can include web addresses or phone numbers.

**OR**

(a more interesting option is that)

# WRITE AS YOU WISH

The news can also be very personal and doesn't have to be based on others. It can also be your own diary entrees. You can stay anonymous and reach out to the communities as well.

We all know that news can be about the latest breaking things going on chosen by others for us to learn about and believe. But, also who decides what is important to be shown to the public or not? Well, let's reconsider that.

*Miriam Rasch*

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It's like this: You are supposed to conform to society's expectations out of free will. That can be deemed problematic, or you could just do it. act like you have a free will. Then you are free and able to do as you please, but that which made you free – meaninglessness – deprives freedom of its meaning.

Do it goddamn it.

Nothing happens, except for the ever returning repetition of the past or the ever repeated vision of a better future, which all make it impossible for the present to bring about something new –. Sure, this won't make a revolution. It won't put anything on the line, it won't set the machinery to work. It won't put the repetitive reactivation of the past to a halt, but that's not always necessary anyway. What it can do is deliver wellbeing – an ugly word, well-being, but anyway, well-being – a well-being like that of a cat that lies on the window sill, dreaming up the here and now.

**PARt2 GO**

**WHO  
FUCKING  
DECIDES  
WHAT IS NEWS  
WORTHY?**

Just sit down and let it happen, once they put their 'adopted role' on hold, decide to let go and let themselves be carried along with the flow of the world.



GO TO

FOR THE **SECOND** PART OF THIS  
PUBLICATION

<https://theofficialmediatimes.com/>

Let GO  
OF  
PRINCIPLES.

this is not  
**THE END**

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