



Cross-Cultural Etiquette: Succeeding in International Business

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Introduction

In today's globalized economy, businesses are expanding beyond their local boundaries and engaging with diverse cultures worldwide. This growing trend has created a need for businesses to gain cultural competence in order to avoid misunderstandings, build trust and successfully navigate the complex world of international business. Understanding the intricacies of cross-cultural etiquette is crucial to avoiding unintentional offenses and misunderstandings that can damage business relationships and harm a company's bottom line.

Definition of cross-cultural etiquette

Cross-cultural etiquette refers to the set of appropriate behaviors, social norms, and customs that are expected and respected in various cultural contexts. This includes communication styles, gestures, body language, dress, gifts, attitudes towards time, and other social customs that vary across different cultures. Understanding and adhering to these etiquettes are crucial for building and maintaining successful relationships in international business settings. Without proper knowledge of cross-cultural etiquette, businesses may inadvertently offend their international partners, causing misunderstandings, damaging relationships, and potentially losing revenue opportunities. A thorough understanding of cross-cultural etiquette can help businesses build trust, respect, and cooperation with their international partners, leading to stronger partnerships and increased opportunities for growth. Importantly, cross-cultural etiquette is not a static concept, and it may vary depending on the specific cultural context, country, or region. Thus, it is important for businesses to continuously educate themselves to be sensitive to the cultural nuances and adapt their practices accordingly.

Importance of cross-cultural etiquette in international business

Cross-cultural etiquette is an essential aspect of international business that cannot be overlooked. It is vital to understand the cultural differences of the country in which the business is to be conducted. It involves adapting to the norms, values, and beliefs of the host country rather than imposing one's own culture. For instance, a business with an American operation must recognize the fact that the way of doing business in the United States may not be the same in Asian or Middle Eastern countries. Business owners should educate themselves on communication style, decision-making style, and negotiation style to avoid confusion or misunderstanding. In many cultures, building a personal relationship before discussing any business is crucial, while in others, it may be considered time-consuming and unnecessary. Failing to acknowledge or show respect for cultural norms could be seen as rude and unprofessional, resulting in a loss of business opportunity. Hence, understanding and adapting to cultural differences are critical to succeed in international business and build long-lasting relationships with clients from diverse backgrounds.

Effective communication is an essential aspect of conducting international business, and cross-cultural etiquette plays a significant role in ensuring successful communication between parties from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, addressing colleagues or clients appropriately requires an understanding of their cultural norms. In some cultures, addressing people by their first names is acceptable, while in others, using formal titles is expected. Similarly, non-verbal communication cues such as eye contact, hand gestures and physical proximity may have different meanings in different cultures. It is crucial for businesspeople to understand these nuances to avoid offending or confusing their international counterparts.

Understanding Cultural Differences

An important aspect of understanding cultural differences is to be cognizant of stereotypes and biases. Stereotypes are generalizations about a particular group of people based on their culture, ethnicity, or nationality. Biases, on the other hand, are preconceived notions or prejudices that can affect our judgment or behavior towards people from different cultures. It is crucial for individuals and businesses to recognize and overcome these stereotypes and biases to effectively communicate and interact with people from diverse cultures. One way to do this is to develop cultural intelligence, which involves becoming knowledgeable about different cultures and being able to adapt to their customs and practices. This includes learning about their communication styles, values, beliefs, and social norms. By understanding cultural differences and developing cultural intelligence, individuals and businesses can build lasting relationships with their clients and partners, improve their global presence, and ultimately succeed in today's interconnected world.

Definition of culture

Culture is a multifaceted concept that is often difficult to define, as it encompasses a wide range of characteristics and traits that vary significantly across different societies and communities. At its core, culture involves the shared values, beliefs, customs, and practices of a group of people, which shape their behaviors, attitudes, and interactions with others. It can be manifested in various forms, such as art, music, language, cuisine, religion, social norms, and political systems, among others. Culture is deeply ingrained in individuals from birth and shapes their identity, worldview, and sense of belonging. Therefore, understanding and respecting cultural differences is crucial for effective communication and collaboration in a globalized world, particularly in international business. By recognizing and adapting to cultural nuances, businesses can enhance their cross-cultural competence, build strong relationships with stakeholders, and achieve their objectives in diverse markets.

Importance of understanding cultural differences

Understanding cultural differences is essential for businesses operating in today's global market.

Cross-cultural communication is vital to success, and recognizing the nuances of different cultures can make or break a deal. Companies that appreciate cultural differences are better positioned to build strong and lasting relationships with international partners. By understanding cultural norms, customs, and values, businesses can tailor their approach to different markets and show respect and appreciation for their customers' cultural heritage. Ignoring cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and ultimately, failed negotiations. It's important to remember that cultural differences can extend beyond language; nonverbal communication is also an important part of understanding and respecting cultural differences.

By taking the time to learn about the cultures of their global partners, companies can gain a competitive edge in the international market and strengthen relationships across borders.

Examples of cultural differences in global markets

One example of cultural differences in global markets is communication styles. In some cultures, such as Japan, individuals are taught to communicate indirectly and avoid confrontation. This can present a challenge for businesses operating in these cultures because Western communication styles tend to be more direct. Additionally, gift-giving customs vary widely across cultures. While gift-giving may be seen as an effective business strategy in some cultures, in others it may be viewed as bribery or inappropriate. For example, in China, it is common to give gifts as a show of respect, but in the United States, gift-giving can be seen as an attempt to influence a business decision. Lastly, time management and punctuality can also differ greatly across cultures. In some cultures, such as Germany and Switzerland, being on time is crucial and considered a sign of respect. However, in more relaxed cultures, such as those in Latin America, meetings may start later and run longer than scheduled. All of these cultural differences must be taken into account for businesses to effectively navigate global markets.

In addition to providing practical tips on cross-cultural communication, "Cross-Cultural Etiquette: Succeeding in International Business" also takes a deeper dive into the theories and research behind intercultural interactions. The authors argue that understanding cultural differences is crucial for successful business interactions, since what may be polite or appropriate in one culture could be seen as offensive or rude in another. They also discuss the importance of cultural

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intelligence – the ability to understand and navigate different cultural norms and expectations – in modern global business. The book offers practical exercises for developing cultural intelligence, such as analyzing case studies and practicing empathetic listening skills. By emphasizing the importance of both knowledge and empathy when interacting with international partners, “Cross-Cultural Etiquette” provides a comprehensive guide for businesses looking to thrive in the global marketplace.

Common Cross-Cultural Etiquette Mistakes

One of the most common cross-cultural etiquette mistakes that individuals make is assuming that their customs and behaviors are universal. This can lead to misunderstandings and disrespect. For example, in Western cultures, it is common to make direct eye contact during a conversation, as it is seen as a sign of honesty and respect. However, in many Asian cultures, direct eye contact can be seen as aggressive or disrespectful. Another mistake is assuming that everyone speaks and understands English. In reality, many individuals and cultures have different levels of fluency, dialects, and regional slang. Therefore, it is essential to take the time to learn a few key phrases in the local language and try to understand the nuances of communication. Similarly, businesses must be mindful of the use of color, gestures, and body language, as these can convey different meanings in different cultures. In essence, cultural intelligence and awareness are key to avoiding common cross-cultural etiquette mistakes.

Lack of awareness

Another challenge when navigating cross-cultural business interactions is the lack of awareness about cultural norms and etiquette. For example, in some cultures, it is considered rude to show the soles of your feet or shoes, while in others it is customary to remove your shoes before entering someone's home. These types of cultural differences, although seemingly small, can have a significant impact on a business relationship if not respected. Another common mistake is assuming that everyone speaks the same language or understands idiomatic expressions. This lack of awareness can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings that can derail a business deal. Additionally, not understanding simple social norms such as how to exchange business cards or appropriate gift-giving practices in different cultures can reflect poorly on a company or individual and damage the relationship. It is essential for businesses to be aware of cultural differences and take steps to educate themselves and their employees to ensure successful cross-cultural interactions.

Stereotyping and generalizations

Stereotyping and generalizations can be particularly damaging in cross-cultural communication. Generalizations, or sweeping statements about a group of people based on limited experience or exposure, can perpetuate stereotypes and lead to negative assumptions about individuals or entire cultures. Similarly, stereotypes can be hurtful and create an atmosphere of distrust or hostility between individuals or groups. It is essential to approach cross-cultural communication with an open mind, avoiding generalizations and stereotypes while seeking to understand and appreciate the differences between cultures. While some cultural differences can be challenging, taking the time to learn about and respect these differences can ultimately strengthen business relationships and lead to greater success in international markets. It is crucial to recognize the potential dangers of stereotypes and generalizations while working towards developing a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of cross-cultural communication.

Language barriers

Language barriers can present a significant challenge in cross-cultural communication and can adversely affect business relationships. Misunderstandings and miscommunication can arise due to language differences and lack of fluency in a particular language. In some cases, even where both parties speak the same language, variations in accents, idiomatic expressions, and even dialects can lead to communications breakdowns. To overcome these barriers, businesses need to employ effective communication strategies such as providing language training to their employees, using interpreters or translation services, and adopting technology solutions for language translation and interpretation. Additionally, it is critical to be patient and understanding with partners or clients who may be struggling with language challenges as this will foster trust and respect in the relationship. Moreover, it is essential to recognize the significance of nonverbal communication such as body language and facial expressions, which may vary across cultures, as these can also have a significant impact on communication.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication, which encompasses everything from facial expressions and body posture to gestures and eye contact, can play a significant role in cross-cultural interactions. In some cultures, maintaining strong eye contact is a sign of respect and engagement, while in others, it may be considered rude or confrontational. Similarly, certain hand gestures or facial expressions may have vastly different meanings depending on where they are used. Recognizing and interpreting these nonverbal cues can be crucial in building relationships with international partners and avoiding misunderstandings or offense. However, it is important to approach nonverbal communication with caution and context. An action that may be deemed appropriate or necessary in one culture may not be appropriate or necessary in another.

Additionally, individuals must be aware of their own nonverbal cues and how they may be perceived by others in different cultural contexts. By mastering nonverbal communication and being sensitive to cultural differences, individuals can improve their cross-cultural interactions and navigate global markets with greater success.

In conclusion, understanding and adhering to cross-cultural etiquette is essential for businesses operating globally. A lack of knowledge about cultural norms and values can not only lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings but also cause harm to business relationships. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to invest time and resources into cross-cultural training programs and collaborate with local experts to develop a deeper understanding of the markets they are operating in. By doing so, businesses can avoid cultural faux pas, build better relationships with their partners and customers, and ultimately succeed in international markets.

Strategies for Cross-Cultural Communication

One effective strategy for cross-cultural communication is to understand the complexity and diversity of different cultures. It is important to avoid making generalizations or stereotypes about a particular culture and instead approach each individual as a unique and multidimensional human being. Additionally, active listening is essential in cross-cultural communication. It involves not only hearing what the other person is saying but also exploring their perspective by asking questions and showing empathy. Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions and gestures, can also communicate cultural cues and should be carefully considered. Flexibility and adaptability are also valuable traits when interacting with individuals from different cultures. Being willing to adjust communication styles and behaviors to fit the situation and cultural norms can help build rapport and foster positive relationships. Finally, seeking out and learning from cultural experts or cultural mentors can be a valuable resource for gaining a deeper understanding of other cultures. Overall, successful cross-cultural communication requires a willingness to learn, an open mind, and a respectful approach to other cultures.

Active listening

Active listening is a key aspect of effective communication in cross-cultural contexts. It involves not just hearing the words that are being spoken, but also paying attention to the speaker's tone, body language, and cultural context. By actively listening to their counterparts, business professionals can build stronger relationships with their international partners and demonstrate respect for their perspectives and ideas. Active listening also allows for more accurate understanding of the message being conveyed. When dealing with individuals from different cultures, language barriers and differences in communication styles can often lead to misunderstandings. By actively listening, business professionals can ensure that they are interpreting the message correctly and responding appropriately. Additionally, active listening can be useful in identifying cultural differences and gaining insights into the expectations and norms of different cultures. Ultimately, active listening is a critical skill for success in cross-cultural business settings, facilitating mutual understanding, respect, and trust between parties.

Respect for cultural differences

To successfully engage in business in international markets, it is essential to have respect for cultural differences. Cultural differences are significant, and lack of awareness and acceptance can result in undue conflict, misunderstandings, and potentially the loss of business. Learning about the cultural norms and values of the market you are targeting can demonstrate respect and willingness to engage in meaningful business relationships. Culturally sensitive marketing strategies, including language and imagery, can also help to demonstrate respect for the culture you are targeting. Additionally, conducting business in a culturally appropriate manner, such as greeting people in a way that is acceptable in their culture, can show respect and interest in their customs. Interacting with people from different cultures can bring new perspectives and deepen understanding of the world, creating unique opportunities for success in international business. Overall, a willingness to engage with and respect cultural differences is essential for success in international markets.

Cultural sensitivity training

Cultural sensitivity training is essential for businesses operating in an increasingly globalized world. Not only does it promote diversity and inclusion, but it also helps businesses avoid cultural misunderstandings and navigate cultural differences with respect and tact. Targeted training programs can cover a range of topics from language and communication styles, to customs and traditions unique to specific cultures.

Participants can learn how to be mindful of nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, which are often nuanced and culturally specific. They can also learn to anticipate cultural differences in business practices like negotiating and gift-giving. In addition to avoiding misunderstandings, cultural sensitivity training can offer businesses the opportunity to better engage with customers and clients from different backgrounds, and ultimately strengthen their global presence. By investing in cultural sensitivity training, businesses can foster a more inclusive and respectful workplace culture and build stronger international relationships.

Utilizing professional interpreters

Utilizing professional interpreters is an essential aspect of cross-cultural communication in international business. These interpreters are experts in language and cultural nuances and can help bridge the gap between different languages and cultures. By providing accurate and culturally sensitive translations, interpreters can ensure that business negotiations and interactions run smoothly and effectively. Professional interpreters also possess a strong understanding of business etiquette and expectations in various cultures, which can help businesses avoid misunderstandings that could damage relationships or financial outcomes. In addition, utilizing professional interpreters can help prevent inappropriate behavior or communication that may be considered rude or offensive in another culture. This is especially important when conducting business in countries where cultural differences can have a significant impact on the success of a business deal. Therefore, businesses should make an effort to seek out and utilize qualified professional interpreters to help facilitate cross-cultural communication in international business as a key component to success.

In addition to understanding the importance of relationships in many cultures, it is also important to consider the role of hierarchy and authority. In some cultures, the hierarchical structure of a company is extremely important and it is crucial to understand who holds what position and what level of respect and deference is expected. This can range from formal titles and dress codes to specific rituals and customs regarding showing respect. In contrast, other cultures may prioritize a more egalitarian approach and may not place as much emphasis on formal titles and roles. It is important to be aware of these differences and adjust behavior accordingly to avoid offending business partners or colleagues. Additionally, understanding the role of individualism versus collectivism in different cultures can help facilitate successful communication and collaboration. In collectivist cultures, the emphasis is on group cohesion and teamwork, while individualistic cultures may prioritize personal achievements and recognition. Knowing these differences can help avoid misunderstandings and foster productive relationships in international business settings.

Cross-Cultural Negotiation Strategies

Cross-cultural negotiation strategies are crucial for businesses to succeed in the international market. Companies must learn to adapt to different cultural norms and customs in order to effectively communicate and negotiate with foreign clients and partners. One key strategy is to research and understand the cultural background of those with whom they will be negotiating. This helps businesses avoid misunderstandings or offensive remarks that could damage the potential partnership. Another strategy is to be flexible in negotiations and be open to compromise. Cultural differences can lead to different interpretations of what is considered a fair deal, so it is important to be willing to compromise and find a mutually beneficial solution. Nonverbal communication such as body language and facial expressions can also have a significant impact on negotiations. Businesses must be aware of the cultural differences in nonverbal communication and be able to interpret them accurately. Lastly, businesses should consider hiring cross-cultural consultants who can provide valuable insight and guidance on how to navigate different cultural norms and expectations.

Importance of negotiation in international business

Negotiation is an integral part of international business and plays a crucial role in establishing successful relationships with foreign partners. Negotiating across cultural boundaries requires an understanding of cultural differences in communication styles, attitudes towards time, and the importance of direct and indirect communication. In international business, negotiators must navigate various challenges such as language barriers, complex legal frameworks, and varied cultural perspectives. Successful negotiation requires an ability to recognize cultural differences and adapt one's style accordingly. A negotiator in international business must be skilled at building relationships, understanding the interests and priorities of their counterparts, and creating solutions that meet both parties' needs. Negotiation is important because it can help reduce misunderstandings, foster an atmosphere of trust, and build productive partnerships across cultures. In short, negotiation is an essential component of international business and can make the difference between creating profitable relationships or costly mistakes.

Differences in negotiation styles

Differences in negotiation styles are a major obstacle for companies doing business across cultures. In low-context cultures such as the United States, negotiations are often straightforward and direct, with the emphasis on financial outcomes and a tendency to separate personal relationships from the business relationship. By contrast, in high-context cultures such as Japan or China, negotiations are more indirect and often involve building personal relationships and trust over time. Additionally, it is necessary to understand the significance of nonverbal communication and gestures in cross-cultural negotiations. In some cultures, such as in the Middle East, negotiation involves a great deal of haggling and discussion, with a focus on maintaining trust rather than reaching a quick agreement. Understanding these cultural differences in negotiation styles is essential for effective communication, as well as creating successful business relationships across borders.

Building relationships before negotiation

Building relationships before negotiation is an essential step in successful cross-cultural business interactions. In many cultures, including those in Asia and the Middle East, business is built on personal relationships, and trust is a crucial factor in the negotiation process. Business partners want to know who they are dealing with on a personal level before committing to any deals. As such, it is important to take the time to establish a relationship with potential business partners prior to commencing any discussions about business matters. There are various ways to build relationships, including socializing outside of work, sharing meals, and showing interest in their culture and customs. Once the relationship is established, communication becomes more straightforward and productive, and misunderstandings can be resolved more effectively. Building relationships is not only vital in cross-cultural business but also an essential element in any type of business negotiation, as it sets a foundation for trust and long-term partnership.

Finding common ground

Finding common ground is critical for success in any cross-cultural business relationship. This involves understanding and respecting cultural differences while seeking to identify shared values and goals. By focusing on commonalities and finding ways to bridge gaps in understanding, businesses can build strong and productive international relationships. It is also important to remember that effective cross-cultural communication is a two-way street, with both parties needing to make an effort to bridge differences. Open-mindedness, flexibility, and a willingness to learn and adapt are essential qualities for anyone working in an international business context. While it may take time and effort to establish effective cross-cultural partnerships, the benefits can be immense, including increased access to new markets, enhanced understanding of diverse perspectives, and the ability to build stronger and more resilient global networks.

Another important aspect of cross-cultural etiquette in international business is understanding proper communication styles. Communication is a critical piece of doing business globally. However, communication styles vary widely across cultures, and a misunderstanding or a missed nuance can result in communication breakdowns, misunderstandings or offense that can damage a business relationship.

For example, in some cultures, direct communication is the norm, and people are expected to be candid and straightforward. In contrast, in other cultures, indirect communication is preferred, and people may communicate subtly or indirectly. A failure to appreciate these differences in communication styles could lead to misunderstandings and could jeopardize business deals. Further, non-verbal communication such as body language and eye contact also vary across cultures, and understanding these differences is essential for effective communication. Therefore, having a good grasp of diverse communication styles across cultures is a vital component of cross-cultural etiquette in international business.

Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Etiquette

One case study involves a Japanese company seeking to partner with a Western firm, but their lack of knowledge about Western business customs led to misunderstandings and ultimately, a breakdown in negotiations. In another case, a French businessman's casual greeting to a Chinese counterpart was seen as a sign of disrespect, damaging the relationship between their companies. These examples emphasize the need for businesses to not only be aware of the cultural differences they may encounter but also to proactively seek to understand and respect them. By prioritizing cultural sensitivity and adaptability, businesses can build strong relationships with partners and customers across the globe, ultimately leading to greater success in international markets.

Example 1: Misunderstandings in an international joint venture

Misunderstandings can be common in international joint ventures due to the different ways that different cultures communicate. For example, in the West, it is common to express opinions and ideas in a direct and straightforward manner, while in some Asian cultures, directness may be seen as rude or confrontational. In the book, "Cross-Cultural Etiquette: Succeeding in International Business," the authors describe a case where a misunderstanding led to a breakdown in communication between American and Chinese partners in a joint venture. The American CEO criticized the Chinese CFO's presentation as "too vague" and "lacking in detail," while the Chinese CFO felt personally insulted by this criticism. The misunderstanding arose because direct criticism is seen as acceptable in American culture, but in Chinese culture, criticism is often indirect and given in private. To avoid these types of misunderstandings, it is important for businesses entering into international joint ventures to learn about and respect the communication norms of their partners' cultures.

Example 2: Cultural differences in client interactions

Cultural differences can greatly impact the way individuals interact with one another, particularly in the realm of client interactions. In some cultures, it may be customary to engage in small talk and establish a personal relationship prior to discussing business matters. Conversely, in others, it may be seen as rude or intrusive to ask personal questions and establish a close relationship before discussing business matters. Additionally, different cultures may place varying levels of importance on punctuality, directness, and negotiation styles. In some cultures, direct and assertive

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communication is valued, while in others, indirect communication and a more polite demeanor may be expected. Understanding and adapting to these cultural differences in client interactions can greatly impact the success of business negotiations and relationships. It is therefore important for businesses to invest time and resources in cross-cultural training and education to ensure that they are effectively navigating cultural differences in global markets.

Example 3: Miscommunications during a negotiation

Miscommunications during a negotiation can be a major obstacle to successful business deals. One example of this occurred during a negotiation between a Chinese and American company. The American company was offering a product discount of 20%, but the Chinese negotiators interpreted this as a lack of confidence in the product's quality and a sign of weakness. Meanwhile, the American negotiators saw the 20% discount as a generous offer to build a good relationship with the Chinese company. This miscommunication led to the Chinese company rejecting the offer and walking away from the negotiation. To avoid such miscommunications, it is essential to understand the cultural background of the parties involved and to communicate clearly and explicitly. In this case, the American company could have explained that the discount was a goodwill gesture to strengthen the partnership rather than a reflection of any doubts about product quality, while the Chinese company could have asked for clarification on the discount's intent and meaning.

In today's global economy, understanding cross-cultural etiquette has become increasingly important for businesses looking to succeed in international markets. This is where "Cross-Cultural Etiquette: Succeeding in International Business" can prove to be a valuable resource. The book provides businesses with practical guidance on how to navigate cultural differences and avoid misunderstandings that can undermine success. The authors draw on their extensive experience in working with diverse cultures to provide specific insights into the customs and traditions of different countries. Moreover, the book emphasizes the importance of adapting to cultural differences to build trust and establish successful business relationships. By recognizing and respecting cultural differences, businesses can communicate more effectively, build stronger partnerships, and achieve their goals in a globalized economy. Overall, "Cross-Cultural Etiquette: Succeeding in International Business" is an essential read for anyone involved in international business and looking to forge successful connections across cultures.

Conclusion

By learning about and embracing cultural diversity, businesses can foster better relationships, improve communication, and ultimately achieve greater success in international markets.

Recap of main points

One of the key takeaways is the need for businesses to be flexible and adaptable to different cultural practices, rather than imposing their own norms and expectations on international partners. By embracing cultural differences and recognizing the complex nuances of global business interactions, businesses can expand their reach and thrive in today's interconnected economy.

Call to action for businesses to prioritize cross-cultural etiquette

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and globalized, the ability to communicate and work effectively across cultural boundaries becomes more vital than ever. To do so, businesses must prioritize cross-cultural etiquette as a central component of their strategies for success in international markets.

By building a strong foundation of cultural awareness and respect, organizations can overcome the challenges of cross-cultural communication and forge strong relationships with partners and customers around the world. This means investing in cultural training for employees, developing a comprehensive understanding of local customs and norms, and fostering a corporate culture that values diversity and inclusivity. At the end of the day, businesses that prioritize cross-cultural etiquette are the ones that stand to gain the greatest competitive advantage in the global marketplace. By embracing best practices for cross-cultural communication and behavior, organizations can build a reputation for excellence, deepen trust with partners and customers, and achieve lasting success on the international stage.

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