UNIT 8 : OFFICE COMMUNICATION

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- learn the meaning of communication and its basic features and principles
- discuss the process of office communication
- describe internal communication and external communication
- learn the mail sevices and organisation of the mailing section.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Communication plays an important role in every person's life, whether it is personal or official. In the previous unit we have discussed about office organisation, the different types office organisation like line, line and staff and services organisation, office charts and manuals. Now, in this unit we are going to discuss the concept of communication and its importance in an organisation or office as it contributes heavily to the success or failure of every employees task in an office.

In general, Communication means a process of transforming information and facts from one party to the other. In an organisation, it is only through communication that all the important functions like controlling, information, instructing, directing and monitoring etc. are carried out. Also, to avoid grievances and misunderstanding at office it is very important that proper and correct communication takes place at office. Mutual trust and understanding among the employees can only be achieved through meaningful communication.

The objective of this unit is to create an understanding of the meaning and importance of communication and process of communication, and at the end of this unit you will get some idea on the mail sevice and organisation of the mailing section.

8.3 MEANING OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS BASIC FEATURES

Communication has been defined in numerous ways. The one meaning that is chosen for the purpose of the present study is : ''Communication is a mutual exchange of facts, thoughts and perception, resulting in common understanding of fall parties''. According to L. A. Allen, "Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another". Communication is a bridge of meaning between people. The following are some of the definitions of communication given by different scholars :

- Webster dictionary states that communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.
- Peter Little defines communication as “communication is a process by which information is passed between individuals and/or organisation by means of previously agreed symbols.

The following are some of the essential features of communication :

1) **Two Individual :** Communication always involves two individual; a sender and a receiver. One person cannot communicate, the communication process should take place between two individual.
2) **Sequential Process :** Communication is a process, which involves several steps. First, the sender has an idea or thought to communicate. Second, the idea is translated into recognizable form, called encoding information. Third, the encoded message travels through various communication channels like telephone, mail routes etc. Fourth, once the receiver gets the message, he begins to decode the message. Finally the communication takes place.
3) **Continuous Activity :** Communication is a continuous activity as the manager communicates everything with his subordinates, peers and superiors in order to get things done.
4) **Permeative Function :** Communication takes place at all levels in an organisation may it top, middle or lower. It is the artery of an organisation through which instructions, order and decisions of the management flow from one level to other level.
5) **Transference of Meaning and Understanding :** Communication involves both information and understanding. Effective communication is the process of sending a massage in such a way that the massage received is meaningful as intended by the sender.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define Communication.

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Q 2: State True/False :

a) Decoding is a process through which ideas are converted into a form that can be transmitted to others. (True/False)

b) Communication takes place at all levels in an organisation. (True/ False)

8.4 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is important at all levels of an organisation and it is needed by all employees. Communication is important because of the following reasons :

1) **Basis of Action :** Getting the right information to and from the correct sources is necessary for an organisation to function properly. Communication keeps the people working in accordance with desires of the manager and is the basis of Action.

2) **Facilitates Planning :** Communication helps in planning process in a number of ways:
   i) It helps the employees to interact and provide vital inputs to plan
   ii) It helps the employees to create good rapport with subordinates and seek their opinions and provide realistic information
   iii) It helps the employees to communicate what is contained in the plans in a clear way and secure their acceptance.

3) **Helps in Decision-Making :** Communication helps in Decision-making. It provides the right type of information to a manager and enables him to consider the pros and cons thoroughly before arriving at a decision.

4) **Means of Co-ordination :** In the words of Hicks, “when communication

stops, organized action comes to an end". So, in the absence of communication, members may fail to realize the importance of working united towards a common goal.

5) **Improves Motivation and Morale :** Employees in an organisation can communicate their grievances, troubles, problems to the management and managers in turn, can explain the importance of organisational rules, policies and procedures properly.

8.5 PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication always go through a process. The process of communication involves the following steps:

1) **Sender :** The sender is any one who wishes (i) to convey an idea (ii) to seek information (iii) to express a thought or emotions to others.
2) **Encoding :** Encoding is the activity of converting data or information into code. The sender encodes the idea by selecting symbols with which he or she can compose a message.
3) **Message :** A message is the information that is conveyed by the sender.
4) **Channel :** A channel is a path through which the message is sent. The message is sent through a channel, which is communication carrier.
5) **Receiver :** The receiver is the person who is supposed to receive the message.
6) **Decoding :** Decoding is the activity of converting code into plain text. It is the process by which the receiver translates the message into the terms that are meaningful to him/her.
7) **Feedback :** It is the response by the receiver to the sender's message.
8) **Noise:** It is any type of interference with a message that hampers the sharing of meaning between the sender and the receiver.



Encoding : The process through which ideas or concepts are converted into a form of that can be transmitted to others.

Decode : The process through which information received through communication is converted back into ideas or concepts.

The following figure 5.1 shows the graphical representation of communication process :

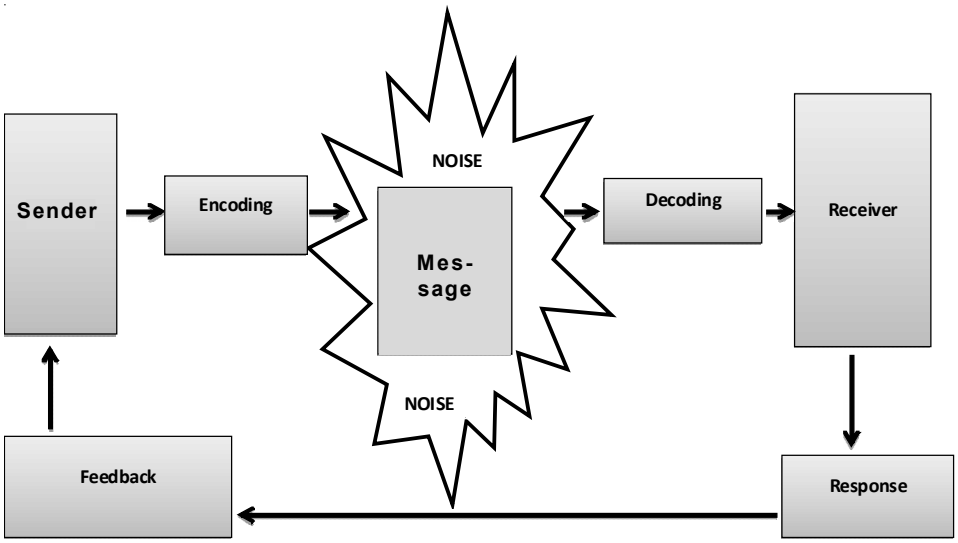


Fig. 8.1 : Communication Process



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Write any two importance of communication.

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Q 4: What is Encoding?

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8.6 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication denotes a type of communication which occurs within the organisation. When the inter-communication takes place between the employees of the same department, it is called intra-departmental communication and when it takes place between the employees of different departments of the same organisation, it is called inter-departmental communication. The internal communications includes letters, memos, notices, instructions and orders.

The communication between the organisation and the outsiders is called external communication. External communication is needed for smooth running and the progress of the business.

Let us discuss the internal and external communication in detail in the following sections.

8.6.1 Internal Communication

Internal communication is also known as inter-communication which is a major function of an office. For a small organisation, where there are 10-20 employees there is no problem of internal communication but in an organisation where there are large numbers of employees, the problem of effective communication takes place. In a big organisation having a number of departments or sections the internal communication can be divided into two types. They are:

1) **Intra-departmental :** Communication that takes place between the employees of the same department.
2) **Inter-department :** Communication that takes place between different departments of the organisation.

Again, there are communication that flows upward or downward. Upward communication is that where the communication flows from bottom to top i.e. subordinate to superior. It includes reports, statistics, opinion, suggestions, complaints, etc. submitted by the lower level employees. Downward communication is that where the communication flows from top to bottom i.e. from superiors to subordinates. Downward communications include policies, manual, instruction, procedures etc. Internal communications include :

a) Oral communication
b) Written Communication
c) Mechanical Communication

1) **Oral Communication :** Oral communication is the process of expressing information or ideas by word of mouth. Speeches,

presentations, discussions are all forms of oral communication. Oral communication is generally happens when the communication matter is of temporary kind or where a direct interaction is required. Face to face communication (meetings, lectures, conferences, interviews, etc.) is significant so as to build a rapport and trust with each other. The types of Oral Communication include:

a) Face to face communication,
b) Telephonic Communication,
c) Public Address System (Speech),
d) Informal rumor mill (Grape Wine),
e) Audio & Visual Media (Radio, TV),
f) Lectures, Conference-Interchange of views, Meetings,

2) **Written Communication :** Written communication involves any types of message that makes use of written word. It is the most important and the most effective of any mode of communication. Effective writing involves careful choice of words, their organisation in correct order in sentences formation as well as cohesive composition of sentences. Also, writing is more valid and reliable than speech. The different types of Written communication are:

a) Orders, Instructions
b) Letters
c) Memos
d) Reports
e) Policy manuals
f) Information Bulletin
g) Complaint System
h) Suggestion System

3) **Mechanical Communication :** Under this communication system, written messages are mechanically delivered to the persons concerned. There are some devices used for delivery

of the messages. The devices are:

a) Tele-printer

b) Automatic Telex Service

c) Television

d) Videophone system

8.6.2 External Communication

External communication is the transmission of information between the employees in the organisation and another person of an entity which is external. Every organisation has to maintain an affair with suppliers, investors, dealers, customers, debtors and creditors. It is the exchange of information and messages between an organisation and other organisations, groups, or individuals outside its formal structure. There are variety of channels that may be used for external communication, which includes face-to-face meetings, print or broadcast media, and electronic communication technologies such as the Internet. External communication includes the fields of PR, media relations, advertising, and marketing management. There are several methods of external communication:

a) Personal visit

b) Telephone

c) Postal services

d) Electronic medium



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Write down any three types of Written Communication :

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

Q 6: Write down any three methods of external communication :

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

8.7 BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

When there is communication, then there is grapevine i.e. an informal communication takes place. Grapevine is a form of informal communication by which people communicates each other without any formal format of communication. The name is called 'Grapevine' because like that of a grape vine it's impossible to find the origin of information which results in spread of rumors. It is actually a type of communication where information spreads through gossips or rumors and are not accurate at all the time.

Several factors may disrupt the communication process or come in the way of effective communication. The following diagram shows some of barriers to communication.

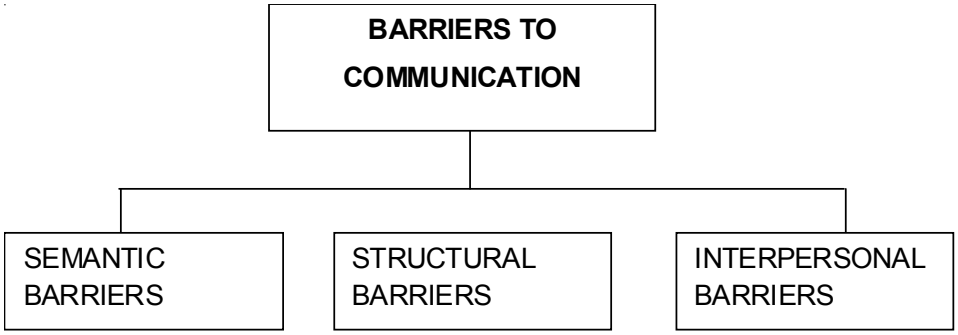


Fig. 8.2 : Barriers to Communication

A) Semantic Barriers : Many of our communication problems are semantic in nature, as the same word may convey a different meaning to different people. For example the word 'productivity', may mean effective usage of resource for manager but for workers it may mean doing more work to get the same amount of salary.

B) Structural Barriers :

a) Hierarchy : When an organisation grows, its structure expands, creating many communication problems. Messages have to pass through several

hierarchical levels. It follows that something may be lost or added by transmission at each stage of process and level. Massages are likely to be delayed and distorted.

b) **Status :** Open and free flow of communication is also affected by status relationship in the organisation.

c) **Specialization :** Too much fragmentation of work causes people to be more loyal to their particular departments than to their organisation as a whole. It tends to separate people even when they work side by side.

C) Interpersonal Barriers :

a) **Can't Express Effectively :** Some people cannot communicate effectively because they cannot use their words and personality effectively.

b) **Filtering :** Any attempt to alter and color information to present a more favourable impression is called filtering.

c) **Credibility :** Credibility is based on a person's competence in the subject area being communicated, and is based on the degree of confidence in the person.

d) **Attention :** Attention is very important in a communication process. People normaly hear but do not listen. Attention and listening is very important for an effective communication.

e) **Perceptual Differences :** Differences in past experiences, educational back ground, emotions, values, and beliefs also affect each person's perception of a message that is important to them.

f) **Information Overload :** The effectiveness of communication is likely to hamper when managers allow themselves to be flooded with bundles of data.

g) **Emotions :** How the receiver feels at the time of receipt of information influences effectively on how he/she interprets the information.

h) **Time Pressure :** Managers are often subjected to time pressure; because decisions must be made within specified deadline. Such time pressure can create communication problems.

8.8 GOOD COMMUNICATION : TEN COMMANDMENTS

The following are the 'Ten Commandments' that will help the employees at office to improve their communication skills:

1) **Clarity :** Clarity is very important in communication and the message should be clear and understandable.
2) **Purpose :** The purpose of each communication should be stated, then information should be obtained and then action should be initiated.
3) **Participation :** Participation on of the employees on planning a communication is important in an office for clarity. Participation helps to bring additional insight and objectivity to the message.
4) **Word Choice and Body Language :** Simple words and using them carefully is important so that they do not take on different meanings to different people.
5) **Empathy :** Empathy is the ability to identify with the various feelings and thoughts of another person.
6) **Actions :** Employers or the top level employees should support communication through good supervisory efforts, clear assignments of duties, fair rewards for effort, sound policy enforcement etc.
7) **Use of Feedback :** The individuals in an office should provide feedback, which provides an open channel, so that he/she can check on how the messages are being perceived.
8) **Communicate for Tomorrow as well as Today :** Communication must be planned with past in mind so as to support earlier decisions consistently.
9) **Be a Good Listener :** Each individual should not only concentrate on the explicit meaning that another person is expressing but also on the implicit meanings unspoken words etc. and should be a good listener.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Write down any two types of structural barriers to Communication.

a) .....

b) .....

Q 8: Write down any three commandments to good communication.

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

8.9 MAIL SERVICES AND ORGANISATION OF MAIL SECTION

"Mail" may be described as the written communication that passes through the messenger service or the post office. Mail implies any written or digital communication exchanged by two or more parties. Mail may come in the form of letters, emails, text messages, voicemail, notes or postcards. The efficiency of mail handling determines the efficiency of office. Effective, planned, systemic handling of mail ensures better relationship with people inside and outside the organisation.

A proper organisation of mailing department is essential, for it ensures an efficient and economical performance of mailing service. The organisation should cover the following four phase of work:

- Opening, sorting and distribution of inward mail
- Collection of information for replies
- Typing and signing of replies
- Making up and dispatching the outward mail

Mail services are the written communication that passed through message or post office. Mails are of two types. They are:

a) Inward mail

b) Outward mail

8.9.1 Handling Inward Mail

Inward mail is the logical starting point of the work of the mail services of an organisation. The efficiency in handling inward mail has a great impact on the efficiency and success of the business as a whole. The following are the stages in handling inward mails:

1) **Receiving the Mail :** For every organisation the practices in receiving the mail are different. In small organisation the mails are received by the receptionist or the secretary but in large organisation a mailing department is there where clerks are assigned for receiving the mail.
2) **Opening the Mail :** Now a day's organizers are using letter openers. Before opening the office premises the mail should get ready for distribution in various departments. Once the mails are delivered the signature of the receiver shall be obtained in the register.
3) **Sorting the Mail :** The mails are sorted out and grouped according to the departments to which they are addressed.
4) **Scrutiny of Mail :** After opening the letter, the contents are scrutinsed. The enclosures are verified with the covering letter so as to find whether the contents are actually enclosed. If anything is missing then it should be brought to the notice of the office manager or supervisor.
5) **Stamping the Mail :** When the letters are opened they are stamped with the date of receipt, time etc. The letters are serially numbered.
6) **Recording the Mail :** Many organisations like banks, government offices etc used "inward mail register" for keeping the records.
7) **Distributing the Mail :** The mail distribution and delivery is the last stage of handling inward mails. At the time of delivery, the messenger should get the signature of the person receiving the mail, on the register.

8.9.2 Handling Outward Mails

The mails which are supplied by the business houses to other establishments are called outward mail. Handling outward mail is much more complicated then handling inward mail. It requires understanding of postal regulations and rates, timing of postal clearance, postal facilities available etc. The following are the stages of outward mail handling :

1) **Drafting the Letters :** All the outward letters should be properly drafted, dated and should be well typed.
2) **Signature and Reference :** The particular authority re authorized to sign the mails. The letters, circulars are signed by the junior officers but the cheques, orders are signed by the authorized persons.
3) **Collection of Outward Mail :** The mailing department messenger visits the different departments at the specified time and collect the letters from the outgoing mail box.
4) **Maintenance of Outward Mail Register :** Before posting the letters, the information related to letters are recorded in the outward mail register. The letters are sent through post office.
5) **Folding the Letters :** The letters are properly folded and put in the envelope. They are folded in such a way that the address is visible through transparent window on the envelope or in the cover.
6) **Preparation of Envelopes :** The envelopes must be correctly written with the address of the receiver. Correct address with correct pin code ensures the speed and accuracy in delivery
7) **Sealing and Stamping :** The envelope should be properly glued with tape or gum. They should be sealed with resin or in accordance with the postal rules, when valuable documents are sent by registered post with acknowledgement. Now a days, mails are sent through private courier service for speedy delivery, the messenger must be arranged to collect the proof of delivery

from the courier office.

8) **Posting :** All unregistered mails are put in the postbox of the post office. The envelope should be written with “special terms” such as VPP, registered with AD etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: Define ‘Mail’.

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Q 10: What is Inward Mail?

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8.10 ARRANGEMENT WITH POST OFFICE AND MECHANIZATION OF MAIL SERVICES

The small organisations often prefer to have inward mail dropped into their letter boxes twice/thrice daily by the postman and they drop their outward mail in the nearest post box or post offices. Many mechanical aids have been devised for use in mailing department. The use of mail services has the following uses, they are :

a) Eliminate wastage
b) Increase speed of operations
c) Accuracy
d) Speed up the delivery of reports

Mechanization of Mail Services : The devices that can be used in the mailing department are :

1) **Letter Opening Machine :** It is a device used for opening envelopes of different sizes at great speed, 50-200 envelopes can be opened per minute, depending upon whether it is manually or electrically operated.



Fig. 8.3 : Letter Opening Machine

2) **Time Recording Machines :** This device is used to record time and date of receipt or dispatch of mail. These are electronic clock which print the time and date when envelopes are inserted in them.

3) **Addressing Machines :** A printer that automatically prints addresses on letters for mail which are sent to the regular correspondents.



Fig. 8.4 : Addressing Machine

4) **Folding Machines :** Folding machines are very beneficial for medium to large volumes of mail. They are generally easy to set up and operate. They require much less time than folding by hand and produce neater results.



Fig. 8.5 : Folding Machine

5) **Sealing Machine :** Sealing machines reduce the time and effort needed to seal envelopes by eliminating the need to manually wet and fold the flap. They come in two varieties: 'Automatic and Manual'. An automatic envelope sealer can process a stack of envelopes by individually feeding them through the machine. On the other hand, a manual envelope sealer has to be hand fed and can only process one at a time.



Fig. 8.6 : Sealing Machine

6) **Inserting Machine :** Inserting machines combines the work of several machines into one. It folds a sheet of paper, inserts it into an envelope, and then seals the envelope. There are various types of folder inserters for different volumes of mail. Many folder inserters are programmable and allow the employees office to store jobs for frequent mailings.



Fig. 8.7 : Inserting Machine

7) **Mail Tabbers :** Mail Tabbers are an economical alternative to using envelopes that save both time and money. A tabber places a small adhesive tab on folded sheets of paper to keep them shut. The location of the tab can be adjusted on the tabber machine. Tabbers provide a tight and secure seal and are useful for mass mailings and brochures.

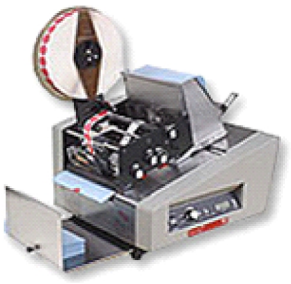


Fig. 8.8 : Mail Tabbers

8) **Franking Machine :** Franking Machines are machines that automatically stamps letters or packages passing through it and computes the total postal charge.



Fig. 8.9 : Franking Machine



8.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the following :

- Communication is a mutual exchange of facts, thoughts and perception, resulting in common understanding of fall parties.
- Communication plays an important role in an organisation. So, the importance of communication are (1) basis of action (2) facilities planning (3) helps in decision-making (4)means of coordination (5) improves motivation and morale.
- There are is a process of communication which involves the following steps : (1)sender (2) encoding (3) message (4) channel (5) receiver (6) decoding (7) feedback (8) noise
- There is internal and external communication. Internal communication denotes a type of communication within the organisation and the communication between the organisation and the outsiders is called external communication.
- There are various barriers to communication they are : (a) semantic barriers (b) interpersonal barriers (c) structural barriers
- To make communication effective there are ten commandments that may help a manager improve his communication skills: (a) clarity (b) purpose (c) physical and human setting (d) participation (e) word choice and body language (f) empathy (g) actions (h) use of feedback (i) communicate for tomorrow as well as today and (j) be a good listener.
- We have discussed about mail services and organisation of mail section. Mail services are the written communication that passed through message or post office.
- Mails are of two types. (a) Inward mail (b) outward mail
- The use of mail services has the following uses, they are : (a) eliminate wastage (b) increase speed of operations (c) accuracy (d) speed up the delivery of reports.

8.12 FURTHER READING

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8. 13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : a) False, b) True

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : a) Facilities planning, b) Means of coordination.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : Encoding is that where he sender encodes the idea by selecting symbols with which he or she can compose a massage.

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : a) Orders, Instructions, b) Letters, c) Memos

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : Personal visit, Telephone and Postal services.

Ans. to Q. No. 7 : Hierarchy and Specialization.

Ans. to Q. No. 8 : Clarity, Participation and Word choice & body language.

Ans. to Q. No. 9 : “Mail” may be described as the written communication that passes through the messenger service or the post office.

Ans. to Q. No. 10 : Inward mail is the logical starting point of the work of the mail services of an organisation. The efficiency in handling inward mail has a great impact on the efficiency and success of the business as a whole.

8.14 MODEL QUESTION

Q 1 : "Communication is a very important function of any business". Discuss the importance of Communication.

Q 2 : Discuss the different types of Communication. Suggest some measures to remove barriers to Communication.

Q 3 : What do you understand by Communication? State the features of Communication.

Q 4 : What is Internal and External Communication?

Q 5 : Write down the process of Communication.

Q 6 : Write a note on :

a) Semantic barriers

b) Interpersonal barriers

c) Structural barriers.

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