

Leadership and Orientation as Strategic Initiatives for Quality Service Delivery: Evidence from Kenya

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Abstract

Quality of life in a country is greatly determined by services delivered. Customers, citizens of a country have the right to quality service to meet their needs. The government of Kenya appreciates the need for efficient service delivery, but there are problems in service delivery in terms of quality, accountability, infrastructure, efficiency and complains in the Kenya's county governments, especially in Kericho County. The study objectives examined the effect of strategic leadership and strategic orientation on quality service delivery in Kericho County Government. The paper was anchored on transformation theory. A descriptive survey design was used in this investigation. The target population was 170 staff of Kericho County government. A sample size 51 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research findings were presented using tables. The results revealed that strategic leadership had significant effect on quality service delivery. The employee capabilities, development of organization culture and ethical practices of strategic leadership contributed in improving service delivery. Strategic orientation had a positive significant effect on quality service delivery. In conclusion strategic leadership and strategic orientation had positive statistical effect on quality service delivery. It is recommended that there should be improvement on policies and procedure to enhance human resource capacity building, improve citizen participation in interaction and evaluation, provide sufficient funds and provision of sufficient budget for technology.

Key Words: Service Delivery, Descriptive Survey Research Design

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I. Introduction

Service delivery is a major indicator of the living standard in a country that is not measured in per capita income. Central to the achieving value-added services to the public are the intensified citizens' prospects (Khalid, 2010). It is important to be accountable and transparent in service delivery as argued by Halachmi (2011) that the present weight on public sector for intensification of accountability and transparency serves to show the effectiveness and efficiency in public sector. In Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa are among countries that have improved service delivery through devolution (World Bank, 2012). Service delivery is part of the complex interaction between the government, society, the citizens and the public consider the affiliate government as the most palpable mode of government (Agba, Akwara and Idu, 2013). Government bodies and the public relate in the crucial function of delivering services (Abe and Monisola, 2014). Customers, citizens have the right to better services and therefore provision of services to the public by the government should be quick, reachable, of good standard and of moderate cost to the citizens as argued by Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Onuoha (2014). The authors argue that delivery of service can be measured in terms of speed, timeliness, quality, complains, efficiency of operation, ethics, accountability, accuracy of solutions offered, multiple solutions, and additional services.

Kenya government has made attempts to guarantee enhanced service delivery by establishing Huduma Centers (centers for provision of government services), initiated performance contracting, incorporating information technology in the delivery of service to the citizens and innovation as well as strategic human resources (Munoru, 2015). Government of Kenya appreciates the need for quality service delivery. The Kenya's county governments are tasked with the development of infrastructure and successful completion of the projects as indicators of effective delivery of service to the public. Kalava (2016) found out that misappropriation of county revenue at 80.5%, influence service delivery and argue that service delivery in Kericho County Government is a problem. According to Gaitho (2017), leadership qualities play an important role in improving service delivery. Leadership has influenced service delivery in South Africa. Citizen participation in reforms, improvement of quality government management system is slow in developing countries (Dorasamy, 2017).

The prime objective of the Kenya's National Treasury in regard to county governments in Kenya has been to secure sound as well as sustainable management of their financial affairs and hence improvement in service delivery (Onyoni, 2018). The current study sought to establish the effect of strategic leadership and strategic orientation on quality of service delivery in Kericho County Government, Kenya. The measures of service delivery in the current study were, efficiency of operation, number of complains, ethics, accountability, and improved infrastructure. Kericho County Government had been experiencing problems in relation to these measures since the time the services were devolved from the national government in Kenya as argued by Onyoni (2018). According to Tanui (2019), Kericho county government is battling to regain the lost glory. It is because of the poor state of the roads in the town as motorists have to navigate around huge potholes, clogged drainage systems, poor garbage management. County Government is to provide a clean, safe, as well as prosperous environment.

Strategic initiatives are the means through which a firm translates its visions and goals into practice. Organizations need to systematically build a portfolio of strategic initiatives in order to compete (Harrison, Holmen, and Pedersen, 2010). Strategic initiatives refer to the key action programs that are focused on achieving the specific objectives or bridging the gap between measures of performance and targets (Lechner and Kreutzer, 2011). The scholars argue that strategic initiatives are specifically defined in terms of objectives and if the objective is where the company is going, then the initiative will be how it is going to get there. According to Lechner and Floyd (2012) strategic initiatives provide the firm's leadership with a framework to help review the current projects of the company, define the expected impact on the mission, and then focus on the few key projects likely to cause immediate as well as measurable changes in the functioning of the organization.

Mulcaster (2012) argues that strategic leaders are able to transform the strategies in the organization into realizable objective by translating the strategies to the followers. Hence strategic leadership is embraced in the organization through adherence to ethics together with balancing controls of organizations, and emphasized effective organizational culture (Katee, 2013). According to Aziz, Rahman, Alam and Said (2015) strategic leadership enables the organization to utilize the existing human resource capabilities that exist within individuals to improve service delivery. Strategic leadership has been associated with service delivery and strategic implementation (Masungu and Marangu, 2015). The author claims that the strategic leaders are involved directly in strategic mobilization of employees in order to pursue organization's strategies and enable organization to perform and improve service delivery. Kitonga (2016) alluded strategic leaders are more oriented to strategic direction and the scholar has found positive correlation between strategic leadership and performance. Strategic leadership is an interactive process that involves leaders and followers which assist to direct the followers achieve specific goals of the organization and apply both tacit and explicit knowledge (Gaitho, Ogutu, Awino and Kitiabi, 2018). The county leadership and frontline staff are the closest to people and the primary duty of leaders is to perform well in the organization, departments, as well as the divisions within the firm having strategic direction (Onyoni, 2018).

According to Kohli and Jaworski (2010) customer orientation emphasizes on provision of favorable conditions that enable customers to come back for the service or product. In Turkish families' enterprises the strategic orientation plays a significant role in improving performance (Altindag, Zehir, and Acar, 2011). Customer orientation through adoption of technology improves performance of Small and medium Enterprises (Nakola, Tarus and Kibet, 2014). Jassmy and Bhaya (2016) argue that organization with a fitting strategic orientation is likely to have better performance than its counterpart. Other researchers have found out that strategic orientation is not directly linked to better performance (Hao and Song, 2016). Strategic orientation is an approach to business that enables organization to achieve in specific area of competence which includes customer, entrepreneurial, market and technology orientation (Nganga, 2017). Companies that specialize in technology orientation invest heavily in development and research for the production of new products while on the other hand market orientation emphasizes on the market leadership and competitiveness of the product in the market (Onyoni and Kavale, 2018). It was important to consider, in the current study, strategic orientation in service delivery within government setup.

II. Statement of the Problem

There are several inefficiencies in quality service delivery by the county governments in Kenya due to increased cases of corruption, obsolete and old systems, political interference, scarcity of funds, personnel issues, and procedural practices, thus raising the question on whether the counties are fulfilling their role to improve service delivery to the people of Kenya (Kioko and Were, 2014). Some of the challenges that Kericho County government in Kenya encounters in service delivery included adequate infrastructural, inefficiency of operations, accountability and complains. Public complaints concerning poor service delivery, insufficient physical infrastructure and long waiting hours are likely to affect the face of the public sector on service delivery as argued by Kalava, (2016). County governments in Kenya should initiate strategic initiatives to enable them improve on delivery of service to the public as argued by Onyoni (2018). The scholar found out that strategic leadership, strategic planning, strategic environmental scanning, and strategic orientations greatly

influence service delivery in Nairobi County, Kenya though service provision is slow and don't meet the expectations. Service delivery in public sector has been a challenge for centuries. Devolution has improved service delivery in Australia, Germany, United States, Britain and Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia in Africa (Kolil, Ondiek, and Manyasi, 2019). Kenya government devolved certain services to the County governments but the Counties are immersed in misappropriation of public funds (Onyoni, *ibid*).

According to Tanui (2019), Kericho County Government in Kenya is battling to regain the lost glory. The author argues that it is because of the poor state of the roads in the town as motorists have to navigate around huge potholes, clogged drainage systems, poor garbage management. The author further argues that County Government is to ensure a clean, safe, as well as conducive environment. The current study's focus was on infrastructure in term of improvement of facilities.

III. Hypotheses

- i) There is no significant effect of strategic leadership on quality service delivery
- ii) There is no significant effect of strategic orientation on quality service delivery

IV. Literature Review

Transformation theory was initially designed by James Macgregor Burns in 1978 and later developed by Bass in 1985. The transformation theory explains the interaction between workers and management. It highlights, particularly, how the relationship between worker and management is managed to make the employees to go beyond their self-interests in support of corporate targets. The transformation theory applies to the current study because it aids in the concept of the process of change from the conventional systems of operation in service delivery to the new and devolved systems as argued by Xing, Ness, and Lin (2013). Through an effort of creating a new future, adopting continual learning, and a new mindset, the individuals managing system are able to take various actions than they could in the past (Onyango, 2015).

The transformation theory helped in assessing whether strategic orientation influences the delivery of service in the Kericho County Government. It also facilitated in examining the effect of strategic leadership in service delivery. Initially Governments were using a lot of paper work but with the introduction of technology time and money is saved. In addition, the Kericho County Government leaders were not previously considering the citizens as the customers. Kericho County Governments realized that the public is the customer, hence use of a customer focus strategy in order to satisfy the needs of the people for good rating.

In South Africa, Serfontein (2010), using descriptive survey research design, explored how strategic leadership impacted on performance of business oriented organizations which adopt operational strategy. The outcome indicated that strategic leadership has direct and indirect positive association with organizational performance, operational strategy and linked to orientation strategy and excellence of operation in business firms in South Africa. The investigation was however conducted in South Africa and is not on strategic leadership and quality service delivery as covered in the current study..

Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2011) explored the essence of strategic leadership in organizational development. The researcher used a survey research design and targeted 230 staff in public organizations. The sample size was 100 but 98 respondents participated in the study. The findings indicated that human capital management is a key subject on leadership traits among organizational managers. The dependent variable was organizational development. However, the current study's dependent variable was quality service delivery.

Nthini (2013) examined effects of financial performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya in relation to strategic leadership. The findings revealed that corporations embraced strategic leadership through effective corporate strategic direction, adherence to ethics together with balancing controls of organizations, and emphasized effective organizational culture. The researcher used descriptive research and correlation analysis to establish the relationship between study variables.

Kitonga (2016) explored on strategic leadership and performance of non-profit making organizations in Nairobi, Kenya. Results showed existence of a relationship in strategic leadership practices and performance of non-profit making organizations. The results revealed a positive correlation between direction of the strategy, ethical practices, human input development, strategic take over and performance of organizations. The investigation employed a convergent mixed research method design and targeted 1475 non-profit firms with a sample of 305 leaders responsible for strategic function in non-profit making organizations in Nairobi, Kenya. The sample was obtained using simple random sampling. The study examined performance of the organization while current study focused on quality service delivery.

Gaitho and Awino (2018) investigated how service delivery is affected by strategic leadership in African context using descriptive research design. It focused on how ethics, accountability, leadership skills, and personality traits influence delivery of service. Investigation showed that qualities of leadership influence service delivery. The current investigation narrowed down on the effect of strategic leadership on service delivery in Kericho County Government. Onyoni (2018) investigated the strategic factors that affect delivery of services in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study focused on the influence of strategic planning, strategic leadership,

strategic environmental scanning, and strategic orientation on service delivery. The result was that the four variables proved to have great relationship with delivery of service in Nairobi County in Kenya.

Altindag, Zehir, and Acar (2011) explored effects of strategic orientations on performance of businesses owned by Turkish families using a sample size of 280 managers who helped in filling the questionnaires. Examination of data was carried out by data reliability as well as examination of factor analyses. Regression analysis established the associations and the results presented positive contribution of strategic orientation on both qualitative besides quantitative performance of the Turkish family companies. The findings were obtained from Turkish family businesses. There was no link to strategic initiatives and quality service delivery.

Nakola, Tarus and Kibet (2015) concentrated on the impact of strategic orientation on performance of small and medium size enterprises in Kenya. The study relied on resource based theory and employed the descriptive research design. Results indicated that orientating customers on issues of technology had important and attractive results on performance of small and medium size enterprises. However, the dependent variable was performance while in the current study it was quality service delivery.

Jassmy and Bhaya (2016) investigated how strategic orientation affects performance of the organization, an analysis of Al-Dewaniya's Province Real Estate Banks in Iraq. Questionnaire necessitated the collection of primary along with secondary data. Outcomes showed that strategic orientation had positive relationship with how banks perform and revealed that customer orientation enables an organization to reach higher levels of performance. However, investigation was carried out in Iraq focusing on performance. The current study's emphasis was quality service delivery in Kericho County, Kenya

Ali, Leifu, and Rehman (2016) investigated how orientation of technology and orientation of customers affect performance of Chinese firms. The sample size of 158 firms was selected using cluster sampling. Results indicated clearly that the use of various strategic orientation enhance performance of firms. The investigation however focused on strategic orientation and performance of Chinese companies but not on the effect of strategic orientation on quality service delivery which was addressed in the current study.

Obeidat (2016) explored how strategic orientation affects performance of an organization by assessing mediation role of innovation. Structural equation modeling was used to investigate the relations given by the study model as well as to test the study hypotheses. Findings indicated that strategic orientation significantly affects innovation but not on how an organization performs. In addition, innovation significantly affects performance of the organization. However, investigation was on how strategic innovation influences performance and not strategic orientation on quality service delivery as in the current study.

Nganga (2017) explored effect of strategic orientation on telecommunication companies' performance in Kenya and established that strategic orientations influence performance. The recommendation was that telecommunication organizations should embrace various strategic orientations. It is because technological advancement allows organizations to catch up with the changing trends and be able to identify the needs of their customers. Descriptive research design was used and the target was marketing managers, Information technology managers, and business development managers who provided primary data. However, the current study examined the effect of strategic leadership and orientation on quality service delivery particularly in Kericho County government.

Mwaura and Obonyo (2018) assessed whether strategy orientation impacts on performance of medium manufacturing companies in Kenya and results showed that technology, customer and market orientation significantly affect firm performance in manufacturing sector in Kenya. It was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The target population was 179 registered medium manufacturing companies and simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 54 firms. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to analyze data. The findings of the investigation support the results of a research by Jassmy and Bhaya (2016), Nakola, Tarus, Buigut, and Kipchirchir (2015), and Nganga (2017) that strategic orientation significantly influences organizational performance, but the target population was manufacturing firms in Kenya.

V. Methodology

A descriptive study design was employed in the paper. A target population of 170 staff of Kericho County Government consisting of county officers, directors, administrators, supervisory staff, technical and the support staff as per human resources staff records of Kericho County Government of 2019). The sample size of 51 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. The research instrument was reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to compute the means, standard deviations and Analysis of variance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Content and construct validity of the research instrument was determined through screening of the objectives, theories, conceptualization of study variables and questionnaire. The coefficient of reliability was computed using statistical package for social sciences. An average of 0.736 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was obtained and was above the threshold of 0.7. Research authorization was granted by graduate school, Kenyatta

University and National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, both in Kenya. Confidentiality of respondents was observed

VI. Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics results on strategic initiatives and service delivery were analyzed using mean and standard deviation which were interpreted. Strategic leadership and strategic orientation and service delivery were discussed.

Table 1: Strategic Leadership and Quality Service Delivery

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county leadership focuses on outcomes	50	3.7400	0.59966
The county leadership ensures that the employees have the capability to perform tasks effectively	50	3.4800	0.88617
The county leaders are committed to developing effective organization culture.	50	3.4000	0.75593
The county leadership has put in place good ethical practices	50	3.5400	0.64555
Strategic leadership affect quality service delivery in Kericho County Government	50	3.7400	.59966

Source: Research Data (2020)

The results in table 1 reveal that the county leadership focused on outcomes to some extent (mean of 3.7400). Variation in outcomes was low (standard deviation of 0.59966).

County leadership somewhat ensures that the employees have the capability to perform tasks effectively (mean of 3.4800). Variation in performance of tasks was low (standard deviation of 0.88617). The county leaders' commitment somewhat led to development of effective organizational culture (mean of 3.4000). Its variation in effectiveness due to commitment by County leaders was found to be low (standard deviation of 0.75593). Effective organizational culture determines the ability of county government to respond to change and performance. The results also revealed that the county leadership had somehow put in place good ethical practices (mean of 3.5400). Its variation in ethical practice was low (standard deviation of 0.64555). It was found out that strategic leadership moderately affect quality service delivery in Kericho County Government (mean of 3.7400). Variance in quality service delivery due to strategic leadership was low (standard deviation of 0.59966). There was need to enhance strategic leadership for quality service delivery.

Qualitative data showed that leadership has improved the infrastructure and quality service. Strategic leadership was found to impact directly and indirectly on organization performance (Serfontein, 2010). The current study identified direct effect of strategic leadership on quality service delivery. The results concurred with Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson^s (2011) study findings which indicated that strategic leadership had significant effect on organizational performance. However, the study focused on the leadership traits among organization's managers while the current study focused on leadership governance. Gaitho and Awino (2018) focused on leadership traits; leadership competence and accountability which were attributed to influence service delivery; similar to the findings of the current results. However, the current study focused on outcomes of leadership, capability, effective organizational culture and ethical practices. On the contrary, Tanui (2019) reported poor service delivery in Kenya which requires improvement in strategic leadership.

Table 2: Strategic Orientation and Quality Service Delivery

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county government management understands the needs of the citizens	50	3.5000	0.64681
The county government management values preferences of the citizens	50	3.4400	0.73290
The county government effectively relates with the citizens	50	3.6200	0.85452
Kericho County government invests in technology	50	2.9200	0.85332
The county government allocates enough budget for development of technology	50	2.9200	0.92229

Source: Research Data (2020)

According to the findings on strategic orientation, Kericho county government management moderately understood the needs of the citizens (mean of 3.5000). There is low variance in the varied needs of the citizen as results of the understanding (standard deviation of 0.64681). The county government management just valued preferences of the citizens (mean of 3.4400). Variance in the preferences of the citizens was low (standard deviation of 0.73290). The findings also revealed that the county government was somewhat effective in relating with the citizens (mean of 3.6200). Variation in relationship was low (standard deviation of 0.85452).

Kericho County government invested little in technology (mean of 2.9200). Variation in technology due to investment was low (standard deviation of 0.85332). The findings show that the county government allocated inadequate budget for technology development (mean of 2.9200). Variation in development of technology was low (standard deviation of 0.92229).

Qualitative data indicated that Kericho County Government has developed strategic plans that cover infrastructural development. The strategic plans enable the county to develop economically and ensure quality service delivery. Another study by Altindag, Zehir, and Acar (2011) also related strategic orientation with positive influence to quantitative and qualitative performance of companies in Turkey. The results indicated similar findings with current research finding. However, the results didn't relate positive influence to quality service delivery. Jassy and Bhaya (2016) found similar results that strategic orientation had positive effect on the performance of organization. The current study focused on service delivery rather than performance of the organization.

3: Quality Service Delivery

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Kericho County provides quality service.	50	3.1600	0.84177
Service delivery is efficient.	50	2.9800	0.71400
The leaders of Kericho County government are accountable to the public.	50	3.2400	0.84660
Infrastructural development in Kericho County has improved service delivery.	50	3.2200	0.99571
Complaints from the public indicate the level of service delivery.	50	2.9200	0.98644

Source: Research Data (2020)

According to the findings, Kericho County government provides some quality services (mean of 3.1600). Variation in quality service delivery provided was low (standard deviation of 0.84177). Service delivery was less efficient in the Kericho County Government (mean of 2.9800). Variation in quality service delivery was low (standard deviation of 0.71400). Leaders of Kericho County Government were found to be just accountable to the public (mean of 3.2400). Variation in quality service delivery due to accountability to the public was low (standard deviation of 0.84660). It was found out that infrastructural development in Kericho County Government had moderately improved service delivery (mean of 3.2200). A standard deviation of 0.99571 showed slightly low variation in quality service delivery. Complaints from the public indicated the level of quality service delivery to a small extent (mean of 2.9200). Variance in quality service delivery was low (standard deviation of 0.98644).

Qualitative data showed that national government in Kenya should increase the share of funds to county governments. It would lead to quality service delivery as well as development. Aziz, Rahman, Alam and Said (2015) found out that service delivery was improved through strategic leadership affecting the human resource capabilities. Despite the adoption of devolution there is less improvement in quality service unlike other countries which have adopted devolved system like Australia, Germany, United States, Britain and Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia in Africa (Kolil, Ondiek, and Manyasi, 2019).

Table 4: Analysis of Variance on Strategic leadership and Quality Service Delivery using SPSS Version 21.0

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Delivery * Strategic Leadership	Between Groups (Combined)	20.688	6	3.448	32.154	0.000
	Within Groups	4.611	43	0.107		
	Total	25.299	49			

Source: Research Data (2020)

The findings revealed that strategic leadership had significant effect on quality service delivery ($F_{(6,43)} = 32.154, P < .05$). Therefore, strategic leadership is an important predictor in quality service delivery.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance on Strategic Orientation and Quality Service Delivery using SPSS Version 21.0

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Service Delivery * Strategic Orientation	Between Groups (Combined)	21.053	5	4.211	43.635	0.000

Within Groups	4.246	44	0.096		
Total	25.299	49			

Source: Research Data (2020)

Strategic orientation had significant influence on quality service delivery in the county government ($F_{(5,44)} = 43.635, P < .05$). The results indicated that there is need to enhance quality service delivery.

Table 6: Analysis on Coefficient using SPSS Version 21.0

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.150	0.726		.206	.838		
1 Strategic Leadership	0.380	0.139	0.280	2.739	.009	0.412	2.426
Strategic Orientation	0.893	0.112	0.802	7.983	.000	0.425	2.350

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Source: Research Data (2020)

According to the regression equations;

$$Y = .150 + 0.380X_1 + 0.893X_2$$

Where: Y= Service delivery; X_1 = Strategic leadership and X_2 = Strategic orientation. This reveals that a unit improvement in strategic leadership and strategic orientation lead to 0.380 and 0.893 units increase in quality service delivery in that order.

H₀₁. There is no significant effect of strategic leadership on quality service delivery

Probability value of ($p=0.009 < 0.05$) was obtained, hence the hypothesis “**There is no significant effect of strategic leadership on quality service delivery**” was rejected

H₀₂. There is no significant effect of strategic orientation on quality service delivery.

Table 6 shows a probability value of $p=0.000 < 0.05$, therefore “**There is no significant effect of strategic orientation on quality service delivery**” was rejected.

Outcomes of this research are helpful to government in assessing whether devolution enhances service delivery. Another contribution of the current study is that there is a room for additional services to be devolved. Findings on strategic leadership, public participation, resource and strategic orientation related policies would benefit the County government to improve service delivery. Governments’ management gains insight in ensuring quality service to the citizens and gain insight into what could be affecting the public’s expectation on service delivery. The management can increase strategic orientation which had the highest influence in service delivery. Academicians have their share of the study’s benefits on the basis of future research on how strategic choices influence service delivery.

VII. Conclusions

The ethics, culture and human resource capability are still at development stage which gives more room for improvement in service delivery. The study concluded that county government utilized needs approach and relation approach in regard to the citizens. However, there is low technology approach as well as budget for technology development. The study recommended Kericho County Government to improve on organizational culture, human resource through policy and procedure. The county government should improve on technology through funding and allocation of sufficient budget for technology development. It should also integrate citizen’s values, needs and improve relationship with the citizens.

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