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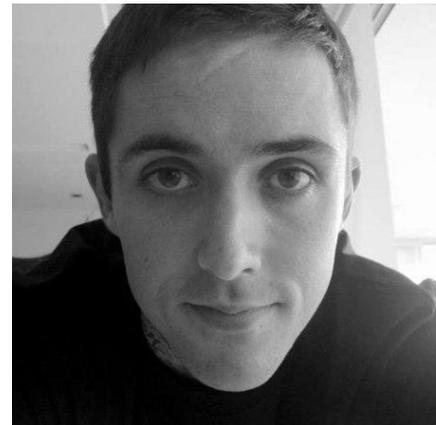
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From Making a Million as One of the First True social media Experts, to Running a Social Publicity Agency with Rockstar Clients Like Bam Margera and The Veronicas, this is Leon Hill's Story

Hello, this is Yaro and welcome to the Entrepreneur's Journey podcast. Just a little bit of info about our guest coming up in a moment. His name is Leon Hill and he has an interesting story to tell you. It's sort of a two part story.

One is about his creation of uSocial which was one of the very first social media marketing agencies that became notorious because Leon used a marketing publicity angle of selling likes and diggs and twitter followers so basically, a service that you could pay to get more followers on those social media tools.



A lot of controversy spiked because of it because they thought he was doing something illegal either stealing people's information or having some sort of software that was creating followers in all these social media tools.



It turns out he was doing something that's not illegal and actually is kind of like the precursor to what social media marketing is today. So, you can have a listen to that to hear what he does and what he did back then.

Today, what he actually runs is Rock Publicity which is a social media and publicity service for entertainers and musicians.

This is a great interview because you're going to hear a lot about what he does to do social media, how he gets so many followers and so many YouTube views and Facebook likes and all those social media things and how all that taps back into actually a return on investment for the people he does it for.

If you really want to hear a fantastic social media expert who has been doing it for years and actually getting real results for big companies, he's also consulted and done this for Audi and ING and a bunch of other really large companies. He really is the real deal. It's a great story. I know you're going to love it. That's going to start in a moment.

I also want to invite you to join my EJ Insider program. That's the next step up from this interview you're hearing. What the EJ Insider is, it's an interviews club. You're going to get all my previous interviews plus you're going to get a brand new stream of interviews that you won't get anywhere else. They are only available inside the EJ Insider program.

It's specifically interviews for people who are, of course, looking for motivation and great stories from other online entrepreneurs likely on you're about to hear from but, really, it's for people who are interested in hearing from multimillion dollar bloggers, people who have made millions with email marketing and people who sell information products.

That's the focus of EJ Insider interviews, million dollar bloggers, information marketers and email marketers. So, people who have done a lot in that space. If you're also a blogger or an information marketer, the EJ Insider club is the perfect set of interviews for you plus you get all my other interviews inside there.



If you're interested, go to www.ejinsider.com and check out all the available interviews inside the club.

Okay, here comes the interview with Leon. I hope you'll enjoy it.

YARO: Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to an Entrepreneur's Journey interview podcast.

Today on the line, I have a Brisbane friend named Leon Hill who has had, well, I'm learning about his history as a chat we had just briefly before we started this call.

I know him as the man behind rockpublicity.com which is a publicity service for entertainers and musicians. Basically, he provides social media and publicity services for people like The Veronicas and Bam Margera and some other people you might know.

But, as I've just heard, he has an original claim to fame back about six years ago starting a company called uSocial which was, well, this is how you put it Leon, was you sold Facebook likes and I'm assuming Twitter tweets and Digg diggdiggs. Basically, you were providing a paid social media service which then got you cease and desist notices from all those big social media companies, and quite a bit of notoriety.

Have I kind of summed it up well there?

LEON: Perfectly, perfectly.

YARO: Okay, great. So, thank you for joining me today.

LEON: No, thank you.

YARO: Now, I'd love to go through all of these with you. Let's go back in time. Before I do that, maybe I should just clarify right now, right now you are just doing Rock Publicity. That is your business. It's your own business, right? You're not employed by any one to do that?

LEON: No, that's correct. That's my own company.



YARO: Okay, well we need to get to the point where you started that and we can learn about that. But, I want to go back in time and hear all about these wonderful getting these cease and desist notices and all that sort of stuff because it sounds really interesting.

Can you take us back even before that though? Did you go to University in Brisbane or were you even born in Brisbane?

LEON: No, I was born in Sydney actually. My only aspiration as a child I guess, I always wanted to join the military. That was the only thing I ever really wanted to do as a kid and I did that as soon as I was 17.

I joined the Australian army where I worked as an aircraft technician or Black Hawk mechanic for 2 years until, unfortunately, I was medically discharged due to a fairly severe back injury. I was pretty down and out about it at the time because I guess, my future plans of the career that I wanted to pursue became null and void but, I guess, I'm in a better place right now, you could say.

YARO: What did you do? How did you hurt your back?

LEON: Stupidly, I did it when I was younger. I grew up on a property about an hour south of Byron Bay. I injured it when I was younger. I can't remember actually the full details of what happened but, I was fairly weak when I was young despite the fact that I passed all my medical tests and all that kind of stuff when I joined the army originally. I think military life just ended up taking its toll.

Although I could more than happily do my job as an aircraft technician, when you're in the army, you're a soldier first and after a while, about a year and a half, I couldn't pass my basic fitness requirements anymore due to my back so, they gave me six months of physio and said, "If you can get back up to standard, we are happy to keep you on." But, about four months into physio, I asked my physiotherapist. I said, "Do you see me in the next two months getting up to speed?"



She said, "Honestly, your back is not really at the stage where it can be mended at this point." So, I just made a decision to call it quits then.

I was honorably discharged but, yes, my back is still not up to standard so, I'd rather have that in my life to be honest. But, hey, everything happens for a reason, right?

YARO: Okay, so were you 19 then when you were discharged? Is that quite right?

LEON: Yes, 19 when I was discharged and then, I went and carried out a very glamorous career in retail. I worked for Optus and Vodaphone and a few other telco companies for a few years, really wasting time, trading my own time for paychecks which is something that I never really wanted to do but, I knew it was probably while I was working retail that I made the decision that this is not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life and to pursue something on my own which is fondly enough, Internet Marketing came up and I started learning a bit about that and it's kind of funny that I am being interviewed by you because you're one of the first blogs I remember reading years and years and years ago.

It's kind of funny we're at this point now that I am being interviewed by you for your podcast.

YARO: [*Laughs*] Yes, that is cool. I started this blog in late 2004 or 2005 so, there's a few years there. Was it just all full of retail kind of jobs pretty much?

LEON: Yes, very very glamorous retail jobs. I think I worked for Optus for about a year and a half or two years and then, Vodaphone for maybe another two years. That was probably that period of my life which is a gray area, I can say.

YARO: I'm sure it was full of all kinds of youthful experiences, too. Let's move forward then. If you discovered Internet Marketing, did you do that on the side while you kept the retail jobs and where did you enter Internet Marketing first?



LEON: Yes, I did it at the start. It wasn't more of I was doing it per se. It was more that I was learning about it and I figured, my main goal at the time was that I wanted to be able to do something that I could do for myself and that I could do from anywhere in the world as long as I had, I guess a laptop and an Internet connection.

When I started learning about Internet Marketing, that was obviously, something, it was very attractive because, as you know, as long as you've got a laptop and an Internet connection, you can do it from anywhere in the world so, it was more that point in my life. It was more learning about it.

I ended up meeting at that point a Swedish guy who'd lived in America for almost a decade who going through a few businesses in his own life. He actually used to run [*unclear*] and then, he did a load of film work online. And, he was extremely successful. I think he was worth at that time about probably 5 million dollars a year, he was bringing in.

It was just one of those things that getting into Internet Marketing at the time and then, I met him and the Universe aligned me with someone that was helping me out in that area.

I met him and he told me a lot about making money online and I guess, that was where my first part of the training in learning how to make money in the Internet like seriously training started.

I ended up living with him and his wife for about six months in Sydney and they basically told me everything that I knew in exchange for me working with them for free of charge which was at the time, a fantastic opportunity that I couldn't have got a better opportunity at that point in my life.

YARO: What were you doing for them?

LEON: Basically, I was helping them manage one of their companies which dealt in a lot of affiliate marketing and promotion for probably hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of websites that provided video content, everything from live movie streaming and things like that to website similar to YouTube but, that provided also premium content and that was where they made the bulk of their money, probably in terms of what they did in the film industry,



Yaro, I guess, paid video streaming and paid video content at the time, they were probably the biggest people in the world that were doing it.

But, as you know, with Internet Marketing, some people that do it were doing it and achieving notoriety whatsoever or any fame. So, they were slipping under the radar but, they basically in a very short time taught me everything I really needed to know about marketing anything on the Internet.

YARO: Are you talking about everything like blogging, video marketing, social media, email marketing, banner advertising, like all the different facets of Internet Marketing?

LEON: Yes, everything apart from social media. This is at the time where social media wasn't that big of a thing. I know it's funny to say. This was only in 2006 but, back then, social media was really just starting to get a bit of a snowball effect and people were starting to see how effective it could be but, back then, it was more banner advertising, email marketing and all that kind of stuff, all the traditional kind of original Internet Marketing stuff, if you could say.

YARO: Right. What exactly though were they selling that you were working on?

LEON: They were basically selling premium subscriptions, marketing premium subscriptions to video sites. Anything, I don't why they chose video. I guess, it was something that worked out for them at the start but, anything from paid content sites that provided training or information of how to do just about anything all the way up to adult sites.

They did basically anything that had anything that was related to subscriptions to video sites, they did.

YARO: Right, okay. Yes, I can imagine that would have been an underground business in a lot of ways.

LEON: Yes, well I guess, the adult... Because they dealt with a lot of adult content, or not a lot. It was maybe a third of their business. There was a



little bit of an underground side of it even though there was a lot of people out there in the market, adult content because it can be extremely profitable but, I don't really like to tell anyone about it.

YARO: Yes, it's the industry you don't want to tell your parents about.

LEON: Yes, that's true.

YARO: So, what happened next with what you did? You did that. You weren't earning a living from them or you were doing work in exchange for training or were you actually paid just like an employee?

LEON: No, I wasn't paid anything at all. When I met him, I basically said to him, I knew that this was going to be something that was an opportunity that could change my life. I basically said to them, "Look, if you're happy to teach me everything that you know, I will happily work for you for nothing."

They said, "Okay, sure. There's no better way for you to learn than if you want to come and live with us. Would you like to move to Sydney with us and live with us and then, you can learn first hand that way."

I said, "Sure."

That was about six months living with them in Cherrybrook in Sydney, working very, very closely with them every single day almost. That was an experience that I couldn't have ever imagined that I would have had but, I think the Universe just lined up something that I was looking for at that time and gave it to me on the plate. So, I was very, very thankful to have that opportunity.

YARO: You said you lived with them. You didn't need to keep a job. It was just wake up, go to work, talk to them, and that was your life for six months.

LEON: Yes. Basically, yes.

YARO: So, ultimate boot camp in Internet Marketing.

LEON: Definitely, definitely.



YARO: Okay, so after six months, were you thinking, "Time to start my own thing?" What was next?

LEON: Well, it was only probably after a couple of months when I started learning from them and the rate that I was learning was just phenomenal. Some days, I'd go to bed at the end of the day and just, my brain was just so filled with information. I didn't necessarily know how to process it all. They really worked me hard. They had this view that if I'm going to go down and live with them and work with them first hand that they were going to basically fill my mind with as much information as they can.

So, it was a very fast learning experience but, after a few months, I started thinking of ways to... I remember actually, one of the things they actually said to me, "We'll give you all the information that you need but, when it comes to you doing something on your own, that's up to you to make the decision."

It was after a couple of months and I was starting to think, "So, how can I apply these to something that I want to do?" This was when social media started becoming a fairly big thing and, I guess, the traditional part of Internet Marketing was interesting and it were to me but, I really early on started to see that social media was going to become a massive thing.

I thought if I can really figure out a way to get this social media thing happening and figure out a way to get a handle on it more than anyone else ever had then, I knew that I was going to do something special with it.

A few months of testing with a few affiliate products and things like that, I really realized that to achieve any kind of success in social media, you needed to have a following whether that was on Twitter or Facebook or on Digg or whatever, you needed to have people that were really interested and targeted in what you were doing and you needed to, in order to make a really decent living, you needed to have a fairly large following.

I thought, if there was an easy way to get targeted fans on Facebook or followers on Twitter or a way to get to the front page of Digg easily then, you could really make as much money as you wanted.



After a few months of testing, I figured out how to basically guarantee a front page on Digg and then, from there, I basically figured out how to almost guarantee in almost any industry using partners as well as just good advertising on Facebook, how to really quickly and effectively get targeted fans to Facebook pages or Twitter.

Then, it dawned on me that instead of doing this for myself, there are companies out there that would pay big money for this. So, it went from me wanting to use social media as a platform to promote my own business to thinking, "Well, no one else is actually selling this service to get increased followers on twitter or fans on Facebook. Why don't I sell that to companies?"

I did.

YARO: I got to stop you though, Leon. Everyone that's probably listening is thinking, "How in earth did you figure out a way to get lots of Diggings and Facebook likes, and Twitter tweets and so on?" What was your secret thing? Are you allowed to tell us?

LEON: Yes, yes, of course. There was no real secret behind it and I guess, when all the press was going out about this thing they thought there was some secret or something devious going on behind the scenes or there was software being used or something along those lines but, really all it was, it was just a matter of really getting a handle on getting networks of partners together.

For example, on Facebook, we approached businesses that already had a decent following in, let's say, the automotive industry. We'd approach companies and say, "Well, you've got a decent following selling order products or whatever, would you be interested in being paid to promote another brand's product in a similar industry or promoting another page?"

Initially, the hottest thing was getting businesses to agree with that. But, once they realized how much money that they could earn and especially some businesses that weren't necessarily getting a handle on the whole Facebook marketing thing, for them to say, if we post one post on our



Facebook page that has, let's say, 10,000 fans, just promoting another similar product in another industry or not necessarily a similar product but, a product in that same industry, it started off very slow but, eventually, we had a lot of businesses saying, "Yes."

So, really, all we were doing was paying other companies in similar industries or similar pages money to promote another page. And, that was it.

YARO: A sponsored post, basically.

LEON: Sponsored post before Facebook's own sponsored posts actually existed. That's what we were doing which is I think why Facebook kind of got annoyed at me at the start.

YARO: Did that work with Digg? Because I know Digg was the biggest site at that time for social media traffic back in like '07 or '08, right?

LEON: It was. With Digg, it was slightly different. Always, the deal with Digg was I found who a Digg's power users and basically, we got them to promote content. That's how we guaranteed front page content on Digg.

We were basically paying some of Digg's most well-known power users to promote other people's content and pretty much every single time, it was a guaranteed front page and if not, we either refunded the client or we just run another campaign for them.

YARO: Amazing. So, I'm guessing the trick with that business was "a," to get the people to agree to do the sponsored whatever and making sure that there was a margin for you in it, as well.

How did you come up with the numbers for that? Let's say, me went to me and I've got 25,000 followers on Twitter. What would you say like if you had a client that was relevant to me?

LEON: It would depend on the industry. It would depend on how much demand there was for in the industry. To be honest, at the start, that was the hardest thing.



Actually, the first couple of weeks, I lost more money than I can count but, once I figured that out, figure out the profit margins and how to work it in in each industry and, of course, we couldn't do it in every industry. We turned back clients if we just didn't have a demand for that industry or whatever but, it would all depend on the industry.

But, eventually, at the start, we were just offering certain packages. Every package was the same price. That's when I started losing money because I thought I can charge the same price in every single industry.

In some industry, I was making a profit but, others, in the first couple of weeks, I made massive losses. That was the biggest trial and error, trying to figure out which industries worked and which didn't.

YARO: You keep saying, "we." Was there more people than just Leon Hill doing this?

LEON: Well, at the start, the first month it was just me. But then, after a while, I set up an office in the Philippines and one in Singapore just for back end stuff to help doing customer order fulfillment, all that kind of stuff and then, I had my main customer service team. I had an office just outside of Washington, D.C. In America with four staff. That all happened within, I'd say, three months.

YARO: Incredible!

LEON: Within three months, I think it went from me to having maybe 15 staff in three countries around the world.

YARO: Okay, that's crazy growth, speed of growth. How did that happen? I'm assuming you put up a website saying, "We can give you X number of tweets, likes or diggs for this price."

Did that just naturally get you a lot of press coverage and a lot of word of mouth growth or was there some sort of marketing tactic you used?

LEON: I think the two things that I would credit to how quickly things grew, firstly setting goals. I've always been a very big person in setting goals. I



set myself, I wouldn't say massive goals at the start but, once I started achieving a certain amount of success, I set myself bigger and bigger goals and I basically, wouldn't let anything go ahead unless I achieve those goals.

My first goal when I started this company was I thought, "Well, how much money would I like to make to have the lifestyle that I wanted?" I guess at the time, the lifestyle that I wanted was to be earning \$300. The lifestyle that I wanted was to be able to work from anywhere in the world with an Internet connection.

I thought, "Well, if I'm making ten grand a month, \$300 a day then, that will give me that." I hit that within a month and, I thought, "Well, you need to set yourself a bigger goal."

I said, "All right, \$1000 a day." Then, I hit that within two months. I set myself fairly big goals and I basically, went after them. But, the other, I guess, secret to my success was getting massive publicity.

I knew to really expand the business the way that I wanted to. Internet marketing would be one side of it but, I knew that if I could get massive publicity on a global scale, then it would grow faster than anything that I could ever hope.

I thought, "Well, how can I get media coverage? How can I get press around a company that's effectively a business to business service that increases the fans on a Facebook page or something like that?"

I thought, well, it's not a very good story if the media wants to write about something, "Here's a company in Australia that is increasing businesses fans Facebook page." That's boring.

I thought, keep it simple but, keep it hard hitting. So, the first press release that I sent out about the Twitter services was simply put, "Company is selling twitter followers."



I didn't say anything much more than that. The media at first, a lot of media outlets were like, "Is he buying customers data and reselling it to companies? What is he doing?"

Initially, most of the media assumed that I was somehow harvesting user data of Twitter or Facebook and selling it to companies which, one, is very illegal and two, is I have absolutely no software experience so, even if I wanted to do that, there's no way in hell I'd be able to, which is actually what led to me getting cease and desist notices from Facebook, Twitter and Digg because they thought I was using some kind of software to do this which is against their terms of service and in the State of California, where most of these companies were located is illegal.

I wasn't surprised that I got cease and desist notices once the press started getting out but, once they were convinced that I wasn't using any kind of software, in all three instances, it was basically, "We're not necessarily happy what you're doing making money off your site but, there's nothing we can do to stop you."

Again, after the initial press that I got which again was marketed as, "23-year-old nobody from Brisbane, Australia reselling followers or fans on some of the biggest social networking sites in the world."

It was great press to start with but, once they started sending me illegal notices, straight away, I'd send those out to the press again. It was insane publicity that I could have never hoped for. So, that's why things, I guess, grew so quickly and led me to, under the first year, making my first million in revenue.

YARO: Fantastic controversy. You've got balls though, man to get out there with the press.

LEON: Yes.

YARO: I'm curious. Did you have a good look at their legal terms of service to make sure that you weren't breaking any laws within it?



LEON: Admittedly, I didn't at the start. I was very naive and I had... This was my first business. This was my first foray into doing anything on my own so, the whole business world was new to me and when they sent these legal notices out to me, luckily, I was already starting to make some good money so, I could afford a good lawyer.

Basically, they told me the first question from the lawyer was, "How are you actually doing any of these things? Are you using any kind of software?"

I said, basically, "No."

That was a very quick learning curve into the terms of these sites that I had no idea about it. Honestly, at the start I was stupid because I didn't look into these things but, luckily for me, I wasn't doing anything wrong.

YARO: I guess, it's funny because today, people still do sponsored content like I get approached to write blog posts which people would pay me money for. There is nothing wrong with that in terms of legalities. I'm just paid for content. Obviously, there's considerations with, "Does it damage my brand?"

In particular, nowadays does it damage my Google rankings because Google doesn't want paid content especially passing on linkages. They don't want to artificially inflate rankings. It sounds like a similar situation.

Like if I have sponsored tweets today still, there are companies that offer that where a celebrity might get paid \$3000 to say, "I just bought these shoes," or something like that, after they have given a review copy or something like that and that's totally fine.

It sounds like you were doing that but, you weren't really, because I didn't know how you did this. I actually remember hearing some press around, I don't know if it was you but, there was someone doing this.

I think it was you because it was Brisbane. I remember thinking, "How does he do it?" I was thinking, true, it's software. I was thinking you must be harvesting names or fake accounts, that's how you would add all these followers on Facebook or Twitter or something like that.



But, it sounds like you just had a team, correct me if I'm wrong, going out there and knocking on doors of other power users within these systems and saying, "Would you write about us? Would you write about our client?"

LEON: Yes, that was basically it in a nutshell. The controversy that I couldn't have honestly asked for anything better than the controversy that surrounded it because the publicity that went on was incredible.

But, if I'm honest, the controversy helped build my company to what it was. It helped me make more than a million dollars a year and despite the fact that a lot of the press going out there or a lot of what people's assumptions were that we were doing something like this were untrue, I've got to admit that I'm happy it happened because it helped spread my name around the Internet but, the funny thing is that it got so out of hand that at one point, after a few articles were written, that I wasn't interviewed about where people were just assuming that I was using software or harvesting people's information or something.

I was actually getting death threats via email and things like that and people in America emailing me saying, "If you ever sell my personal information to another company, I will sue you," and all these kinds of stuff.

In the end, yes, it's just kind of strange looking back on it now. It was a very interesting time and I learned a lot.

YARO: Incredible and I can now see how natural the flow went from that company to a publicity company because you were effectively doing social media publicity.

This is what a publicity agent does. They go and try and get you sponsored content into newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, and online nowadays and sometimes, they'll pay money to push press content out there to reach certain people and hopefully, gets to be syndicated which is what you were doing.

It's just the controversy you were after around it was a great marketing tool which since you knew you weren't breaking any laws, you were happy to let



it go as long as those death threats didn't really turn into anything [laughs] physical.

LEON: [Laughs] Oh, luckily for me, they never did but, yes. I did get some pretty interesting emails, I've got to admit.

YARO: I still have to say, you do have balls, man because you would have had to constantly take those allegations and confident knowing that you're not doing anything wrong but, still your brand out there in the world has this scammer, social media scammer was being pushed out there. It could be a hard thing to recover from.

Can you maybe take us forward, not that it was damaging your business. You were getting more business from it but, in terms of a personal brand, what happened next with the company?

LEON: Basically, the company just honestly kept going on with an upwards and I kept making a lot of money but, for me, I think what really made me realize it was something that I wasn't going to continue doing was basically, it just started draining me.

My initial goal was I wanted to be making money for myself that I could do from a laptop from anywhere in the world and have freedom. I didn't have that because I was very early on, running 12 to 15 staff which within a year, grew to about 25.

I went from doing the things that I loved which was getting publicity and doing that side of marketing to just managing a company, doing all the boring administration stuff and all that kind of gears.

I had my hands out of what I was doing. It was just running a company and I got really bored of it, not just bored. I was working 16 hours a day and just really, really wearing myself out.

Due to the success that I was getting from uSocial, I started getting offers from fairly large companies, some turning over multiple billions of dollars a year to consulting with them.



I think, my first ever big consulting job was with the Korean Department of Tourism, I can't remember their exact name now and it was basically, a massive sum of money to fly business class to Korea and work with them first hand and doing just managing all of their social media.

I didn't end up actually going over there. I ended up doing it from home just because it was easier and I had a company to run at that time but, very soon, I started taking a few big office like that on board and I sold uSocial because I was making more money in a month sometimes than the average person earns in a year just to fly to certain places around the world and sitting in a boardroom with marketing executives and teach them how they should be running their social media campaigns, which was amazing.

It was a great experience. I was still fairly young. I think I was only probably 25 at that point, 25 to 26? I was working with companies like ING and Audi and companies like that, working with suits in a boardroom and teaching them how they should be running global marketing campaigns which was insane especially considering I'm a fairly heavily tattooed looking...

YARO: [*Laughs*] I was about to say that. You don't want to see Leon. He's got tattoos and piercings and... [*laughs*]. You're more of the rock star category than the corporate social media guy.

In fact, I think I just saw you on Instagram recently, has a tattoo on your face now, as well? You've gone there?

LEON: I did. I went there a couple of months ago. I figured, now that I'm working in entertainment and music, which is something that I'm hopefully going to continue, I did get a small tattoo just under my eyes. So, I'm definitely, definitely, not the corporate advertising type which was funny, because considering a lot of the times, I got these offers for big consulting work, they never saw me until I arrived in Singapore or a country like that.

It was funny to see their reactions at first. I'd be wearing my black skinny jeans and a pair of Converse. I'd be wearing a white shirt and a slim tie and a jacket on top of that but, I had neck tattoos so, that was a bit of a shock to the system.



YARO: You have a big neck tattoo.

LEON: Yes, yes.

YARO: It's not a small one.

LEON: I think, a couple of times, the first impression was, "Who the hell have we hired here?" We just go on and throw \$50,000 on some guy who is going to sit and waste their money or whatever? It was always funny to see the first impressions but, hopefully, I never let them down.

YARO: Okay, before we move on to the Rock Publicity business you currently do, I do want to know a couple of things with this.

You have all these employees with uSocial, were they primarily just going out there and not doing the work you used to do like knock on doors of big social media users who had lots of following and saying, we got this campaign. Would you like to participate in it? You'll get paid X dollars.

Was that primarily the sort of roles that your employees did because these are employees, too right? Like full time paid staff.

LEON: Yes, these were all full time paid staff. Yes, that was basically the gist of it doing all the things that I used to do fulfilling campaigns, talking to customers, basically everything that was involved with what I used to do on a small scale ended up having to be 25 people filling that role.

My only role from there on was basically, managing that company, managing all my staff and making sure everything was running smoothly.

YARO: They were all over the world, too. Sounds like you went from that fun role where you're in the transition doing the social media to managing people which frankly sucks in a lot of ways [*laughs*].

LEON: Yes, it does. It was totally far. It was so far a move from what I wanted to do, running a company like that was something that I never ever aspired to do. It was something I never wanted because I saw my father, my biological father, he ran a very successful painting company. He started



out as a painter just painting houses on his own and ended up being one of the largest contractors in Queensland, Australia where we live having 150 staff.

He went from painting houses to sitting in an office all day doing quotes and tenders and all that kind of stuff. I guess, it was exactly the same thing that he went from doing, just in a different industry.

YARO: So, the consulting work, did that come because they just saw your press coverage and they thought this guy obviously knows a lot about social media, let's get in touch and see if he consults? Was that how that happened?

LEON: Yes, yes. Basically, it was all word of mouth. I started getting, it was kind of a shocker at first. With uSocial, it was mainly small to medium sized companies and then, I was having companies like the United States Marine Corps Recruiting, Audi, ING, SingTel, companies like these, massive, global multibillion dollar companies approaching me and saying, "Do you think you could help us out?"

That was kind of a bit of a shock especially considering I was just some kid that grew up in the bush in New South Wales basically that had no experience with the Internet or computer or anything like that. It was a bit of a shock for me.

YARO: How did you even know what to do like what to charge? How do you have the confidence to get into a boardroom and know that what you were going to say was actually valuable to them?

LEON: I don't know. I think, just my experience at the start, I had no experience in social media whatsoever but, I think learning just help, after uSocial, just learning how it all worked I guess, and it was a very fast learning curve so, I guess, I did that with uSocial for maybe a year and a half or two years, and I learned very quickly, everything about how proper promotion in social media as well as the publicity aspect of it worked.

So, when I was approached by companies like these, I think the first big job that I did was, I think, for the United States Marine Corps Recruiting. It was,



I guess, I I winged it at the start but, the results that I achieved with them really made me realize that, you know, well, I do know what I'm doing with the company in this level and then, I just kept applying it to other companies.

YARO: Okay, well, let's break that down because I am curious. You were providing results for Audi and ING and so many big companies. They are paying you fifty grand to come and just say what you knew and tell them what to do. What did you tell them? What was working for them? Can you give us an example? Like, how did you help Audi?

LEON: Actually, I think the United States Marine Corps Recruiting was probably one of the better examples that I can give. It was more of a recruiting campaign whereas they wanted to approach people of a certain age bracket, American citizens, I guess, get introduced to having the marines as a potential career choice.

Very quickly, I went in and the first thing is always analyzing what they're currently doing and most companies especially at that stage had absolutely no idea what they were doing.

It was spending a crap load of money to put crappy ads in Facebook sidebar that really weren't working. And, they were missing the whole social aspect which is getting people talking about something. They were basically doing the whole Google Adwords thing, just on Facebook, putting ads on the sidebar and hoping that they were going to work, and spending sometimes, six figures on that a month and it was just not achieving results.

I guess, I brought more of the social aspect into every single one of these campaigns just going over providing content that people were going to like, comment on, share, be interested in, talk about and things like that as opposed to just putting an ad in the sidebar and hoping that people were going to look at it and click on it and go, "Yes, this is interesting."

For the US Embassy, that was a really big eye opener because it made me realize that companies were just going out there and going, "Okay, this is the budget that we've got. Let's spend it all on some ads on the sidebar."



Sure, it worked to a certain extent but, as you know, it doesn't work anywhere near as good as providing content that is either controversial, interesting, newsworthy that people are going to tell everyone else about, which is what social media is all about.

I think with that campaign alone, the rights of interaction that we were getting from the ads as opposed to the social content that we were providing was something like 1500% over and above what they were getting it at the start and they were spending almost no money though which is providing content.

That was a really big thing.

YARO: So, were they looking for, let's say, they have a Facebook fan page and you were telling them, okay, release this sort of content. It would go viral and you'll get all these people sharing it with their friends. They'll also start liking your fan page and that obviously, brings more attention back to your campaign and what you're trying to do, an awareness. Is that what your main impact was on these companies?

LEON: Yes, definitely. For me, it's all about, and social media is, it's all about providing anything that is going to get people talking and putting an ad in Facebook's sidebar isn't going to get anyone talking. People ignore that kind of stuff.

Regardless of what the content was, whether it was interesting photos of marines doing what they do or video content that was going to engage users in and get them talking or even get them thinking, "Well, maybe a career in the marines is something that I could pursue," for me, it was all about providing the maximum amount of engagement through using something that people are really going to talk about.

YARO: Okay so, when you came and worked with them, did you just sort of tell them these ideas or do you actually go back and do it for them, as well?

LEON: A bit of both. Most of what I did was really ideas. I was getting paid to use my brain and use my imagination and come up with content that was



going to work. So, from my point of view, I've always been a very creative person so, that was something that I really, really enjoyed.

But, for the most part, initially, it was just really providing content, providing ideas and really expanding my mind with what was possible that they could do. But, in the end, it ended up being with a lot of companies that I would physically, obviously with multi-billion dollar companies like this, they have a team of staff and there's no way I could have done it on my own.

In some cases, it was managing their teams and really going through the entire process for a couple of weeks, if not a couple of months and managing their teams and going through everything.

By the time that I'd leave, their teams were up to speed on everything that they should be doing.

YARO: So, you'd show them like, "Here's a picture we put up of this soldier in a funny pose." It got liked a hundred times and put on ten other walls or something like that. You need to do this like three times a day and then, you'd put this video up and then, you're gauging the metrics and seeing how many people are coming back and what the like growth on their pages, is that it?

I know social media is like a dynamic world. It's always like you have to be in the pulse of what's going on in the now. You can't keep doing the same thing over and over again, right?

LEON: Yes, that's correct. The thing is, at that stage, social media was still a very emerging thing. So, with a lot of companies, it was just really getting them up to speed with the basics of what they should be doing. It wasn't really anything going over and above what was, I guess, what would be the standard of social media today at that stage and this is only a few years ago.

It was really just getting them up to speed with the basics, with what I would consider how companies should be running any social media campaign.



Like I said, back then, they were just throwing money. Back then, the philosophy was, "Let's throw money at it. Let's throw money on ads on Facebook, Twitter, or whatever." Hopefully, it works. They were approaching Facebook like Google.

YARO: I can see how it's easy to come across and just make some slight changes and look like a superhero and also because your background with the uSocial credibility would have helped get you into the boardrooms in the first place.

Let's keep moving forward, Leon. You said you sold uSocial so, you were making enough money from the consultancy. You were thinking you don't like having to manage all the people in uSocial, your company and then, you decided to sell it.

Is that what happened?

LEON: Yes, that's right.

YARO: How did you find the buyer? Can you talk about how much you sold it for?

LEON: I can't talk about how much I sold it for. That's the only thing I probably can't mention but, I basically, luckily got an offer. It was strange. It was another one of those Universe lining up the things that you want when you want kind of things.

Probably about, I would say, six months into uSocial launching, I got my first offer to buy the business. I think someone saw the potential for it. I was the only person in the world doing it at that time and made me an offer which was far below what I would have taken for it anyway.

There are a few other instances where I got smaller and bigger offers but then, when I decided that it's something that I really want to get out of, I actually just got approached by a buyer.

Initially, the money wasn't what I would have let go of uSocial for but then, they came back to me with another offer maybe three weeks later when I



told them I wasn't interested at the start. That was an offer that I was happy to take and I just took it.

YARO: Did you buy a nice car after that?

LEON: What did I do after that? I think I did actually. I bought an Audi S3 which is what I had at that point and then, I lost my license for stupid leg speeding, exceeding the speed limit for nine months.

YARO: [*Unclear*] an S3, I think?

LEON: Yes, that's true.

YARO: Okay, so you're back to being a consultant. When did Rock Publicity come into this because that's a bit of a different angle from Audi to the Veronicas. I don't know if a lot of our listeners know the Veronicas because I know they got some coverage in the States.

Can you tell us the transition to the new publicity company?

LEON: Yes, well I mean, like I said, I was doing a lot of consulting but, I think doing it in the corporate world, it wasn't something that I was very interested in after a fairly short period of time, I think the main thing that was annoying me about it is that in some cases with campaigns.

Obviously, when you're working with a big multinational brand, any campaign that you do, you've really got to work it around what their branding is and their public image and all that kind of stuff.

But, in a lot of cases, I love using my imagination and although, I thought I was keeping it within their branding, whenever any kind of campaign before it goes out with a company like that, it's going to go through a filter of a dozen marketing executives and in most cases, they were coming back and saying, "Yes, I will do that but, we'll undo 20% of that."

I think that made me realize that the corporate world wasn't going to be where I was going to be able to fully apply my talents. So, I decided to take a bit of time off and figure out what I wanted to do. Like I said, lucky I was



in a position to be able to take a bit of time off and I think I needed a holiday because I had been working constantly since I started uSocial and I think, it was about three or four months off, and I did a bit of traveling and all that kind of stuff.

And then, I figured out that maybe going back to the corporate world wasn't something that I wanted to do and maybe applying it to entertainment and music was something that was an industry that I'd really be able to go nuts with.

Very soon after, I got the offer to work with Bam Margera from Jackass on his Australian tour and it was --

YARO: How did that happen?

LEON: I actually know a guy who was a tour manager for Bam's brother Jess, his band CKY and did their tour in Australia a couple of years ago and then, when he got the offer to do Bam's tour of Australia, he said, "Would you be interested in doing a publicity for him?"

I though, "Sure, I've never done anything like this but, I'm more than happy to do something new," and it was again, I'll say it was probably Universe lining up something that I wanted to do in entertainment and music or whatever. It's just, my life has been a series of those events.

YARO: Which gods do you pray to, Leon?

LEON: No gods. I'm actually a fairly staunch atheist but, I don't know. Every single time in my life that I've kind of wanted to pursue something, it's just like it's just being lined up for me. So, I'm just being lucky or some gods that I don't know about are looking over my shoulders but, yes.

I did the tour for three weeks with Bam and initially, it was just going to be doing his tour publicity and then, at the end of the tour, I had to sit down with Bam, this was in Cannes, which was the last stop of the tour. I had to sit down with him at the end, and I said, "Have you been happy with everything that I have done and all this kind of stuff?"



He's like, "Yes, man," and he said, "I've never had anyone organize anything like this on tour and I've never worked with a better publicist than you."

I was very, very flattered by that having someone that's worth millions and millions of dollars who's being seen all around the world by multiple millions of people and he is idolized by so many saying that to me. I was very taken aback by it and then, I got the offer to continue doing all these digital publicity and social media and press full time and I jumped at the opportunity.

The Veronicas came after that and then, Brisbane band Dune Rats came after that and now, I'm doing some consulting with some artists from EMI music in Japan. It's all just followed on very quickly.

YARO: It's all an extension of what your core skills that you built with uSocial. I can see that. It's getting to know how social media marketing works. You got to practice it on so many different companies. Your head must be full of so many load case studies of techniques that work.

When someone like Bam comes and says, like especially at the start when you really didn't work in that industry, and he has got a tour and obviously, you are going to try and get in more ticket sales. That's the point of the publicity in terms of an ROI, right?

LEON: Yes, that's right.

YARO: So, what do you do for him? How do you even think about, "Okay, how can I get more ticket sales for this guy using social media?"

LEON: See, with someone like Bam, it's very easy. He's made a living out of being a jackass. You can say, so, to really make your imagination run wild and come up with stunts or stupid things or whatever or things that are going to get people talking, and interested with someone like BAM is very, very easy. There are almost no limits for someone like Bam. This is a guy that's...

YARO: Can you tell us what you did? What drove ticket sales?



LEON: Everything. Running competition campaigns on... Actually, the first thing that we came up with so, Alex, the guy I was mentioning before who was the tour manager for CKY, he's actually Bam's drummer now on tour.

Alex, he's an Australian guy. I think he's 23 and I came up with the idea, I'm not going to be able to say this without being G-rated. Maybe, you can beep me out. When Bam goes on tour, his group, he calls himself, "F*ckface Unstoppable."

Again, which is great for shock value and gets people talking. I came up with the idea. I said to Alex, I said, "Would you be interested in getting that tattooed on you?"

He said, "Yes, sure."

The first thing that we did is I got in touch with a friend of mine who is a tattooist named Wade Larkin in Brisbane and we filmed Alex getting "F*ckface Unstoppable," tattooed on his ass.

YARO: Let's just call it F-Face Unstoppable so, you'd get that iTunes explicit --

LEON: Yes.

YARO: Okay [*laughs*].

LEON: All right. I went with Alex and I filmed him getting F-Face Unstoppable tattooed on his butt cheeks and we uploaded it to YouTube. That was great. I think it was thirty thousand something views very, very quickly and people got very interested in that and it got shared around a lot which is the point of adding it in social media.

YARO: How did he had his existing following and that's where it went to first?

LEON: What was that, sorry?



YARO: You said, you got 30,000 views. Those views came from the existing following he had on social media because always, you have to start with the base. You can't just upload a video and then, people don't know where it is, right?

LEON: Well, see the funny thing was with Bam, when I started with him, Bam's social media was, to put it simply, horrible. That was one of the things that surprised me for someone who had the backing of MTV and things like that. No one had ever really told him his management or whatever however important this stuff was and for a guy who's made a living in video from Jackass and from Viva la Bam and Bam's Unholy Union and all these years that he had, he didn't even have a YouTube channel. He didn't have anything.

I set up his YouTube channel in December last year so, I started with nothing from that point. He had his Facebook following which is about 1.5 million when I started. He had his Twitter followers which was about 800,000 but, he didn't have a YouTube channel. That was the biggest shock that made me realize, "Wow, this is something that really needs to be taken up to standard."

That was the very, very first video. People go to Bam's YouTube channel which I think youtube.com/thisisbammargera. That was the video of Alex getting that tattoo. It was the very first video that we uploaded.

We did things like promote it on twitter and Facebook but, there were no subscribers whatsoever.

YARO: Amazing. I guess, it's helpful when you got that base of a little bit of an audience which I'm assuming, most of your clients come to you nowadays... The Veronicas... Where were the local Brisbane band? I can't remember the name of it. They're probably not that big yet.

The reason why I'm asking you these questions is there's people listening to this who don't have a base of followers yet. They are thinking, "Well this is great. I can't produce a video and then, send it to 1.5 million Facebook followers straight away because I don't have that." I don't either personally.



In terms of the actual social media strategies for growth if you don't have a platform yet, what do you do? Have you had to come across the situation recently?

LEON: I wouldn't say recently but, the best way that I could explain it is one of my Internet Marketing heroes is a guy called Joe Vitale. I basically buy every single thing that he does.

He's not big in social media at all. He's core set of skills is in publicity. I've been reading his stuff since about probably 2004 when I really wanted to get into something like this. He says, "If you want to do anything right in marketing, if you want to get noticed especially in publicity," he said, "make it practically outrageous."

What I always say to people to take from that is regardless of whatever you do, whether it's a publicity campaign or doing something in social media, don't be boring. Do something that is within your industry and within your branding and something that's true to who you are but, do something that's so far out of the ordinary that people are going to have to take notice.

In this day and age with so much competition and all these kind of stuff, if you're doing whatever anyone else is doing then, you're never going to get noticed. Doing something that's outrageous that stands out that's even stupid to a certain extent or that is totally newsworthy that people have to almost have to talk about it or take notice, that's how you get noticed today.

As an example, Dune Rats which is the Brisbane band that I wouldn't even say, up and coming anymore. They're starting to really make it. Recently, they did two music videos for their song, "Red Light, Green Light" and they did a red version and a green version.

The red version of the video was just them hanging around in Coney Island in America. The green version of them was, I guess, you could say they were stoned event. They're being known as a band that is very interested in smoking marijuana. It's one of the, I think, their fan bases' big things and they made a video of them sitting down and for the entire two minutes of the video clip, they do nothing but smoke bong all the way through the video.



YARO: [*Laughs*] Brilliant.

LEON: If people want to search for that, it's regardless of, I'm not a drug user or anything like that but, it's something that people will take notice of. It cost them no money to produce it. It's seriously a video in front of them while they smoke bong for two minutes.

Now, I think, within two months, it had received 200,000 views on YouTube. Bear in mind, these were guys that at that point had only had a couple of thousand fans on Facebook.

I'm not saying that everyone's going to be able to make a video like that.

YARO: I'm so going to do that right now [*laughs*].

LEON: But, there's always something that you can do that stays true to who you are but, that is so far out of the ordinary that people have to talk about it or take notice.

Again, it's going to take a bit of imagination coming up with ideas but, there's always something that people can do and especially with social media, the only way that you're really going to get noticed without a big fan base is doing something practically outrageous.

If anyone wants to learn more about that, I definitely think that they should go out and listen to some of Joe Vitale's stuff or buy some of his books because he's one of the greatest marketers I've ever come across and yes, he's a very big guy.

He's always adamant about making things practically outrageous which is doing things that the media are all following or whatever or people in social media almost have to share, talk about, or take notice of.

YARO: Just off the top of your head, Leon, given you know my background as a blogger. I'm a bit more on the down to earth. I'm not going to be smoking bong on the video but, what would you suggest for someone like me who wants to get 100,000 views on a YouTube video. What would, off



the top of your creative head, give me some rock publicity advice. What should I do?

LEON: I mean, why wouldn't you do something like... Let's keep something within Yaro Starak.

YARO: Please, yes. Let's do it.

LEON: You could strip down to your Speedos that have the word YARO written across your bum and swim across the Brisbane River while the media film it, something like that. That would still be something entertaining that wouldn't be over and above who you are.

YARO: [*Laughs*] Are you sure?

LEON: I don't know, maybe not. I don't know. It takes a bit of time to come up with these kind of things. I think that's why I love working in entertainment these days because I can usually come up with fairly outrageous things like this that's straightaway most entertainers are willing to go, yes.

But, I don't know. Let me get back to you. I'll send you something good.

YARO: Okay, thanks [*laughs*].

I do want to start wrapping up. We're almost an hour here. I am actually quite a fan of The Veronicas. I'd love to hear one little case study of something you had done for them that's worked well.

LEON: With them, I think the initial thing that worked very well at the start was just optimizing everything that they did on social media so, it was another big surprise for me that those girls having the backing of Warner Music which is a multibillion dollar record label, how little Warner really knew about just even the basics of optimizing social media, just things like asking people to subscribe to YouTube videos and stuff like that. I've only been working with the girls for a few months now so, I haven't really had the chance to start a really big publicity or social media campaign.



But, I think the thing with them that's worked the best so far was just general optimization of their social media.

For example, I think we tripled their YouTube subscriber right within a week just by doing things like making sure the descriptions were right and putting annotations on the video asking people to subscribe.

That was a big thing but, I'm definitely going to have the chance to chat with them soon because they've got their third studio album coming up. They actually just got back to Australia a couple of weeks ago. We're starting. I actually got a meeting with them tomorrow morning. We're starting to get ready with some campaigns for their third studio album which is due to launch by the end of this year. That should be fun.

YARO: Okay, you run Rock Publicity. It's rockpublicity.com. If anyone is, I guess, I don't have a lot of musicians listening to this podcast so, not likely to send you a lot of clients.

LEON: That's okay.

YARO: I am curious though for people who are listening, how much do you charge and what do you do? I know you could go and check out RockPublicity.com for details but, can you give us a summary of your services?

LEON: Yes, generally the main thing that I do for big celebrity clients like The Veronicas and Bam is basically general social media management and digital publicity. With the social media management, depending on the artist and the workload, they can run anywhere up to five or ten thousand dollars a month.

Obviously, that would depend on how big the artist is, how much work there is in it. For someone like Bam, for example, it's almost a full time job just working for him. But, as you can understand, someone that has his level of fame, to charge him fees like that isn't anything that's really going to worry he'll be out of his pocket.



I also do consultations. I'm doing a consult at the moment for the Singapore Management University so, depending again on the campaign and how in-depth it is but, for a company like that doing a ninety-day campaign, it can run well over \$20,000. In the end, it depends on what they want to get out of it and the workload whether it's just general publicity or digital publicity or social media but, yes. It's very varied. It's all a matter of each individual client of what I charge and what I do with them. It's I guess, a hard question to answer very concisely.

YARO: Sounds like there could be some people who are not necessarily musicians who would potentially come and contact you at least for consulting basis so, yes, I guess, if you got that kind of budget, Leon is someone to talk to. I'm okay saying that, right?

LEON: Yes, definitely.

YARO: Okay, rockpublicity.com. Leon, let's wrap it up. Any last words of advice especially since the audience listening to this, they're more likely bloggers and information marketers who hear about social media as a platform, for example, list building. That would be the main goal they would have is to spread their brand and also bring people back to their email list and subscriber base.

Is there any kind of wrap up advice you want to give to that audience on how, based on your experience, especially today, given it is more complicated and certainly more competitive, what to do with the social media if that's their goal?

LEON: Be interesting and stand out. I can't say anything more strongly than if you really want to get ahead in social media or publicity at the moment with so many people in any industry trying to get ahead, you need to do whatever you can to get noticed and get your head above everyone else. Don't be boring. Be interesting. Be outrageous. Do anything that you can that your competitors aren't doing to get noticed and get people talking and if you can do that, if you can manage to do that in any industry, you're going to succeed.



YARO: Okay, thank you, Leon. We're all going to learn how to be interesting people now. That was a challenge [*laughs*].

Cool. Any URLs besides Rock Publicity you want to send people to or is that the best one?

LEON: No, definitely Rock Publicity and everything of my social media, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook is all .com/rockpublicity. So, I'm fairly easy to find.

YARO: Okay, great. Great brands. Thank you, Leon and thank you for sharing your story. That was quite a bit of a wild ride you're going on there and you haven't even hit 30 yet. So, impressive stuff.

LEON: Yes. I definitely haven't had a boring life since I left school, I've got to admit.

YARO: Yes, I look forward to seeing the next big client that you sign up to as I follow your Instagram and learn more about it.

Yes, thank you for taking the time for telling your story with us. I appreciate it.

LEON: Thank you, Yaro.

YARO: And, for everyone listening in, you know where to go. It's Entrepreneurs-Journey.com or you can Google my name, YARO to get all the other podcasts like this great story with Leon.

You can also subscribe on iTunes. I hope if you have listened to this on iTunes, you can give me a nice five-star rating. I'd appreciate that a lot.

Thanks again for listening and I'll talk to you again soon. Bye!

I hope you enjoyed that interview with Leon. I found it quite a fascinating story and a really interesting industry that he is currently in.



Before you end this podcast, I'd like to invite you one more time to join the EJ Insider Interviews club. If you love that interview, you'll love my interview style, and you love that kind of guest then, there's a lot more available for you inside the EJ Insider program. Just go to www.ejinsider.com/interviews will take you directly to the information page about the interviews program.

I invite you to take part. It's a great program. There's a lot of interviews in there. In fact, over a hundred in the back catalogue now that you can get access to and it will be very motivational as well as very tactical as you can hear all the great advice that Leon gave in that interview. It's something that you can apply to your business as well.

Once more, it's the EJ Insiders club. Ejinsider.com/interviews. I hope to see you on the inside. This is Yaro Starak and I'll talk to you soon. Bye!



Relevant Links Mentioned in this Interview

- Rockpublicity.com
- [uSocial](#)
- [Bam Margera's YouTube channel](#)
- [Joe Vitale](#)

Where to Find Leon Online

- [Instagram](#)
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