

## Key Employment Sectors in the East Birmingham North Solihull Regeneration Zone

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## Building Technologies



Building Technologies directly contributes over £6 billion and 250,000 jobs to the West Midlands and as such is a very important, and growing industry grouping for the region. It is at the very core of the physical and social regeneration of the region and creates major opportunities for jobs and improvements in quality of life.

The sector is undergoing rapid transition, from a low technology, site-based industry to a dynamic provider of manufactured built environments. The West Midlands with core strengths in building materials, design and manufacturing is well placed to lead this transition.

Advantage West Midlands's vision for this sector is for the Region to be an international leader in sustainable building materials, sustainable building products and design-led, manufactured building solutions.

Stimulating off-site manufactured building solutions will contribute to the Region's comparative advantage in design, manufacturing and engineering, and addresses many of the issues that have plagued the construction industry, from overspends and late delivery to skill shortages and poor social inclusion.

The pre-fabrication of buildings off site in factories, provides potential job opportunities for those unwilling or unable to work on a building site. Such construction methods mean that a smaller part of the workforce will need to be mobile in order to get to the location of a building project. The UK is currently not at the forefront in this market, but efforts are being undertaken to encourage investment in this area.

Buildings account for over 50% of CO2 emissions and market demands are combining with increasing legislation and regulation for more sustainable use of resources including land, water and energy. These will be leading drivers for building technologies for the foreseeable future. The Region's strengths in materials and product development present an opportunity to position the West Midlands as an international leader in sustainable buildings.

There will, therefore, be significant job opportunities in traditional and new methods of building construction and maintenance. In addition, the desire wherever possible to recycle and maintain, particularly historical existing buildings, creates a requirement for heritage conservation skills. Skills that are in short supply, but great demand.

### **Key Points:-**

- Estimates from the Construction Industry Training Board suggest the building trade will need to recruit an extra 6,300 workers a year in the West Midlands to cope with the on-going major construction projects in the region.
- 60% of firms cite difficulties in recruiting intermediate level skills (NVQ 2&3).
- The sector's traditional recruitment target area - young males predominantly from white ethnic groups, is becoming increasingly hard to access as their numbers in the labour market declines.
- Only 13% of the workforce is from the rapidly growing black and ethnic minority communities and there are even fewer women than that working in the sector. These two groups combined account for more than 50% of the available working age population.
- Technological advances will create need for people with skills equivalent to or greater than NVQ level 3.
- Older people may lack formal qualifications, but may possess the knowledge and skills being sought by specialists in this sector. Knowledge and skills that, with the right support, would earn these people NVQs.

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## Business and Professional Services



The Business and Professional Services grouping ranges from accountancy, banking and surveying to financial and legal services and marketing services. This grouping generates wealth and added value but also underpins the sustainability and growth of other key regional industries, through provision of expert advice and business support.

Now seen as the fastest growing industry grouping in the West Midlands, its development has become strategically important for the region through the expertise and knowledge it can offer to all branches of the economy.

This industry group is dynamic and expanding within the West Midlands. Traditionally, major B&PS firms have had their main offices in London, perhaps supported by a regional office network. Regional firms have tended to be smaller, serving local markets.

However, this pattern is changing. Some regional firms have grown to such a degree that they are now winning national and international business, without the need to have a main office in London. Costs, transport difficulties and quality of life considerations are leading to firms moving out of the capital. Technological advances and more mobile working patterns have led to more devolved workforces.

Based on the results of the West Midlands Employer Skills Survey 2003, there are an estimated 28,400 B&PS establishments within the West Midlands, accounting for 15.5% of all regional establishments. The location of these establishments is typically orientated towards urban areas in the West Midlands; over 30% of B&PS establishments are located in just twenty postcodes, predominantly related to Birmingham city centre and a significantly expanding outer arc.

The industry grouping in Birmingham was estimated in 1997 to comprise 28,400 establishments and employ 90,200 people. The grouping has grown significantly since then and the ongoing regeneration of the city centre suggests that it will continue to do so.

The rate of growth of the grouping will partly be affected by its ability to recruit local people with the right skills. Aspirations as well as skill levels will need to be raised to make this possible.

**Key Points:-**

- Significant numbers of people from black and minority ethnic communities are qualified in professional services areas such as accountancy, business/marketing and finance but face barriers to jobs that would make full use of their skills and qualifications.
- Barriers that include lack of knowledge of the opportunities available, lack of adequate advice and support and the reluctance of some employers to review and change their recruitment and retention practices so as to reach out effectively to these potential employees.
- On the demand side, there is a real and ongoing need for companies to ensure that the skills of their staff can support the companies ability to compete.
- Train2Gain (Learning and Skills Council Programme) offers employees and employers great opportunities to upgrade skills that meet the needs of business.

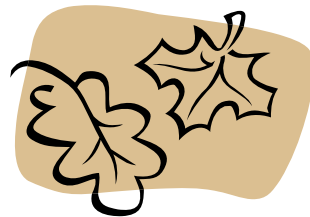
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## Environmental Technologies



Environmental Technologies covers all sub-groups of the environmental industry and ranges from air pollution control, waste management and recycling to environmental consulting, energy management and low carbon technologies. There is, therefore, more to the sector than wind farms or domestic waste collection.

This group employs around 29,000 people in the Region, with a forecast growth of 5% per annum to 2010. Growth that is mainly being driven by the expansion of environmental legislation, but that is also being influenced by rising fuel, energy and commodity prices.

The vision for this group of employers is for the Region to be internationally recognised for the supply and use of Environmental Technology products and services by 2010. The Environmental Technologies marketplace is complex, dynamic and challenging. However, the West Midlands have a number of substantial strengths in terms of its wide range of manufacturing capability and technology companies with relevant expertise.

However, weaknesses are centred on the skills agenda, and on weakness in innovation, critically, the need for companies to see and to grasp opportunities.

The sector requires a broad range of skills and aptitudes. The jobs on offer in coming years should suit both brain and brawn. Moreover, those who relish finding new ways of doing things will find many opportunities in this sector to their taste as will those with an enthusiasm for conserving and enhancing the environment.

**Key Points:-**

- A recent study of the Environmental Economy of the East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration Zone identified a total of 4,300 people employed in the sector with companies active in waste and related markets together with energy management and renewable energy as the largest sub group.
- Employment in the environmental industry has been growing at 5% per year in the last 5 years - this is despite large reductions in employment in the water industry (which shed 10,000 since 1993).
- The overall rates of employment growth look set to continue over the next decade and will be highest in waste management where activities such as recycling are often labour intensive.
- Highest growth in the UK and in the West Midlands is forecast in waste management, renewable energy and cleaner technologies and processes.

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## Health and Care Sector



Although often viewed as a sub-sector of the public sector, it incorporates many private businesses, particularly within the Care Sector. Changes in demand for health and care services are creating pressure within workforce recruitment and retention.

The sector recognises too, that it needs to diversify its predominantly white workforce (86%) and do more to train up, the people currently employed by the sector, to fill the jobs of the future. 25% of the sector's workforce has no formal qualification and 30% are only qualified to NVQ levels 1 & 2. There are also issues about how to make this sector more attractive to potential male employees.

The National Employers' Skills Survey for 2003 (NESS) results suggest that 12,597 (42%) staff are not fully skilled and 15.5% have significant skills gaps of whom nearly 60% are associate professionals such as nurses and para-professionals.

Nationally there are skills shortages for professionally qualified staff in the NHS and in Social Services departments including: Consultants, Laboratory Scientific Officers, Social Workers, Approved Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Midwives, Physiotherapists and managers at all levels

The provision of new and enhanced health care facilities in Birmingham, for example at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and at Heartlands Hospital Medi-Park will create an increased and changed demand for workers in this sector.

**Key Points:-**

- It has been predicted that the shortfall of labour supply in the Health and Care Sector by 2010 will be 8.7 % below demand (PACEC Labour Demand and Supply 2001)
- The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine relocated from Gosport to Birmingham opening in 2001. It is a recognised Centre of Excellence having developed innovative training and education and research programmes
- The University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust - runs the Queen Elizabeth, Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth Psychiatric hospitals - will create a new £599 million hospital at the QE site in Edgbaston. The scheme will increase the number of beds from 1,050 at the QE and Selly Oak to 1,213, as well as a new mental health facility to replace the psychiatric hospital
- Birmingham New Hospitals project will create approximately 800 new entry-level health care support posts
- University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust has steadily increase in staff numbers from 4,787 in 1998 to 6,550 in 2004
- 30% of the public health and care sector workforce in the sub region do not have a level 3 qualification and 85% of the private care sector do not have a level2 qualification (LSC Strategic Plan 2003 -2006)

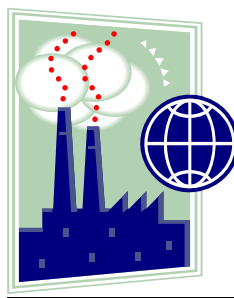
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### Manufacturing



Manufacturing is, and will continue to be, of huge significance to the West Midlands economy. In 2015, manufacturing in the West Midlands is expected to contribute 20% of the regions Gross Value Added, the highest of any other UK region and while direct manufacturing employment is likely to continue to fall, the region's manufacturing economy will have changed from one that competes on cost to one that has unique innovation and technological strengths in key technology areas embedded within its supply chain.

Knowledge has become the main source of competitive advantage as globalisation has made access to raw materials and other traditional factors of production and sources of comparative advantage ubiquitous. If manufacturers in the West Midlands are to survive in the long term, they must compete in the knowledge economy.

Naturally this, impacts on the present and future types of jobs in the sector, and the kind of skills needed to fill them. New jobs will be created with a requirement for a higher level of skills than at present, even as the total number of people directly employed in manufacturing is declining.

There are obvious connections and overlaps with both the Building technologies and Environmental Technologies sectors. This is particularly evident in areas where factory based methods are used to construct buildings and to manufacture renewable energy devices like wind turbines.

A part of the future of the sector lies in greater collaboration with other sectors that develop products for it to manufacture and mass produce. Increased collaboration is expected with the health sector, where technologies are being developed that can only be fully exploited by being mass produced by commercial companies. The Advantage West Midlands vision for this sector is for the West Midlands to be known for its excellence in translating science, technology and specialist knowledge into the manufacture of successful products.

#### **Key Points:-**

- The West Midlands is the heart of UK manufacturing. It makes a larger contribution to the economy in the West Midlands than in any other UK region. There is an estimated 23,000 manufacturing enterprises, with 92% of West Midlands companies employing less than 50 people.
- Over 19% of people in the West Midland work in the manufacturing sector compared to 13% nationally. The sector accounts for nearly 25% of West Midlands Gross Domestic Product compared to 19% nationally.
- The region directly exports over 29% of its manufactured goods, from around 29% of its manufacturing base.
- The West Midlands receives more inward investment from manufacturing than any UK region, accounting for around 21% of all UK manufacturing investment.
- Of the 2,100 or so inward investors located in the region, approximately 55% are manufacturing related and employ around 1 in 4 of the West Midlands manufacturing workforce, compared to 1 in 6 for the UK as a whole.

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### Public Sector



Public service organisations in Birmingham and Solihull employ over 100,000 people, which is approximately 25% of the working population of the sub-region compared to the national figure of 18%. Many of the bodies in this sector face severe recruitment difficulties and skill shortages as well as staff retention problems. Moreover, they are in competition with each other for workers which are often the same type of recruits being sought by other sectors such as Professional and Business Services.

Locally, the Public Service Compact aims to bring together the range of public service organisations operating in Birmingham and Solihull. The Compact has so far signed up 28 major employers, who between them employ over 80,000 people and start from the dual premise that:

- There is an increasingly competitive market for staff, and
- Public service organisations need to change to ensure they are fit for purpose and capable of meeting the service needs and expectations of their users, particularly when serving an increasingly diverse group of communities.

The Compact aims to:

- Support member employers in addressing inequalities in employment
- Build upon existing good practices and enabling practice to be shared, rather than developing new activities that duplicate strategies and plans of individual organisations
- Develop workforce profiles to identify opportunities for local people to gain employment in the Public sector
- Promote diversity across the workforce, including targeting older employees and those recently excluded from the job market.

Members of the Compact include Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau, Birmingham City Council, Jobcentre Plus, Matthew Boulton College, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and West Midlands Fire Service.

The quotations below are from a recent survey of young people conducted by the Compact. The research discovered that whilst young people were reasonably clear about which organisations make up the Public Service sector, their views about working in the sector, including non statutory bodies were largely negative:

- 'Public sector bodies are some of the largest single employers of people in Birmingham and Solihull and we all need to use their services...'
- 'There is a certain stigma attached to being in the uniformed services, I can't understand why anyone would want to, it seems very institutionalised.'
- 'I wanted to be a teacher, but I changed my mind, with the amount of work that they have to put in. The pay does not reflect that, from what I have heard the starting wage for teachers is not much more than a job that you don't have to be qualified for.'
- 'Really broad, you could be a policeman on the streets or a social worker behind a desk. Invisible people really, you don't notice when the streets are clean but you do notice when they are not.'
- 'Public sector is boring and looked down on, and there is not a wide variety of choice in jobs... there is always bad press.'
- 'The feeling of being associated with the government - if the public hate the government then they will hate you too.'

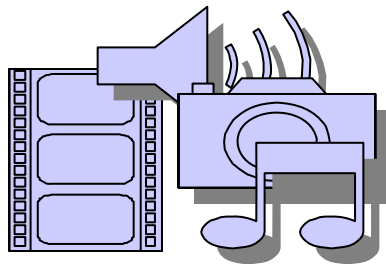
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### Screen, Image and Sound



This industry grouping includes all screen media – television, film, video, interactive games, e-learning, music, radio and photography. Data indicates a workforce of 21,000 (over 60% of whom are assumed to be self-employed) generating a turnover of £1.4bn. The industries are nationally and internationally focussed, with the converging digital marketplace offering opportunities to reach new global audiences.

The West Midlands is home to 2 national broadcasters, 4 of the top 100 TV producers, world renowned popular, classical and ethnic musicians, hubs for the leading players in the UK radio industry, market leaders in the games and animation industries, and internationally acclaimed digital image events.

**Key Points:-**

- Birmingham is the hub for the Region's creative content industries, with the majority of businesses located in the city, supported by nationally recognised media skills provision at University of Central England and the BBC Drama Village at the University of Birmingham.
- There is a growing animation sector in Birmingham.
- 5% of the national workforce in the audio visual industries is based in the West Midlands, the third highest English Region after London/South East and the North West.
- 7.2% of regional workers in the audio visual industries are from ethnic minorities, the highest outside London.
- 1.8% of those working in the sector in this region are registered as disabled, the highest proportion after the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside.
- 79% hold a degree level qualification of those 25% hold a post graduate qualification.
- 25% of the UK's musicians are based in the West Midlands, the highest proportion after London.

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## BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

### **What employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive: skills, characteristics and qualifications (Summary Findings from this Department for Work and Pensions Research Report Number 295 of 2005):**

**Link** <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep295.pdf>

- Employers report that 1/5 of vacancies could not be filled due to a lack of applicants with the necessary skills (Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 2003). Employers may not be placing an emphasis on developing the skills they need 'in-house'.
- Recruitment opportunities for unemployed and inactive groups are likely to improve only where workforce development and advancement exists, to access lower, or less specifically, skilled vacancies (Hogarth and Wilson, 2003).
- The definition and understanding of the term skills can be complex with overlaps between skills, qualifications and characteristics.
- Employers are less demanding of technical skills, considering them trainable, if candidates exhibit employability and soft skills, and positive attributes (Winterbotham *et al.*, 2001).
- Considerable emphasis on soft skills (e.g. interpersonal and communication skills), but assessing how these are measured is problematic. Often measurement is based on employers' perceptions of the candidate's interaction at interview (Hogarth and Wilson, 2003).
- Core characteristics employers look for are motivation and flexibility including willingness to work and learn, appearance, behaviour, confidence, positive gestures and mannerisms (Bunt, 2005). These may, however, be job specific (Taylor, 2005).
- Qualifications do not appear to be important for a large number of employers and jobs, consistently ranking below characteristics and soft skills (Bunt, 2005; Jenkins and Wolf, 2005). They are, however, most often used to inform the screening process.
- Legislative requirements for certification of competence in different occupations and sectors, means that the role of qualifications varies, and has greater importance for some occupations e.g. care and security.
- The unemployed (and some inactive groups) can be disadvantaged by employers' recruitment methods. Where employers use informal methods of advertising, such as word of mouth, those without contacts in the workplace are unlikely to hear about job opportunities (Hogarth and Wilson, 2003). Such strategies also limit the diversity of the workforce (Canny, 2004).
- Age stereotypes persist about older and younger workers (and other inactive groups) and while they benefit some groups, they disadvantage others. Older adults may be perceived as being good with customers but also as 'hard to train'. There is little evidence to support such views (Meadows, 2003).
- Young people are perceived as lacking maturity – but more receptive to learning. Employers may overlook a lack of qualifications if young adults demonstrate positive attributes (Canny, 2004).

- Developing soft and generic skills that are transferable to other occupations is likely to be more important than qualifications in achieving employment.
- However, this is a complex picture, and the extent to which, for instance, CV's are used for screening for qualifications and other attributes is unclear. This is an area that is under-explored in surveys.
- Long duration of worklessness appears to be an important factor with some employers perceiving that such candidates lack any work preparedness – and are more likely to quit at short-notice (Devins and Hogarth, 2005).
- Work Trials (a Jobcentre Plus programme) were emphasised as a way of developing work and employability skills in unemployed and inactive people, and offering employers an opportunity to test whether the person is appropriate for the job.
- Interestingly, this report did not mention (at least in the summary) that employed people are more attractive to recruiters than the unemployed. Even unpaid voluntary work by putting limits on when an individual may make themselves available for interview seems to elevate the status of an applicant in the eyes of their prospective employer.

### **What gets in the way of jobseekers getting to interviews:**

- A lot of the issues outlined above as to what employers require from potential employees are what potentially get in the way of individuals accessing employment, but there are other factors too:
- Lack of confidence leading to individuals ruling themselves out of applying for work, undervaluing their own experience and qualifications, assuming that their age (either too young or too old) is against them, reading requirements into job advertisements that are not there, anticipating discrimination of various types (real or perceived) and so on.
- Practical issues around physical access to locations, affordable childcare, accessible transport, availability of flexible working hours etc. may limit the types of employment that people apply for as well as preferences resulting from lifestyle choices, ethical and religious views, health issues, personal preferences etc. When people do wish to apply for a jobs various factors can impinge:
  - ❖ poor knowledge of where to look
  - ❖ failings in presentation when ringing for a job
  - ❖ completing an application form or compiling a CV.

Applying for a job does require individuals to sell themselves to an employer at all stages of the process.

- It also requires the expenditure of significant time and effort by individuals. Getting a job is a job in itself and it can be very expensive. Those on low incomes may end up spending a significant percentage of their income on jobsearch activities. This can be a limiting factor on their ability to participate in the labour market.

- There is in some areas of recruitment almost an 'arms race' in process whereby recruiters aim to reduce the number of potential applicants (a defensive reaction) and those on the other side of the divide (the offence) aim to increase the number of applicants by finding a way round processes designed to minimise the number of applicants. Employers ideally would like to interview one person per job - the ideal applicant for the post, and most applicants would like to know that they are not in competition with anyone else!
- The problem is coming up with recruitment processes that carry out the necessary functions without putting off the ideal applicant for the post.

## **The Final Hurdle**

Our theoretical jobseeker has secured a job offer and is now deciding what to do with it. Hopefully, he or she will have determined before this stage that they can afford to leave their current job or benefit to take up the position.

- The employed person probably applied for the post knowing it is a better prospect than their current job. They may take the post, stay where they are comfortable or even try to use the offer to extract better terms from their current employer.
- For some, being better off in work may not be an over-riding issue if they have other sources of income to draw on and the position on offer has good prospects for advancement and earnings growth, good fringe benefits like pensions, staff canteen, childcare facilities etc.
- The unemployed person needs to know clearly where they stand financially now and where they will be once they take up the post. We hope that they will be financially better off in work rather than on welfare and clear information about their situation may be obtained from, amongst others, Jobcentre Plus Advisers.
- The real hurdle for someone moving off welfare and into work is moving from one source of income to another with the minimum amount of financial hardship. Starting a job involves financial outlay on clothes, food, travel etc. before one gets paid. In addition, entitlements to support with rent and mortgages may cease. Individuals contemplating the leap from welfare to work need to do so with confidence that whilst they adjust to the requirements of their new life they are not going to get (further) into debt before their first pay cheque arrives. Benefit is paid in arrears and most employers pay monthly in arrears.

## **Easing the transition into work (part 2 – client survey) (Some of the Summary Findings, from this Department for Work and Pensions Research Report Number 186 of 2003):**

**Link** <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rport186/Main.pdf>

Benefit recipients classified as 'proximate to work' demonstrated widespread concern about leaving benefit to take up paid employment. The barriers to work they perceive may constrict their job-search activity and willingness to start a job. Nearly half of all benefit recipients surveyed were worried about leaving benefit. When prompted more deliberately about their worries, all but seven per cent reported some concerns.

Although worry was widespread among the claimants surveyed, certain groups emerged as particularly concerned about leaving benefit. They tended to be:

- ❖ on Income Support
- ❖ with less recent (or no) experience of work
- ❖ renting their accommodation
- ❖ lone parents and
- ❖ occupying the middle age bands.

The most commonly-perceived barriers to work among claimants were financial. There was widespread agreement on the 'top 3' concerns about leaving benefit. They were:

- ❖ not having enough money to live on
- ❖ coping financially until the first pay day and
- ❖ not having enough money to pay the rent or mortgage during the first few weeks of work.

Although the top concerns were largely financial, there was also a great deal of concern about other issues pertaining to benefit. When prompted, between 35 and 40 per cent identified benefit-related issues as worrisome. Probing revealed that they were mostly concerned that reclaim procedures would be lengthy and difficult should their job not work out. Although there was widespread consensus on the most worrisome aspects of leaving benefit, certain subgroups demonstrated particular concern about specific issues:

- ❖ lone parents were especially anxious about childcare
- ❖ JSA claimants were particularly worried about the job not lasting very long
- ❖ renters demonstrated heightened concern about paying the costs of housing during the first few weeks of work and
- ❖ both young claimants and those over the age of 55 were especially worried about the job not lasting very long.

Various financial easements exist through Jobcentre Plus to help get people through the first month (and sometimes longer) of a new job:

- ❖ Job Grant
- ❖ Council Tax Extended Payment
- ❖ Housing Benefit Extended Payment and
- ❖ Mortgage Interest Run-on.

In addition, Jobcentre Plus Advisers provide practical assistance to ensure that those eligible for Tax Credits make speedy and accurate claims thus reducing the time between claiming and receiving support through the tax system. Certain people aged 50 plus and over are also entitled to such financial support purely on the grounds of age.

And in the event of a job not working out:

- ❖ Rapid Reclaim
- ❖ Employment on Trial and
- ❖ Mortgage / Home Loan Interest 52 week linking.

The measures above have been designed in response to the kind of concerns raised in the research. It is crucial, therefore, that jobseekers are encouraged to make use of these easements by being given timely and effective advice about their existence.

***N.B. You will discern from the above that it would be wrong to generalise too much about barriers to employment as they relate specifically to the circumstances and mind sets of individual jobseekers. Measures to help them overcome real or perceived barriers do, therefore, require a degree of one to one support.***

Recipients of this report may contact me for further information.

Regards

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