

Free Whitepaper

# A Complete Guide to eCommerce Replatforming

How to drive growth by making the right  
move at the right time

A Remarkable Commerce Guide



# Introduction

It's a fact of life that most successful digital stores will outgrow their ecommerce platforms eventually. It's a situation that can throttle growth through degrading site performance, weak customer experience and a lack of innovation agility, while eating into margins thanks to rising operating costs.

These are all signs that it is past time to upgrade your ecommerce platform, but the trick is to get on the front foot by managing a smooth, low risk transition to a new platform before your existing environment starts to negatively impact performance.

Quite simply, leaving it too late could leave you in a world of pain – battling to reverse brand damage, falling sales and rising costs at a time when you need to demonstrate early wins from your investment in a new platform.

This guide is designed to help you get it right, and realise commercial gains from replatforming, fast – helping you to choose the right platform at the right time and manage a smooth, low risk transition so your commercials can hit the ground running when you're live on your new platform.

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# Part 1: When to think about replatforming

Retail is currently in the midst of a digital revolution. A combination of changing shopping behaviours, improved online experiences, and rapidly increasing technological capabilities means that those retailers who can react quickly and responsively are better placed for significant business growth.

With the correct ecommerce infrastructure in place, you can transform your entire business from the shop floor to internal processes and external supply chain logistics – to directly increase your revenue and benefit from sustained business growth.

But when is the right time to make the move to a new ecommerce platform? There are a number of tell-tale signs that your platform may be reaching end-of life – here are the top 8 replatforming triggers to think about:

1

## Your website is affected by poor loading times



Online shoppers are notoriously impatient and will shop elsewhere if an online shop doesn't load within seconds. Research has shown that half of all shoppers will abandon a website if it takes more than six seconds to load.

What's more if they can't find the products they want quickly and easily or make their way through the sales funnel to the checkout without any issues, then there is a strong chance that they will abandon their baskets and never return. Even worse, search engines such as Google may penalise your site in its search rankings as page loading speed is a significant part of its algorithms.

So, if despite your best efforts to optimise your website loading speed, performance is being hindered by the underlying platform, it's time to think about replatforming.

2

## Your platform struggles during peak shopping times

Retail is seasonal and making the most of peak trading is crucial to your bottom line. But can your platform cope with large spikes in traffic without affecting the customer experience?

The lost revenue from a website crashing or slowing to a crawl under the weight of seasonal traffic can be enormous, so if you experience any performance dip during peak trading, it is definitely time to look again at your platform requirements.



3

## Your platform doesn't offer all the features that you need

As your online business grows, so do your customers' needs and expectations, and meeting them will mean adding new features and experiences over time. Meanwhile, a higher volume of customers, a larger product catalogue, and a heftier website all require a robust platform that can handle large amounts of data – as well as the ability to satisfy the 70% of online shoppers who now shop via mobile devices.

However, legacy ecommerce platforms, especially monolithic solutions, were not made for mobile shoppers, let alone the lightning-fast web experience consumers have come to expect. So, as you grow you will almost certainly need to innovate and expand the digital experiences you offer to customers – and if your current platform doesn't offer the flexibility and features you need to do that, you will inevitably need to replatform at some stage.



# 4

## Your innovation plans are held back by a lack of agility

eCommerce relies on flexibility - successful retailers need to be able to adapt to market trends. But that can be almost impossible if your platform leaves you reliant on an internal development team or external agency for time sensitive content and layout changes.

In that case, it may be time to empower your team with a more agile platform that doesn't require developer or technical skills to deliver your vision.



# 5

## Important business systems are not speaking to each other

It is absolutely crucial that your ecommerce platform can fully integrate with ERP, PIM, CRM, order management systems and more, or you'll end up with siloed data and disconnected teams.

This has become more important in recent years as mobile has established itself as the dominant channel for digital shopping, because without synchronised systems that work seamless across every channel, you'll end up with an inefficient mess of disconnected systems and data. The end result is a hit to your bottom line, through higher admin costs and a sub-standard customer experience.

So, if you have a range of storefronts - from web store to apps and marketplaces - you may want to consider moving to a headless ecommerce platform designed to ensure that product, stock, customer, content and promotion information remain synchronised.

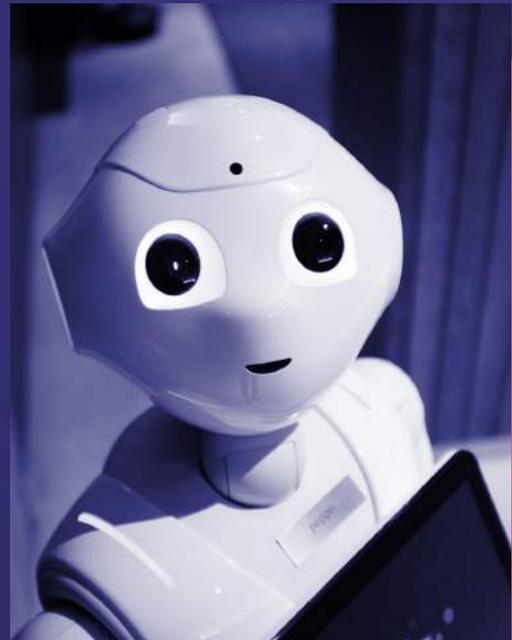


6

## You're battling time and resource intensive manual processes

More and more, retailers are using automation to drive efficiency and underpin a slick customer experience – for instance automated data feeds and reporting to ensure your warehouse and your drop ship vendors remain in check.

Unfortunately, some off-the-shelf ecommerce platforms do not support automated functionality for simple processes (like changing product availability based on custom data fields) and require time-consuming manual adjustment instead. If you're looking to the future and your platform doesn't support custom automation, it may be time for a change.



7

## You are starting to build up significant technical debt



If your current online store hasn't received a significant overhaul in the past five years, you're using an outdated platform or one that has come to its end of life, you're almost certainly building up technical debt.

That means you will see ever more of your budgets swallowed by short-term 'quick fixes' at the expense of strategic development - but firefighting issues will do nothing to elevate the customer experience and drive sales. This is an issue to keep a close eye on as those costs continue to rise without any meaningful return on investment – sooner or later, the business case for replatforming will be impossible to ignore.

# 8

## Your platform doesn't align with your long-term business goals

With all these issues, it's important to remember that your platform doesn't just need to support your ecommerce operation today, but over the months and years to come as your business grows and your strategy evolves.

Quite simply, your platform should help you to look to the future, creating opportunity and competitive advantage rather than leaving you lagging behind because of a lack of agility, features, support and scalability. So, when assessing whether you need to replatform don't just think about today, think about tomorrow too.



## Don't go it alone: Lean on your team

All the same, to replatform or not is a big decision and one that you simply cannot make in isolation. Remember that your teams work with your current platform on a day-to-day basis, so their experience and their plans for the future can be incredibly valuable – understand their frustrations and their ambitions by asking the right questions as part of your platform evaluation.

Your questions, ideally asked in a collaborative, workshop setting, might include:

- Do traffic spikes affect uptime or speed of service?
- Has our platform's security failed at critical moments?
- How often do you hear or say the words, "We can't do that"?
- Are DIY patches and workarounds common?
- Do your teams spend their time and energy maintaining or innovating?
- Do you have the freedom to launch new products, projects, and experiment with new experiences at pace?
- Are new features and apps regularly delayed due to in-house or agency constraints?
- Is your help desk, social media, or email dominated by functionality questions and complaints?

# Part 2: A complete guide to the replatforming process

There is no escaping the fact that a replatforming project can be complex and time-consuming, particularly for smaller retailers without significant technical resource on hand.

In fact, for many mid-size retailers, it is the fear of project over-runs and unexpected costs and disruption to normal operations that see replatforming decisions delayed until an existing platform has already started to significantly impact on the bottom line. Ironically enough, it is exactly this kind of distressed purchase that often leads to errors and oversights in replatforming planning and delivery.

That is why identifying the need to replatform early is so important. It not only reduces commercial losses from relying too long on an ill-fitting platform, but also affords time to prepare a detailed replatforming plan and gain the buy-in you need to manage a smooth, low-risk transition.

The best way to do that, is to think about your replatforming process as moving through four distinct phases:

- **Phase 1:** Planning, preparation and buy-in
- **Phase 2:** Vendor selection, briefing and resourcing
- **Phase 3:** Development, testing and SEO
- **Phase 3:** Launch and optimisation

Each has a vital role to play in the overall success of your replatforming journey, so let's look at them in turn.



# Phase 1: Planning, preparation and buy-in

Arguably the most important phase, your planning, preparation and securing buy-in from key stakeholders in the business will set the tone for your entire replatforming journey – the more detailed your planning, the fewer issues you are likely to run into later.

Naturally, every business has its own needs and priorities, so no two replatforming projects are the same, but there are a number of key steps that all should make part of the planning process. You should:



## Involve key stakeholders early

The larger your ecommerce team, the more important it is to have the right people on board from the beginning – from technical staff to merchandising and marketing teams, all will have their own perspectives, priorities and risks you need to account for.

So, get every stakeholder on your team involved from the beginning of the process, so they understand what is happening and why, and give them all the opportunity to raise questions and concerns. You may not be able to answer them all straight away, but they will also inform your choice of vendor when the time comes.



## Document any customisations and integrations you will need from the outset

When the time comes to choose a vendor, you will need to know that its platform is able to replicate your existing environment from the beginning, so develop a list and system diagram detailing all your current integrations and customisations.

But this is not just about ensuring your new platform will play nicely with your existing ERP systems for instance. It is also crucially important to ensure that any customisations you have in place – for instance to ensure your platform/ERP integration supports your existing workflows – can be replicated in any new platform you choose.

This information will also help to focus discussions with any third-party systems integrators you choose to help deliver your replatforming – ensuring it knows exactly what custom requirements you have and can cost these into project budgets up front.

Equally, this work may also help you to spot possible efficiencies and improvements to carry out as part of your replatforming – for instance by replacing outdated or inefficient software and solutions with more appropriate or cost-effective alternatives.



## Think carefully about data

Data – from product and order data to customer data and management information – is the beating heart of any ecommerce operation, so thinking carefully about the data you need to migrate to a new platform is a vital step.

But remember this is not just about the data you need to migrate; it is about data format too. That is, some platforms are quite restrictive in the data formats they are able to digest and work with – for instance headers in CSV files must exactly match those in the platform database. Meanwhile, the data held by your legacy platform may only be exportable in a different format and, if this is the case, a data transformation process will be necessary – at extra cost.

That all means it is important to document not just the data types and volumes you want to migrate, but formats too. Again, this detail will help to inform your choice of platform – for instance, some are able to digest data in any format – or ensure your discussions with a migration partner reflect any complications around data migration.

## Phase 2: Vendor selection, briefing and resourcing

Your work to prepare, plan and document your replatforming priorities will be a vital resource when it comes to choosing a new platform vendor. But remember, this is not just about the status quo, you also need a platform that can easily and cost-effectively support your future needs.

Again, it is important to involve key stakeholders at this stage, to understand and document business requirements across a range of areas:

- Run face-to-face meetings to understand stakeholders' needs today and their visions for the future - thinking about topics such as back office integration, payment gateways, product data and catalogue management, pricing and promotions and merchandising.
- Document all requirements and ask stakeholders to review and approve.
- Review all these requirements from a technical and business point of view and prioritise according to those that must be available on day one, and those that can delivered as part of ongoing development.
- Work with stakeholders to agree a final set of requirements.

This set of priorities, as well as your business strategy, will provide you with a measure against which to assess vendors and their platform capabilities, so you can make a decision informed by hard facts, not gut feel. That said, even with a decision made, it's not quite time to sign a contract yet.



### Make a plan before you sign

Before making a commitment, the final step is to work with your chosen vendor to develop a realistic timeline to get your site live, mapping out key checkpoints along the way. It is crucial to do this before you sign a contract, because you first need to know that your vendor can support your preferred timeline and clearly understands your requirements up front.

Equally, if you plan to work with a third party to help with the migration, involving them in this process will help you to avoid any nasty surprises – delays and hidden costs – after the contract is signed.



### Involve your team

If your new platform vendor has a team of launch engineers, set up an introductory call to discuss how they can help you throughout the entire replatforming process – making sure your own key stakeholders and technical staff are on that call to ensure a smooth end-to-end experience.

Everyone needs to understand and buy into your replatforming timeline as well as roles, responsibilities and replatforming KPIs - so communicate clearly, seek feedback and iron out any potential issues before you get started.

## Phase 3: Development, testing and SEO



This is where the real action is, and is where the technical team – your own, your platform vendors'; and your migration partners' - take over. That doesn't mean you can disengage and let them get on with it, however. You need to stay involved and close to the project throughout.

Keeping the whole thing on track and on time means first understanding the process, which may include:

- Development sprints, or mini phases during which functionality is constantly developed and released.
- Strict control processes during which every release is reviewed in detail to ensure any functional issues are flagged and fixed.
- UAT (User Acceptance Testing) during which business stakeholders (or a sample of customers) test and review each piece of functionality to check for usability and bugs.

Any delay to any of the releases in this process can have a domino effect on those that follow, so stay engaged, check that business functionality is being delivered according to your specifications and milestones, and document any changes that might impact a specific area of the business.



The development phase can get complicated, so making a checklist of deliverables and constantly reviewing progress against it is a good way to simplify your role in overseeing the work.

**Here is a checklist to help navigate your testing:**

- Data migration: Is all your product, customer & order data imported correctly?
- Data organisation: Are all of your collections set up?
- Navigation: Do all of your menu items exist and connect properly?
- Pages: Are your content pages all created?
- Design: Are there any out of place fonts/elements/boxes?
- Responsive Design: Does everything work on all device types?
- Apps: Are they all connected and tested?
- Other integrations: Are ERP, POS and other integrations working as expected?
- Shipping: Are your shipping rules set up? How are labels being printed?



## Don't Forget About SEO!

Over the years, it is likely you have invested heavily in SEO in order to build search visibility and traffic, so make sure this work is not undone during your replatforming.

Ideally, you should involve SEO experts in your replatforming, or migrate to a platform that can ingest content as well as data, but some tips to bear in mind include:

- Keep technical SEO changes to a minimum during migration – this will make it easier to identify the cause of any SEO issue after the replatform is done.
- Invest time on any redirects you need to implement during replatforming. Avoid redirecting multiple product URLs to one collection of products and instead, take the time to map each product to the same new product URL.
- Content has the biggest impact on SEO so, if you have multiple shops or multiple domains, so have your team, partner or launch expert work on transitioning your content and ensure any changes are well planned.
- Benchmark and monitor – for instance check for 404 errors daily for the first few weeks after migration and deal with them immediately.



## Phase 4: Launch and optimisation

At this stage – leaving aside the technical team focus on the switch-over – quality assurance is the main business priority. Be sure to check key functionality prior to launch, focusing as a minimum on:

1. Checkout: Make sure it is working correctly, testing both the demo gateway and a live order.
2. Notifications: Check that your email notifications are set up correctly and things like newsletter sign up are working properly.
3. Marketing and reporting: Review your dashboards to ensure they are pulling in the right data from the right sources.

Think about launch timing too. If you want to launch outside of office hours, check that your new platform vendor offers 24/7 support, but also ensure that all system logins are available to all team members so any issues can be dealt with quickly, regardless of who is available at the time.



# Replatforming de-risked, the Remarkable Commerce way

Replatforming can be costly, time-consuming work—and there is always the fear that, if your boss, board of directors, or executive team isn't happy with the outcome, your job could be on the line.

That is why, at Remarkable Commerce, we have invested in developing a market-leading replatforming service for retailers choosing our platform – with a particular focus on reducing the risk associated with the move and ensuring you can reap the full benefits from day one.

Some of the capabilities and features that set us apart include:

1. Deep technical expertise at your fingertips: Our migration team includes project managers, system architects, developers, UX specialists, marketing and SEO experts and members of our ecommerce strategy team. This means there is no need to work with a third party systems integrator, which removes a layer of complication from the process but also means you can rely on the same people who built and maintain our platform to draw on their unrivalled knowledge of our environment to carry out your replatforming.
2. You won't be a small fish in a big pond: Our strategy has never been to be the biggest, just the best. That means your replatforming will not be one of many being delivered side by side - you will have our team's undivided attention throughout.
3. Rapid time to web: That focus, coupled with deep platform knowledge means our replatforming team typically completes migration projects within six months, rather than the 12-18 months that is typical elsewhere. What's more, we deliver on time. Our last ten replatforming projects have been delivered on time and on budget.
4. Flexible data and content migration; The Remarkable Commerce Platform can digest data in any format, which simplifies data migration. It can ingest content too, even custom pages, which removes the need to recreate them from scratch during migration.

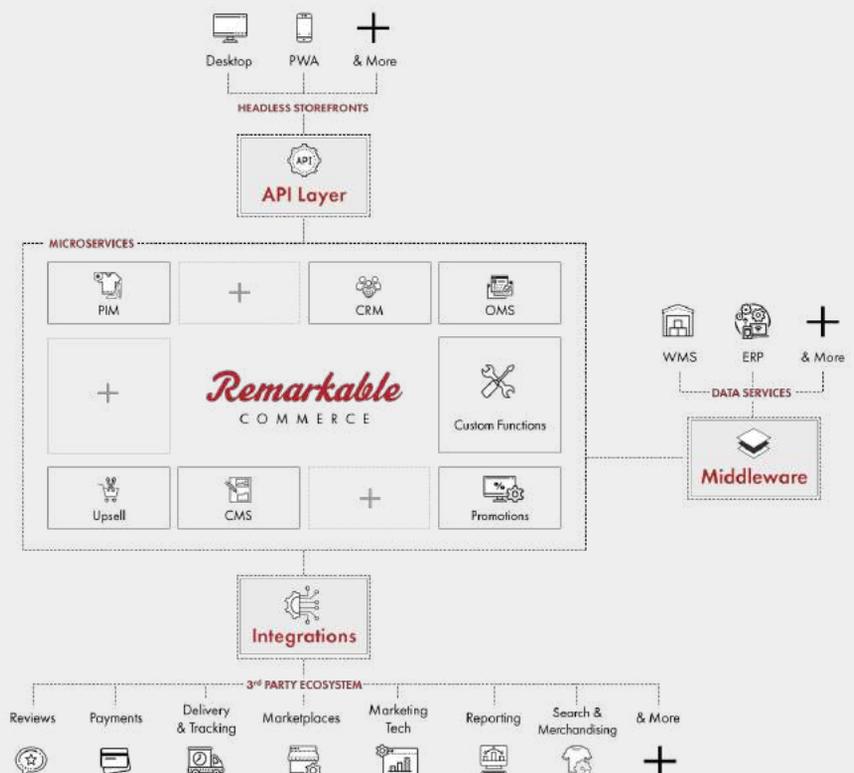
5. SEO and URL configuration: Unlike other platforms we don't impose an inflexible URL structure, so there is no need to map URLs during migration. Instead, we can customise your platform instance to match any existing URL structure and format - and even suggest improvements along the way.
6. Front-end accelerator built in: Unlike other headless commerce platform providers, our platform includes a front-end accelerator – so you won't have to recreate your entire storefront after migration, you won't lose your previous UX investments and can launch with a recognisable brand experience from day one.
7. Instant uplift: Retailers migrating to the Remarkable Commerce Platform don't watch in horror as their commercials go into reverse post-migration. In fact, they typically enjoy an immediate sales uplift and see online turnover triple within two years.

## Headless+ Architecture

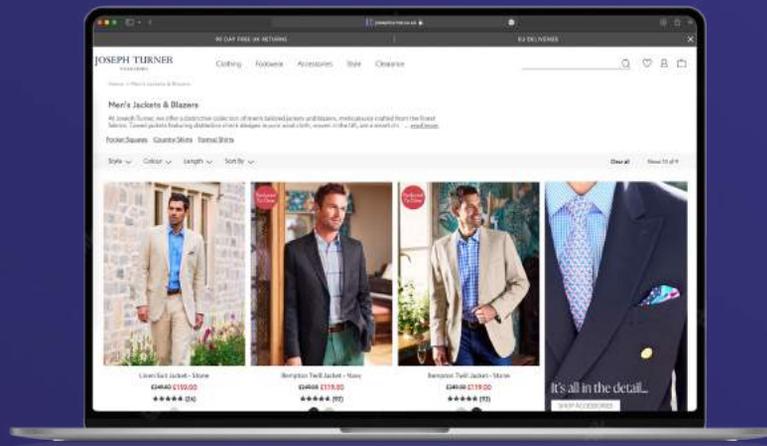
# Launch new retail storefronts within days

Headless architecture and simple, API integrations give you the flexibility to engage customers across every retail touchpoint - web, mobile, apps, marketplaces, in-store - and deliver seamless omnichannel experiences.

A pre-integrated front end accelerator slashes time to web for new digital storefronts, so you can focus on UX, brand strategy and optimisation.



# In action: Joseph Turner



"We chose the Remarkable Commerce platform because it had the flexibility to meet our more complex requirements, while at the same time being a very easy to use platform."

**Catherine Giles, Managing Director, Joseph Turner**

Joseph Turner was formed in Yorkshire over 20 years ago, from a desire to create a menswear shop that could be trusted to provide premium quality clothing in easy, wearable styles. Its collections and designs are influenced by a strong connection to the Yorkshire landscape and lifestyle.

In 2022, the business completed a rapid migration to the Remarkable Commerce Platform and realised the commercial benefits immediately. In fact, after just a few months, it is already enjoying a 20% year on year conversion uplift and **42% rise in revenue from organic search traffic**.

For more information watch Catherine Giles, Managing Director at Joseph Turner and Matt Henton, Head of eCommerce at Moss Bros talk about the benefits of a move to Remarkable Commerce:



# In action: Roman



"The expertise, communication and patience has been amazing from project conception to launch and beyond. We're confident we've chosen the right platform and people to help us continue our growth online. Remarkable have helped us become a stronger retailer, with excellent support, agile developments and their unique approach."

**Ian Johnson, Head of eCommerce, Roman**

Having sold online for some time, Roman Originals had outgrown its eCommerce site. Built on old tech, it hampered efforts to innovate and optimise conversion, offered no support for mobile commerce and had become increasingly unstable - as a newsworthy event had made all too clear.

Roman Originals chose the Remarkable Commerce platform as the ideal foundation for reimagined digital channels - a rapid migration coupled with headless architecture and lightning fast, stable performance made it the ideal choice.

- Immediate 30% conversion rate improvement
- 81% mobile conversion rate uplift
- Consistent revenue growth
- Warehouse management integration drives efficiency and underpins the best delivery proposition on the market
- Organic (SEO) traffic grew by 1 mill visitors within 12 months

# Platform comparison

Before we go any further, it is very important to recognise that your ecommerce platform may be the single most important limiting factor when it comes to optimising the checkout experience.

If your platform forces you to rely on a templated, inflexible checkout, or requires expensive, time-consuming developer expertise to customise your checkout, some of the strategies here may be out of reach.

While platforms are waking up to the impact rigid and complex checkout flows can have on conversion, problems remain – few offer the endless flexibility required to deal effectively with basket abandonment rates. We can easily demonstrate that with a side-by-side review of the native checkout functions that retailers often compare.

	 shopify plus	 BIGCOMMERCE	 Magento Commerce	 Remarkable COMMERCE
Add new payment types within days	✗	✗	✗	✓
Custom journey (headless, SDK or custom flow)	✗	✓	✗	✓
Innovate with new functionality within days	✗	✗	✗	✓
Custom Click & collect functionality	✗	✗	✓	✓
Shared basket across multiple sites	✗	✗	✗	✓
Custom checkout fields	✗	✓	✓	✓
Auto-add items based on basket contents	✗	✗	✓	✓
Transaction fee or GMV (either % of sales, or tiered license)	1-2% of revenue	1-2% of revenue	2-3% of revenue	Fixed Fee, based on traffic, not revenue

# Introducing Remarkable Commerce

Remarkable Commerce is an ecommerce platform and services provider offering a headless commerce platform designed for mid-sized retailers. The Remarkable Commerce Platform is endlessly customisable and highly scalable, perfect for retailers seeking to rapidly transform ecommerce performance.

Our mission is to give more retailers access to the benefits of headless, API-driven commerce by removing skills, technology and cost barriers to adoption. Unlike other headless platform providers, we combine our platform with a pre-integrated, endlessly customisable frontend accelerator, an intuitive, drag-and-drop CMS with 30+ pre-build components, and a wealth of in-house technical, developer, engineering, UX, and SEO skills to support a managed migration and ongoing innovation.

As a result, replatforming projects can be delivered within three months, and retailers realise rapid ROI – typically seeing online turnover triple within two years.

Established in 1999 and with a track record in the fashion sector, our team of 70+ Nottingham-based specialists support retail clients including Ben Sherman, Moss Bros, Yours Clothing, Jeff Banks, Roman, Pure Collection and WoolOvers.



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