



*"The Rival is a great guidebook for the new generation of businessmen and women that want to lead the revenues of our newest companies being built."*

— Jamie Dos Santos, CEO of Cybraics  
and Appointee to the President's  
Intelligence Advisory Board

# RI THE AL

Play the Game,  
Own the Hustle,  
Power in Competition,  
Longevity in Collaboration

Benjamin Von Seeger

# Praise for *The Rival*

“Whether you’re looking to improve a management style or inspire others, *The Rival* is an invaluable tool. No one can doubt the power of individuals to make a difference after reading *The Rival*. Whether you’re in the catbird seat or you’d like to be, you’ll benefit from reading *The Rival*’s seminal lessons about establishing successful global business relationships.”

—Rick Kearns, Deutsche Telekom North America

“*The Rival* points the way to business success based on basic principles, including the ability to process information and establish behavioral change based on emotional intelligence. Readers will realize the importance of business strategy, group work, and having clear and pre-established goals. By following the guidelines in *The Rival*, you’ll be able to turn a small idea into a powerful and competitive company.”

—Edgar Pena, LMH, CAP

“Benjamin uses his experience to explain the key requirements to maximizing sales and creating a successful business. *The Rival*’s backdrop is Benjamin’s success in the telecom industry, but its lessons can be applied to any business area. Benjamin’s messages are artfully distilled and conveyed through real stories in a humorous, powerful, and engaging manner. Any sales professional or entrepreneur will find *The Rival* invaluable.”

—Alan Geeves, partner, head of investment funds, N+1 Singer

“The same gift that first brought Benjamin to the attention of industry leaders is now the gift he shares with readers across the globe—insights about what makes great businesses, including branding, integrity, culture, clear vision, and philosophy. Readers of *The Rival* will leave with a clearer sense of purpose, drive, and renewed confidence in their business.”

—Ilissa Miller, CEO, iMiller Public Relations,  
president, Northeast DAS + Small Cell Association

“Benjamin Von Seeger functions better than you do. That’s just the way it is. You can lament the unfairness of this reality, or you can read *The Rival* and take advantage of his hard-won experience in building success at every level.”

—John Kador, author of *The Manager’s Book of Questions*

“*The Rival* is a guide for success. This practical book is rich with insight that will benefit both entrepreneurs and experienced businesspeople alike.”

—Norma I. Salcido, director of marketing  
and communications, Guidance

“*The Rival*—a demystifying account of how, when, and why to conduct business in a competitive global setting. Benjamin Von Seeger introduces readers to his unique business strategies and tactics, which resulted in outstanding achievements and surpassed business stigmas and cultural boundaries. *The Rival* makes executives think outside the box in order to drive successful business realities.”

—Gerardo Chaljub, PhD candidate, VP of human resources,  
main lecturer, and global consultant

“*The Rival* is must-read for students trying to bridge the gap between academics and practically. It follows the experiences of Benjamin Von Seeger, using modern-day theories to navigate the current trends in businesses and identify what works and what does not. *The Rival* provides key insights into building relationships, pursuing your passions, and achieving business success.”

—Dr. Wayne M. Morgan, business professor

“I had the pleasure of working with Ben for many years. With *The Rival*, he has captured and shared the drive and passion for professional excellence that I witnessed every day. Balancing an international perspective with deep market knowledge, Ben brings a unique perspective to business. He has always understood that the foundation of long-term success is building lasting relationships.”

—Jon A. DeLuca, former CEO of FiberNet Telecom Group, Inc.

"*The Rival* is the X factor revealed. Anyone wanting to solve the mystery of long-term success in sales and the art of deal closing should read and apply the techniques outlined in *The Rival*. While its instruction is practical, universal, and seemingly easy to execute, it is illusive to many who get locked into dead-end details. It's a textbook for what isn't textbook: integrity, talent, tenure, tenacity, and success."

—Betty Smith, CenturyLink

"Reading *The Rival* brought a smile to my face because it reminded me of the experiences Ben and I had together. *The Rival* is a great guidebook for the new generation of businessmen and women who want to lead the revenues of our newest companies being built. Succeeding in business is not just hard work; you have to have the right foundation. Each experience that Ben recites in *The Rival* is derived from his own successful foundation.

Having the right ethical behavior, as Ben highlights in *The Rival* time and time again, is what will allow you to last in the industry for as long as he has. The professionals that work alongside us in the industry and don't follow the gentlemen's code or have winning attitudes are never the leaders! My hope is that the individuals reading *The Rival*, listening to Ben's lectures, and those lucky enough to have been mentored by him follow a path to success that is paved with integrity and loyalty."

—Jamie Dos Santos, CEO of Cybraics and appointee to the President's Intelligence Advisory Board

"Benjamin Von Seeger portrays a rare hybrid of business development, sales, and execution skills in *The Rival*. *The Rival* is a great read for any entrepreneur who faces the challenges of hiring, retaining, or dismissing sales executives. Von Seeger goes beyond the initial contract signing to elaborate on what it really takes to understand complex buyers and generate revenue. Instead of introducing yet another sales gimmick, he focuses on core skills needed to drive sales and overcome the only real rival—yourself."

—Lionel Carrasco, founder and CEO, Leapfactor

"The past fifteen years helped me to learn and share Ben's core beliefs. *The Rival*, a book well worth reading, is the compilation of facts and effects of emotional intelligence that, combined, create the approach to successfully standing out in the competitive business environment."

—Marcela Henao, founder and CMO, Leapfactor

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**Benjamin Von Seeger**

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## **PLAY THE GAME, OWN THE HUSTLE, POWER IN COMPETITION, LONGEVITY IN COLLABORATION**

To learn more or contact go to: [www.benjaminvonseeger.com](http://www.benjaminvonseeger.com)

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For my beloved father, Professor Dr. Gerhard Seeger, who taught me  
the most valuable lessons in life about relationships, languages, history,  
and respect for one another. Thank you, Father. I have become the man  
I am today because of you.





# CONTENTS

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Preface .....	xi
Acknowledgments .....	xvii
Chapter 1 The Key to Success .....	1
Chapter 2 Creating a Global Corporate Environment .....	6
Chapter 3 Developing a Brand .....	11
Chapter 4 Know and Love Your Business .....	19
Chapter 5 A Brief Reflection on Strategy .....	28
Chapter 6 Corporate Culture: On Trust, Team Building, and Integrity .....	31
Chapter 7 Business Is Personal .....	47
Chapter 8 The Importance of Relationships .....	51
Chapter 9 Relational Intelligence .....	56
Chapter 10 Book Smarts vs. Street Smarts .....	60
Chapter 11 Know Your PC .....	74
Chapter 12 The Self-Discipline of Sales Calls .....	88
Chapter 13 Developing an Advisory Board .....	100
Chapter 14 Studying the Competition .....	107
Chapter 15 Parting Wisdom .....	113
About the Author .....	115



# PREFACE

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Most businesspeople write books on their deathbeds to justify the way they've lived their lives. I understand this sentiment. At the end of a long and successful career, there is a desire to make sense of it. Looking back at all I've done, I find that it is not enough for me to just record it; I want to pass it on as a business tool for others. While this book is in part a recalling of a well-executed career, it is also a tool for those seeking to learn and follow in my footsteps. It's not just about being a good salesperson—it's about establishing and retaining a successful business.

People often ask me how I close deals. Suspecting my answer will sound too simplistic, I usually shrug off the question. It's not about being coy. There is wisdom in simplicity, so I will tell you it's all about relationships. Honestly, it's as simple as that.

What makes me an authority on global business, someone whose analysis and opinions are worthy of your attention? A track record of success.

Serving as a vice president at Terremark Worldwide Inc., NAP of the Americas, I secured multimillion-dollar contracts from national and international telecommunication carriers, content providers, and major corporations based in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the United States. Terremark was a colocation and cloud-hosting provider that was sold to Verizon for \$1.4 billion in 2011. Verizon paid \$19 in cash for each Terremark share, about a 35 percent premium on the stock's closing price of \$14.05 a share. A driver of innovation, I was also the director of global markets at CENX, the world's first carrier Ethernet exchange.

Results matter. In the end, they're all that matters.

While I'm an experienced business educator—I was visiting lecturer at DeVry University and its Keller Graduate School of Management, and I hold a degree in business administration and international relations from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich—I'm also a lifelong student of business. I speak six languages, and at the moment, I'm committed to learning Portuguese. You have to commit to continuously growing and learning about your industry, because markets are always changing and evolving, very often overnight. That might mean learning about a new technology or studying a new language. If you don't make a commitment to your own success, you won't succeed.

### **About the Title: Departures and "A Rival"**

In late October 2001, I was flying to London. It was a mere six weeks after the September 11 tragedy that shook the hearts of Americans and people all over the world. At that time, nobody was flying unless they absolutely had to. Security at airports was changing, and the air-travel business had a lot to lose from that senseless act of violence. I was sitting on a Boeing 777, which normally seats approximately 280 people. There were 43 of us on board, and that's including the crew. It didn't matter if I flew business class or coach; I could have run laps in the aisles with all the space on the plane.

People were being cautious about flying, and I couldn't blame them—but I was so used to traveling that jumping on a plane to tend to my usual meetings in London seemed like a no-brainer when I bought the ticket. Yet as I surveyed the empty aircraft, the wheels in my brain began to turn. An eerie fog of doubt crept over me. Should I consider modifying the way I did business? Could I change my method of pursuing contracts the way so many others obviously had?

The question hovered in the periphery of my mind. I was exhausted and jet-lagged by the time the plane landed. As I floated down the airport escalator, bags in hand, I could think of nothing else but checking into my hotel and checking one more box on my list of things to do. Above me hung a sign with the words "Departures" on one side and "A-rival" on the other. I did a double take, noting that "Arrivals" was spelled wrong. It took a moment for me to realize that it wasn't

a sign but a billboard—or rather, a mock sign, posing as one of the directional signs I was so used to seeing all over the airport. Below the words “Departure” and “A-rival” was a witty tagline completing the advertisement: “If you’re not going to see your customers, a-rival will.” I chuckled to myself. Of course, if you didn’t see your customers, a rival would swoop in and take what you left on the table.

Since that day in the London airport, the airways have once again repopulated with air traffic, and the world has grown in technologies that make meetings easier to arrange via teleconference. Just recently, someone asked me why I still fly. After all, we live in an age with Skype, FaceTime, and countless other ways to meet with someone without actually leaving your desk. The virtual meeting reigns supreme, or seemingly so. Here’s why I default to face time instead of FaceTime.

On that trip to London, after I’d gathered my things and finally settled into my hotel, I ordered room service and began preparing my documents for the following day, leaving the TV on in the background. I heard a commercial for British Airways come on and casually turned my head to tune in. A salesman on screen was talking to a businessman via videoconference call. They were obviously in two different countries. The salesman spoke to his prospect, setting dates in the future when they would conference-call again, saying something like, “I’ll look forward to speaking with you next week, and the week after, and the one after that as well.”

They hung up, and the picture focused in on the prospect. The shot panned outward to show the prospect’s office, then his desk, and finally a person sitting in front of his desk—another salesman. The prospect leaned over and signed a contract sitting in front of him, obviously issued by the salesman. The commercial ended there, fading to black with the British Airways logo hovering onscreen. A voice then repeated the tagline I’d read at the airport: “If you’re not going to fly to see your customers, a-rival will.”

I would love to meet someone else who remembers those ads as resolutely as I do, because they had such a profound impact on my life. So much so, in fact, that they have served as the inspiration for the logo design of my company, BVS Consulting Group, and the title of



this book. The acronym stands for Benjamin Von Seeger; however, the check mark representing the letter *V* stands for much more than a part of my name. It represents the ability to get things done quickly and effectively to the best of my ability, with the notions that competition is ever present and there is always room to improve.

There I was, flying alone and even questioning why I was taking the time and energy out of my life to get in the same room as my customer, and here an airline was validating my experience. I do agree that virtual meetings have their place in the business world. In my book, however, they're only useful after you've made initial contact. Working on a deal can be tough enough—why cause relationship problems by allowing yourself to miss out on the additional benefits of human contact? Once you have secured the relationship and the deal, you can rely on videoconference calls and so on in lieu of constant travel. If you are an executive, get on a plane and establish a relationship. This is the work of making yourself real in the lives of your clients. Getting up and seeing people allows you to get to know the whole team, not just the champion.

### **A Message to Entrepreneurs**

Why should young entrepreneurs eager to see their businesses rise to the top read this book? After all, there is a lot of information out there—especially on the Internet—about marketing, strategic business, branding, and how to build a successful company. I know because I've checked out the competition. Other authors profess to know the right way to lead a team, acquire accounts, and bring a business to the forefront of its industry. I'm not saying they're wrong. A lot of the information on the Internet is helpful.

The difference between those other authors and me, however, is simplicity. I am not interested in theory and hearsay; I am interested in fact and action. I meet young entrepreneurs every day, and what I've discovered is that there are two kinds: the kind who wear the title *entrepreneur* like a vanity necklace and the kind who see the life of an entrepreneur for what it really is—a hustle.

All negative connotations aside, being an entrepreneur means being a hustler. The truth is that many will get caught up in the ideology of the word *entrepreneur* and forget that the word really means “to take considerable initiative and risk; to lead others and participate in productive labor and business undertakings.” A hustler is also an enterprising person who is determined to succeed. This person is a go-getter and pursues business with cunning and a limitless desire for success.

Don’t get lost in the glory of the entrepreneur title. To commit to the hustle is to align yourself as the kind of businessperson who goes the distance. Everyone in the business world wants to be an entrepreneur, but how many are willing to sit in an airport for twenty-eight hours waiting for the perfect chance to speak to the person who will make their next big deal? The long hours, the tight schedules, the snap-judgment decisions—this is what builds a business. This is a hustle. If you are reading this book, it is to reinforce what you already know: the importance of working hard and taking major risks. The hustle, I learned at twenty-one, begins with sharp dress accompanied by a willingness and a strong commitment to serve confidently.





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

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# The Key to Success

My first big break in business happened when I was twenty-one and matriculating out of school and into the workforce. Young, bright, and energetic, I worked as a service associate fetching cars for top businessmen. I'll never forget a man and CEO by the name of Frank Demmer who gave me my first big break. Frank continues to work in the industry today.

I managed a fleet of over five hundred cars for a communications company in Germany. The CEO always asked to have a specific Mercedes lined up for him when he went on business calls. I will never forget that car. It was a black Mercedes S500 with a navigation system. You're laughing because a navigation system is easy to come by these days, but it wasn't so common in 1994. Back then, a navigation system was like having the latest tablet today. I was the man he could count on to always provide him with that car and that utility. My ability to acquire those items on a consistent basis showed my initiative and willingness to follow through on projects assigned to me.

One day, as I handed the keys over to Frank, he started a conversation with me. He said, "Would you like to come work for me?"

His request seemed to come out of left field. Frank ran a technology company, and I was just a kid who was barely done with school. Couldn't he see that? Didn't he know I was just the man who ran the fleet for his company?

My problem was that I immediately proceeded to set up barriers and think of what I couldn't do. I put myself in the driver's seat of the situation and told myself I needed to shut this down, for both our sakes. I outright confessed that I knew nothing about technology. This was very true. At the time, I didn't even know how to use a cell phone. In those days, cell phones were new on the market, and it was a luxury to own one.

Frank is an incredible guy. He taught me a pivotal lesson that day that was later reinforced by months of training and years of working under him. I will never forget his response. He said, "It's not about the cell phone, it's not about technology, and it's not about how much you know or don't know. It's about relationships."

At that moment, he gained my attention. I was hired and thrown into a six-month boot camp for sales representatives with a hundred other people who were just like me. The caveat to being part of the class was the knowledge that it wasn't easy; we would either sink or swim. However, after I saw the first paycheck I earned and the prestige of being part of Frank's company and management team, there wasn't an ounce of failure left in me. I was determined to succeed no matter what. Clearly, not everyone shared my will and determination. When we graduated, there were only about twenty of us left. Among those twenty, I was at the top of the class.

When you are in a room that used to be packed and realize that you are one of the few still standing, it makes you think twice and hard. Many times I thought about the ones who weren't moving on with us. We were all given the same tasks to complete and tools to use. I was astounded at how many weren't able to keep up with the class assignments and ultimate requirements. Why was I still standing? Why had Frank chosen me and not the others employed within the car-service division?

Ultimately, it came down to consistency—with the cars as well as with the class assignments. In both situations, we were all given the same tools, yet I succeeded in providing the most consistent and efficient results. We were all taught the same things in class: how to talk to a customer, how to deliver boilerplate, how to make an offer, and how to close a deal. Learning the material mattered a lot. However, I was

always at the top of my business because of how I applied the material and techniques thereafter.

There it was. I had to give Frank the credit because of what he had said to me. His wisdom ended up being so true and profound. It was about discernment. It was about being relatable. These were the elements of establishing relationships. All of the individual parts were coming together for me now. All I really needed was to commit to learning the technicalities of the business. Unlike the moment when Frank asked me to join his business, I now felt confident in my abilities. I was ready to get to work. After that, I worked for Frank for over six years, and my success only grew thereafter.

As proven by the failure rate of that boot camp, not everyone is driven and will succeed in the business world. It's just not possible because it is so competitive, and rightfully so. More importantly, schooling can teach you the book smarts of business and work experience will teach you street smarts, but your ability to assess a room, to speak to everyone as if you are addressing each person individually, is what gives you that competitive edge and confidence to close deals.

I saw this theory prove itself when I moved to the United States. I intended to sell my ideas to a female executive who was very high up in a technology company. I was so bold that I didn't even make an appointment to see her when I arrived in the country. I just walked into her office.

I had a reputation for putting a lot of effort into my overall appearance, and this day was no different. When I arrived, I looked smart and dressed for success. I approached the assistant's workstation with purpose and told her I had a meeting with her boss, Jamie. There wasn't a question about whether I belonged in the office or not. I'd already convinced myself of that. So, it is true that you mold and teach people how to treat you. Without hesitation, the assistant granted me permission to enter Jamie's office.

At that time, Jamie was selling network equipment solutions, and it just so happened that I was selling fiber networks. Today, you can see that there is a natural marriage there, but back then, we were breaking ground and trailblazing this new business opportunity.

I remember walking into Jamie's office and saying, "I have an idea of how we can combine our two companies." I immediately had her attention, but I didn't stop there because I was on a mission. In the next couple of minutes, I began to lay out my intentions. I told her that with my contacts and her technology, we would sell our business products jointly.

To my surprise, I was in her office less than five minutes before she abruptly pulled the plug. "The meeting is over."

"Did I do something wrong?" I said to her.

"No, go speak to my assistant and we'll talk again next time."

I said to myself, *Damn, I messed up big time.* The meeting was only a few minutes, and now I was out on my behind. Worry and fear filled my heart, and I asked myself if I had really bungled the whole thing. And if so, which part didn't she like? I was frustrated that I couldn't read the situation. Knowing her after all these years, I am convinced that this was her way of testing her candidates' overall business acumen.

Regardless of how I felt, I waited to speak to the assistant. When I approached her workstation, she handed me an appointment card and to my disbelief stated, "You're having dinner with Jamie tonight at 8:00 p.m. at Morton's Steakhouse in Miami."

A few hours later, I was sitting in front of Jamie at the restaurant where she became very candid with me. "I wanted to speak with you about something. I couldn't do it in the office, but I am going to be appointed as the CEO of a new organization and I need someone to run global sales. You are the guy to do it."

It was like *déjà vu*. Her offer had the same poise as Frank's six or so years before. "You don't even know me," I countered, not knowing what to believe. "You barely know my name, and you haven't seen my résumé or my work expertise."

Her response was just like Frank's. She said, "I don't want to see it. I don't care."

Six months after my initial dinner with Jamie and being engaged with her team, I closed her company's biggest deal for \$6.8 million. I made it happen in a short time, and the deal came at a crucial moment, just when we needed to build our credibility in the market to increase

our revenue stream. I later asked Jamie, “How did you know I was the one who could make it all happen?”

“You just know. Do you know how many hundreds of people walk into my office without getting my attention? You were in there five minutes and my attention was all yours.”

In so many words, she was saying the same things that Frank said about forming relationships and having confidence to pique people’s interest. When I walked into a room, I didn’t go in with the charged bravado of ego. I went in with confidence and all the scruples of someone who is guided by a large amount of book smarts, street smarts, and most of all, emotional intelligence.

Let me reinforce and repeat that: above all, emotional intelligence is the key to success. It’s not about having the most powerful handshake or getting heads to swivel in your direction when you enter the room; that stuff is all gravitas. I have discovered that confidence and self-assurance can go a long way. Clients can smell it, and they eat it up. Closing deals, however, is all about establishing business relationships. We will be examining emotional intelligence and the importance of relationships in greater detail later in the book.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mr. Benjamin Von Seeger is a senior sales executive known for delivering and sustaining revenue and profit gain within a competitive global telecommunications market. He built world-class sales teams and implemented proven sales processes to exponentially increase revenue for multiple wholesale telecommunications providers.

Throughout his seventeen-year career, Benjamin Von Seeger has held key sales positions with wholesale telecommunication and colocation service providers such as CENX, FiberNet Telecom Group, Terremark Worldwide—NAP of the Americas, MCI, and Mannesmann Telecommunications in Germany.

Prior to joining DELUXE—Hostopia, Benjamin Von Seeger was director of global markets with CENX, the first carrier of Ethernet exchange. FiberNet/Zayo Bandwidth provides comprehensive broadband interconnectivity for the exchange of traffic, for and between multiple IP-centric and TDM-based networks. With FiberNet/Zayo Bandwidth, Benjamin Von Seeger was responsible for the development and management of millions of dollars in revenue from several international carrier accounts, such as Brazil Telecom, T Systems, France Telecom, Telefonica, and Telecom Italia.

With Terremark Worldwide—NAP of the Americas, Benjamin Von Seeger served as a vice president, where he secured millions of dollars in contracts from the largest national and international telecommunication



carriers, content providers, and other major corporations from Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the United States. Terremark Worldwide, Inc. (AMEX:TMRK) was a leading operator of integrated Tier-1 Network Access Points (NAPs) and a best-in-class network services, creating technology marketplaces in strategic global locations. Terremark, a colocation and cloud-hosting provider, was sold to Verizon for \$1.4 billion; Verizon paid \$19 in cash for each Terremark share—about a 35 percent premium to the stock's closing price of \$14.05 a share.

Benjamin Von Seeger is multilingual, with proficiency in five languages: English, Italian, Romanian, German, and Spanish. He holds a degree in business administration and international relations from Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, in Germany, and has been awarded many professional degrees and certificates. He is currently attending the Advance Management Program for business administration and management at Harvard Business School.

Ben has also served as a visiting lecturer at Keller Graduate School of Management/Devry University, enhancing the critical thinking and learning processes of undergraduate- and graduate-level students. He also served as a distinguished panelist for the graduate-level capstone projects during end-of-term evaluations. Ben continues to support the academic endeavors of students for different universities in the United States and around the world.

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Benjamin Von Seeger defies the conventional logic of global business how-to guides with this fresh, enlightening, and provocative perspective on today's global business landscape. This isn't a motivational book; this is your hands-on guide to applying the lessons of the most successful businesses to your own. He delivers hard-hitting insights gleaned from a lifetime of entrepreneurial success.



You'll learn how to develop and leverage innate global business qualities and tactics that will mean the difference between commercial success and failure, including emotional and relational intelligence, relationship building, brand development, business strategy, and more.

*"The Rival is the X factor revealed. Anyone wanting to solve the mystery of long-term success in sales and the art of deal closing should read and apply the techniques outlined in The Rival. It's a textbook for what isn't textbook: integrity, talent, tenure, tenacity, and success."*

— Betty Smith, CenturyLink

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— Ilissa Miller, CEO, iMiller Public Relations, president,  
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