



Accelerating Change

Black Lives Matter and the
Automotive Sector

ENNIS & CO

Ennis & Co are trusted by many of the world's leading automotive and mobility brands to appoint their senior leaders.

We carry out executive search assignments for organisations across the entire automotive spectrum, ranging from manufacturers to national sales companies (high-volume through to prestige and luxury brands), as well as supply chain companies, retail groups, leasing/mobility providers, data analytics organisations and innovative technology companies.

Every pivotal change in history is sparked by a significant moment.

Now, we know that the year 2020 is going to go down in the history books in light of the COVID-19 pandemic – yet what I believe we will also see is an incredibly poignant period of change during these times when it comes to diversity and inclusion. In particular, relating to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Of course, the tragedies that have unfolded to shine light on these sensitive issues have been devastating. We have seen horrific incidents that have sparked understandable outrage all over the world. I have personally been conducting a great deal of my own research into what is happening at present in terms of the Black Lives Matter response and from this, I wanted to share a few thoughts.

Following on from our last publication: Covid 19: The Ways of Working in the Mobility Industry, I want to focus



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on the positive. There is still far too much negativity in the world, yet still not enough emphasis on the good. Multiple organisations have really changed the game in terms of how they have responded to the Black Lives Matter movement and putting in place strategies to improve practices, remove stigmas and, ultimately, educate colleagues and employees. I want to beam a spotlight onto these companies, within a variety of sectors (including automotive of course) as this could be a framework that we can not only admire and respect – but really learn from.

As a huge advocate for diversity and inclusion, it's times like these that I am more passionate and prouder than ever before – because I can see much needed change coming and diversity and inclusion travelling to the top of the agenda. Throughout my career, I have experienced a great deal of moments that have stayed with me until this day relating to prejudice in the workplace. These are not comfortable conversations to have. But we need to keep having them.

So, without further ado, I've presented a snapshot of what the automotive industry, and beyond, has put in place to see what we can learn from one another. As learning is the most important outcome here, I really hope we can glean some practices from here for the future of our own organisations.



AUTOMOTIVE ORGANISATIONS MAKING MOVES TO SUPPORT BLACK LIVES MATTER

Automotive never ceases to amaze me in terms of, if you excuse the pun, the speed of which it steps up the response.

The industry has shown its support for the Black Lives Matter movement in a great deal of ways. Of course, this is consistently evolving but here is a "snapshot" of what we have seen over the course of June 2020.

Nascar

Nascar has banned the use of the Confederate flag at all events in response to the protests over George Floyd's death and growing calls for action over racial inequality.

The decision is a major development for American motorsport that has its roots in the deep south where the flag is most commonly displayed, having become a symbol of opposition to racial equality during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

A statement issued by Nascar read: "The presence of the confederate flag at Nascar events runs contrary to our commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for our fans, our competitors and our industry. Bringing people together around a love for racing and a community that it creates is what makes our fans special. The display of the Confederate flag will be prohibited from all Nascar events and properties."

The move received support from Bubba Wallace, Nascar's only black driver, who drove in a recent race at Martinsville Speedway in the No 43 Richard Petty Motorsports Chevrolet that featured a Black Lives Matter design and the message of "Compassion, Love, Understanding" on the bonnet.

General Motors Company

Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors Company, recently wrote a message to her employees, which stated the following: "I am both impatient and disgusted by the fact that as a nation, we seem to be placated by the passive discussion of 'why.' There comes a time when we are compelled to stop diagnosing what is wrong and start advocating for what is right."

Mary Barra also said that she would commission an inclusion advisory board of internal and external leaders, including herself. The company announced on June 5

that it would be donating \$10 million to organisations promoting inclusion and racial justice.

For me, this has not only seen the creation of an entire new strategy in the field of diversity and inclusion; yet a very strong pledge by the company to attempt to create real and lasting change.

I feel this speaks volumes.

Cox Automotive

Cox Automotive has posted numerous times across social media in support of various Black Lives Matter related issues. They have also released a company statement and donated a large amount of funding to organisations supporting the movement.

Their official statement included the following:

"Our company has a long history of supporting organizations committed to inclusion and diversity, including the African-American community. Today, we have established a \$1 million fund to help organizations that support social justice and civil and human rights. We plan to have open dialogue and engage with our employees through town halls and forums, and gather their feedback on where to donate. We want to empower them to go into their communities and forge new relationships, bring about positive change and provide support for those brave enough to make a difference."

Harley-Davidson

Harley-Davidson posted a powerful statement on their social media platforms on 24 June outlining their strong values, in light of recent comments discovered on of their dealer owner's social media pages. The statement read:

"Racism, hate or intolerance have no place in our world including within the Harley-Davidson community, employees, dealers or riders. We recently became aware of racist comments posted on one of our dealer owner's Facebook page and immediately started a review process. We will not tolerate this type of behaviour in our network, and today we are announcing that the dealer owner in question will no longer be part of our dealer network. Harley-Davidson is committed to diversity and inclusion. We strive to create a welcoming environment for everyone: United We Will Ride."



Subaru

On 17th June 2020, Subaru of America's president Thomas J. Doll said in an official statement that the company is committed to "caring, giving and helping" and that it would be making a \$500,000 donation to the Equal Justice Initiative.

Subaru have also pledged to expand their equity, inclusion and diversity training experiences, having already introduced R.I.C.H Dialogues, which features a conversation tool that explores how to have meaningful dialogues around race, identity, culture and heritage to the executive team and managers. They have also committed to doing even more to create a culture of inclusion throughout all levels of the company.

Subaru have also committed to launching a new comprehensive multi-year learning commitment to confront bias, which will be included for all Subaru employers (circa 1,200) plus all 630 Subaru retailers across the country.

At the bottom of their statement, a heartfelt conclusion outlined the actions needed to be taken to "do more":

"Subaru is a company committed to caring, giving and helping. We have always felt that our brand exemplified our tagline, "Love, it's what makes Subaru, Subaru." And while we still believe that "love" can be the antidote for social injustice, we understand through witnessing the pain and division we are seeing across our great country that we have the responsibility to do more... and together, we can and we will do more."

Toyota

Toyota have reiterated in a statement that they are "committed to making the workplace, marketplace, society and the world a better place for all." They have promised to find additional ways of working together with their community partners across North America and embarked on a company-wide silence during the working day out of respect for George Floyd. This was carried out for eight minutes 46 seconds – the time the police officer had kept his knee on George's neck – and also included production lines stopping to take part in the silence.

This worked as an expression of empathy and solidarity from the company, where one of Toyota's core values is Respect for People.

THOUGHTS ON THE AUTOMOTIVE RESPONSE TO THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

What strikes me most with this glimpse into how automotive organisations are channelling change is great leadership.

It's clear that there is still a long way to go, within any industry (not just specific to automotive) yet the steps being taken towards real, lasting change are positive ones, in my view.

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD?

The Black Lives Matter movement has seen reactions from some of the largest key players across the Globe – yet also from those that are perhaps a little more niche in their sector.

Regardless of the organisation's size, it is the attitude and opportunity to initiate change that makes a world of difference here. It is also not just about brand awareness – it's about genuine belief in the cause and doing something proactive.

Here are some insights into what has been happening across the rest of the world...

H&M

The H&M Group has pledged to donate \$500,000 (£397,775) to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Color of Change, and the American Civil Liberties Union to help in the fight against racial injustice.

"We believe in equal rights for everyone. We stand with and support the Black community – today and every day," the retail giant said on its Instagram account.

"We understand that this goes far beyond a social media post. We've learned the hard way how much work we still must do to live by the values we believe in."

"We're committed to using our voice and influence to do our part and stand up against racism and discrimination."

In 2018, H&M Group appointed Annie Wu to the role of global leader for diversity and inclusiveness in response to the global backlash it received from using a black child to advertise a hoodie with the slogan "coolest monkey in the jungle".

Nike & Jordan

The sportswear giant pledged \$40 million (£32 million) to support the black community, and committed to investing in "organisations that put social justice, education, and addressing racial inequality in America at the centre of their work".

The retailer and brand also posted a video to various channels entitled Don't Do It, a twist on its trademark phrase Just Do It.

In addition to this, Michael Jordan and the Jordan Brand have pledged to donate \$100 million (£79 million) over the next ten years to organisations engaged in the fight for racial equality.

Etsy

The craft and art ecommerce site announced on Instagram that donations of \$500,000 (£396,000) will be made to the Equal Justice Initiative and \$500,000 to Borealis Philanthropy's Black-Led Movement Fund.

The online retailer said it would also match employee donations.

Amazon

The ecommerce giant said it would donate \$10 million (£7.9 million) to several organizations, including the ACLU Foundation, the NAACP, the Equal Justice Initiative, the Brennan Center for Justice, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the National Urban League.

Amazon said it would ban US police forces from using its facial recognition software for a year in support of the

#BlackLivesMatter protests, after activists highlighted how Amazon's solidarity meant little if it continued its commercial partnerships with police forces across the US.

Amazon has since suspended all police use of its controversial face recognition system for one year after accusations that it was aiding racist violence. Dissident employees had charged the online shopping giant with hypocrisy for vocally supporting the Black Lives Matter movement while selling its Rekognition service to US police forces.

This has sparked controversy – yet what Amazon have attempted here is to create an action, rather than just using words to placate consumers. Time and time again, I reiterate the importance of "practicing what you preach" – and even for organisations like Amazon and H&M, who may have inadvertently made mistakes in the past, it certainly resonates that the past can be put right and realistically, it's never too late to learn and grow.

Asos

To support the Black Lives Matter movement, Asos told its 10.3 million Instagram followers that it would be "making a donation to a relevant organization". In its statement, the online fashion retailer also urged others to speak up against racism.

"Silence isn't an option," they said. "We share the sorrow and outrage of the world over the grave injustice leading to the tragic loss of George Floyd's life, along with Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and so many other Black lives."

Asos also pledged it would re-examine "every area" of the business.

"From leadership to recruitment. From training to mental health support. From charities we back to partners we collaborate with," it stated. "From brands we stock to businesses we invest in. From faces we feature to content we create. We will constantly listen, learn, push ourselves and, above all else, support our Black colleagues, customers and followers – and keep you informed along the way."

Again, this brings me back to the defining moment, the "lightbulb moment" in time, that you can see when positive changes have started to set in. I, for one, look forward to seeing how things have really progressed a year from now...

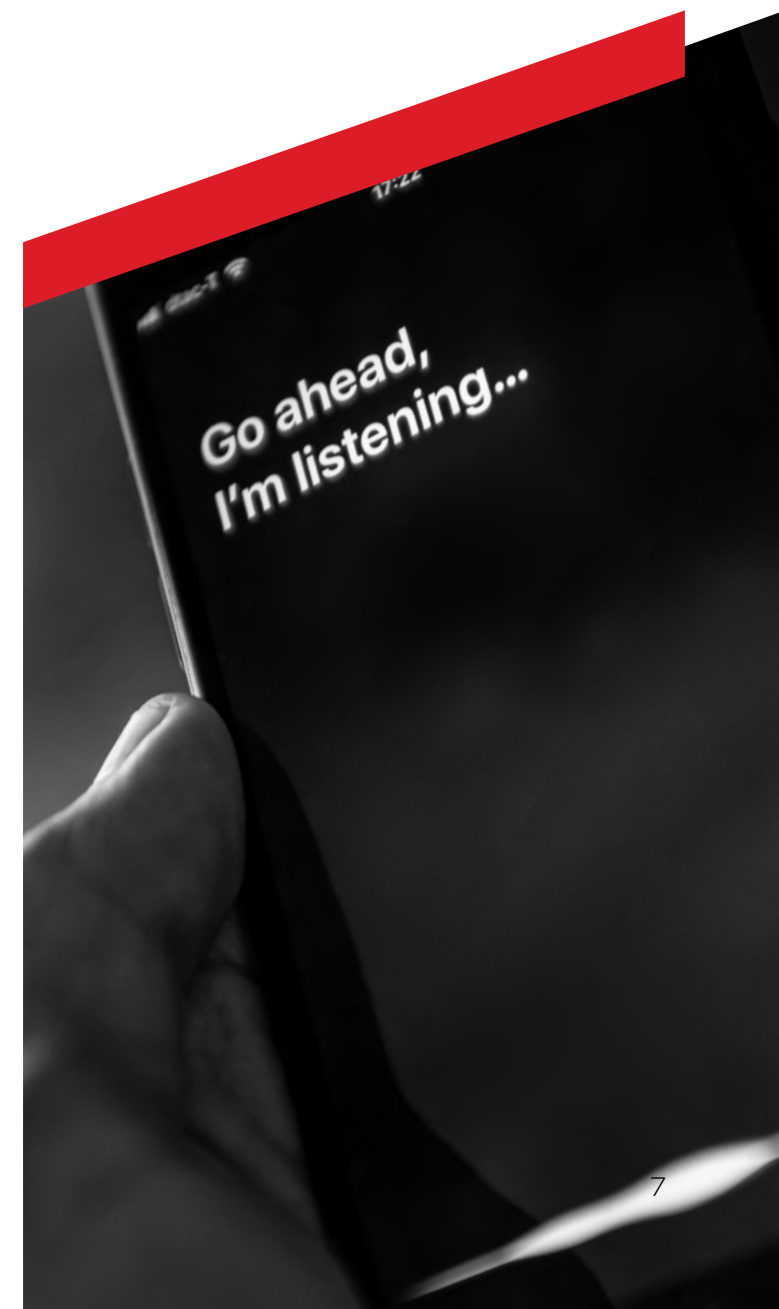
Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's ex-chief executive Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, who donated £10 million to set up the Museum of London, ordered a statue of slave trader Robert Milligan to be removed from outside the museum's Docklands branch.

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This made Sainsbury's the target of a boycott, causing #BoycottSainsburys to trend across Twitter, yet the hashtag on social media then became mocked by anti-racist users in support of Sainsbury's and #BuySainsburys was soon trending in response.

Many users joked that there would be better availability of online delivery slots now that "racists have stopped shopping at the 'Big 4' grocer." This, again, sheds light on the controversial debates currently taking place; particularly surrounding the dismantling of statues following the removal of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol by Black Lives Matter protestors. Which, in turn, has also even led to businesses changing their names to remove the affiliation with a statue commemorating a 17th century slave trader. It has elicited debate not just nationally – yet all over the world and will certainly remain a topical point of conversation for the foreseeable future.



BLACK LIVES MATTER: SPORT

The sporting industry has been vocal about racial injustice for many years now.

The BLM movement first came to fame from the NFL 'take a knee' movement. The NFL has since released a statement apologising for their original rejection of the protest and their new support. The movement was originally rejected due to pressure from public figures and fans telling athletes to 'stick to sports'. This is another example of a brand that has learned from their mistakes and is trying to make amends for them (similar to H&M).

Premier league football has shown support of the Black Lives Matter movement with new matchday shirts, which also feature a badge for the NHS.

In a statement, the league said: "The Premier League stands alongside players, clubs, the FA, EFL, PFA, LMA, PGMOL and all those who oppose discrimination in any form. The League supports the players' wish to have their names replaced by 'Black Lives Matter' on the back of their shirts for the first 12 matches of the restarted 2019/20 season."

The league has also confirmed that there will be no action taken against players who take a knee in protest at racial injustice before or during games.

Premier League players, meanwhile, have released a collective statement, saying: "We, the players, stand together with the singular objective of eradicating racial prejudice wherever it exists, to bring about a global society of inclusion, respect, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of their colour or creed."

"This symbol is a sign of unity from all players, all staff, all clubs, all match officials and the Premier League #blacklivesmatter #playerstogether."

National Football League (USA)

"We were wrong."

Roger Goodell's 1 minute and 21 second statement on 5 June followed several years of debate within the National Football League and among fans,

Donald Trump and countless pundits who criticised silent protests against police brutality.

His message arrived nearly two weeks after the police killing of George Floyd, whose Memorial Day death and the killings of other black Americans have galvanised global protests against police violence and racism.

But in the commissioner's message, Colin Kaepernick – the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback who protested police brutality against black Americans by taking a knee during the national anthem – was notably absent.

"We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong," the commissioner said. "We, the National Football League, believe Black Lives Matter. ... The protests around the country are emblematic of the centuries of silence, inequality and oppression of black players, coaches, fans and staff. We are listening."

A wave of players in the NFL and in other sports followed Kaepernick's example, morphing into a direct resistance against the president after he condemned it. The NFL responded by announcing that teams would be fined if their players continued to do so.

But the move to take a knee during the national anthem before kick-off – or stand with arms locked in silent protest – follows in a long tradition of sports stars standing up for human rights, despite pressure from fans and public figures telling athletes to "stick to sports".

Olympics

At the opposite end of the scale, athletes 'taking a knee' in solidarity with anti-racism movements at the Tokyo 2021 Olympics and Paralympics face bans.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) says disciplinary action "will be taken on a case-by-case basis."

The IOC published guidelines in January banning any form of protest at the Tokyo Games – including taking a knee, raising a fist or refusing to follow protocol at medal ceremonies – and confirmed to sources recently that "the guidelines are still in place."

BLACK LIVES MATTER: TECHNOLOGY TAKES OVER

Technology has been updated to reflect today's times with smart voice assistants giving new and informed responses to questions surrounding the black lives matter movement.

Again, it's a similar theme among other organisations with donations, statements and social media support being the main trends.

Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Apple, Amazon and Google recently updated their smart voice assistants. They now explain the Black Lives Matter movement when asked "Do black lives matter?" and also provide updated responses to "Do all lives matter?"

It shows how tech companies need to quickly update their technology to align with world events. Voice assistants need to be able to understand nuance and properly respond to a question now and in the future. Separately, during the spread of coronavirus, for example, Google, Amazon and Apple updated their voice assistants to provide additional information on Covid-19.

People have taken notice of the changes that support the Black Lives Matter movement. On popular social network TikTok, for example, users have been posting videos of themselves asking "Do black lives matter?" and the answers that they're given. Likewise, people are posting screenshots and quotes to Twitter, recognizing the companies for updating their software and recognizing Black Lives Matter.

Google Assistant, Alexa and Siri don't just provide a response to these questions, either. They also tell users they can learn more by visiting BlackLivesMatter.com, giving them the potential not to just answer basic queries but also to educate their users. They explain, for example, that the phrase "all lives matter" has been used to criticize and downplay the Black Lives Matter movement.

IN SUMMARY

Across the board, it seems organisations have been quick to release statements, make donations and promote across social media.

There does seem to be a clear split between organisations who are completely transparent in their actions, and those who did not disclose the exact organisations they were donating to or the amount donated. The reasons for this were not disclosed, but I can only hazard a guess that it's to remain discreet or neutral.

It seems as though some organisations do not want to receive any backlash (clearly this is very wise), and are quick to respond to any errors in judgement they have previously made regarding race equality (for example, H&M and their advertising mistake and Amazon's refusal of service to the US police).

For me, the general theme is that organisations are more concerned about not appearing racist or discriminatory than they are with upsetting those who oppose the political movement. The majority of large organisations are making statements and donations but are perhaps not actioning any internal change within their company structure, hiring systems or diversity and inclusion strategies. Of course, there could be more internal happenings taking place that may not be public knowledge, yet this leads me on to my next "dissection" of this research – in terms of what we may see next...

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

There will be difficult conversations to have. Lessons will be learned. Strategies will be revisited. In essence, it's not going to be a "quick fix", yet it's certainly be a learning curve for the future of many organisations looking to apply genuine changes for their colleagues and employees.

For me, this is a very exciting opportunity for many reasons and the main factor that resonates for me is diversity and inclusion WILL be pushed to the top of the agenda. Many organisations have already worked hard on this, yet I believe we need to push the conversation and keep learning. We are equipped with an abundance of information, insights and resources out there to re-share... we just need to piece it together.

Now there is clearly a lot to get through in this section. So, what I've tried to do is piece this together into key portions to make it all a bit less daunting and to really "unpick" the parts I think will be most useful.

Needless to say, the momentum and enthusiasm shown from many companies to speak out against racial injustice and make long lasting change needs to be converted to something meaningful and long lasting. I believe the following ways could help make ideas become a reality.

01

Crunch the data

Data arms us with the real-time information we need. Assessing data is what really highlights potential gaps and shortfalls. By collecting and analysing data over time, companies can increase transparency surrounding diversity issues and create goals that are adjusted from the research collated. An example of this could be surveying employees, which can help shed light on their perception of the company and brand in relation to encouraging, and speaking about, diversity and inclusion.

According to Forbes, more companies are instigating anonymous feedback, rating and reviews to analyse data, enabling the organisations to better understand not just the challenges, but the opportunities facing them and build a more inclusive workplace culture.

This requires a lot of commitment... yet arguably, this strategy is arguably needed now more than ever – and not just in light of a global pandemic and vast societal changes.

02

Identify business objectives

This goes hand in hand with data crunching. Specific goals following the identification of gaps and shortfalls within the D&I strategy need to be outlined and implemented effectively. If there was ever a time to review objectives – it's certainly now as it's clear there will be a profound effect on many individuals following recent events, protests and movements to ensure the diversity and inclusion conversation will continue to thrive. Having objectives and targets lead to strategies being less about talk and more about action... and this needs to be clear on all levels.

03

Implementation and communication

Employers must identify and design different messaging for stakeholders and employees to inform, educate, engage or empower as appropriate. People vary in how they understand and interpret messaging, and it's therefore important to ensure communications are delivered in an educational, easily digestible format.

It is, of course, not unusual to see an employee share a post on social media or spread the word about a positive initiative their organisation is doing. This speaks volumes for companies that really know how to look after their people – so the better the communication, the more appreciative employees will be to remain "in the know".

04

Be resourceful & accessible

Sharing well sourced information goes hand-in-hand with the factor of communicating messaging – yet creating a new area for educational resources might help when it comes to a bit of information "overload" that can't really be avoided.

We've seen that some companies have upped their game when it comes to content sharing internally – with some even creating new diversity and inclusion groups and Boards to help their cause. It may be time to look into ways of remotely communicating with employees, given a great deal of people are now working from home, by creating or re-vamping a specific website portal or area on your website just for employees. This way, it could operate as a platform to share consistent, topical information.

05

Don't be afraid to have difficult conversations

Many people have spoken out about the feelings of guilt or shame when it comes to the subject of Black Lives Matter. And it's often a very tricky subject to discuss. The topic of white privilege has been pushed further to the surface recently, with many writers tackling the concept that "acknowledging the reality of racism means acknowledging guilt and complicity."

Of course, this could be viewed as a huge generalisation, yet some will feel the effects of genuine shock and uncomfortable emotions that may be quite new. This is where a more holistic view of the subject is needed. Assessment of societal relations, institutional structures, perhaps discussions surrounding well sourced research need to occur – as well as a look back on history and how far we really have come now.

During a time where people may suppress their curiosity and avoid awkward questions – encourage them to ask and learn. Arrange workshops and talks with experts on the subject and facilitate learning that could really create positive and lasting change. It could be more useful than you know.

06

Keep the momentum going

Six years ago, most Americans thought that police killings of black suspects were "isolated events". Now, three out of four accept that there exists a systemic problem. As we have seen, support for Black Lives Matter has risen more over the past few months than over the past two years.

As previously outlined, the attitudes not just of the public but of major institutions, too, have metamorphosed. The NFL, which for the past four years has condemned players "taking the knee" to the national anthem in protest at racist killings, now acknowledges it was wrong. Nascar banned Confederate flags. Organisation after organisation has publicly affirmed support for Black Lives Matter – yet this cannot simply fizzle out or fade away. Mindsets are changing. Real change is occurring and it's time to make sure it only continues to head in the right direction...

TIME TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK!

It doesn't take a genius to work out I'm very passionate about diversity and inclusion. I can honestly say 2020 has sparked so many pivotal moments in the field of D&I that I honestly cannot simply cram into one document.

I think this time has given organisations a golden opportunity to assess their own behaviours and how their brand is represented. It gives us all a chance to rebalance our views and to take time to reflect on everything that has happened over the past few months.

If there is anything within this document you'd like to discuss with me in terms of future research, or any further points to explore, please do get in touch with me:

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