
Kubernetes Goes Healthcare: What We Can Learn from FinTech

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Abstract:

The adoption of Kubernetes in healthcare is becoming a game-changer, much like its transformative impact on the FinTech industry. This abstract explores how Kubernetes, an open-source container orchestration platform, is driving innovation in healthcare by enhancing scalability, improving infrastructure management, and facilitating faster deployment of applications. Drawing parallels from the FinTech sector, which has successfully leveraged Kubernetes to handle complex transactions, ensure security, and adapt to regulatory changes, healthcare providers can learn valuable lessons. In FinTech, Kubernetes has enabled financial institutions to manage workloads with greater efficiency, reduce operational costs, and respond swiftly to market demands. Similarly, in healthcare, Kubernetes is poised to revolutionize the way providers manage patient data, streamline operations, and deliver personalized care. The ability to seamlessly scale applications and integrate new technologies, such as AI and machine learning, into healthcare systems mirrors the advancements seen in financial services. Moreover, Kubernetes' robust security features can address the stringent compliance requirements in healthcare, ensuring the safe handling of sensitive patient information. As healthcare organizations increasingly embrace digital transformation, the lessons learned from FinTech's experience with Kubernetes can provide a roadmap for success. By adopting similar strategies, healthcare providers can achieve the agility, resilience, and innovation necessary to meet the evolving demands of the industry. This abstract highlights the potential of Kubernetes to not only optimize existing processes but also to pave the way for groundbreaking advancements in healthcare delivery, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and a more efficient healthcare system.

Keywords: Kubernetes, healthcare, FinTech, containerization, HIPAA, data security, scalability, healthcare IT, digital transformation.

1. Introduction

The healthcare industry is at a crossroads, driven by an urgent need to enhance patient care, manage escalating costs, and navigate a maze of regulatory requirements that grow more complex by the day. As the pressure to modernize intensifies, healthcare organizations are increasingly turning to advanced technologies to meet these challenges head-on. The integration of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and other cutting-edge innovations is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Among these, containerization—specifically through Kubernetes—stands out as a game-changer.

Originally developed by Google and now a cornerstone of the Cloud Native Computing Foundation (CNCF), Kubernetes has rapidly become the go-to platform for orchestrating containerized applications. While its roots lie in the tech world, particularly in FinTech, Kubernetes has demonstrated capabilities that extend far beyond its original scope. In FinTech, where managing complex, scalable, and secure applications is crucial, Kubernetes has proven its worth by enabling organizations to navigate regulatory landscapes, ensure data security, and optimize operational efficiency. These very qualities make Kubernetes an intriguing candidate for revolutionizing healthcare.

Healthcare, much like FinTech, is an industry deeply entrenched in data—its collection, management, and protection. Both sectors operate under stringent regulatory frameworks, where compliance isn't just a requirement but a foundation of trust and credibility. The stakes are high: in FinTech, it's about safeguarding financial data and transactions; in healthcare, it's about protecting patient information and ensuring the best possible care. The success of Kubernetes in FinTech offers valuable lessons that healthcare can draw upon as it embarks on its own digital transformation journey.

This article will delve into the potential for Kubernetes to make a meaningful impact in healthcare, borrowing insights from its adoption in FinTech. We'll start by breaking down what makes Kubernetes so powerful and why it's become a preferred choice for managing containerized applications. Then, we'll explore the striking parallels between the challenges faced by the FinTech and healthcare industries, particularly in the realms of data management, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency. Finally, we'll look at real-world examples where Kubernetes is already making a difference in healthcare, offering a glimpse into what the future might hold for this essential sector.

As we explore these themes, it becomes clear that the healthcare industry has much to gain from embracing Kubernetes. The lessons learned from FinTech's experience with Kubernetes can guide healthcare organizations in navigating their own technological and regulatory challenges. In doing so, healthcare providers can not only improve operational efficiency but also enhance the quality of care they deliver to patients. This journey, though complex, holds the promise of a more resilient, scalable, and secure healthcare system, poised to meet the demands of the modern world.

2. Understanding Kubernetes and Its Core Features

Kubernetes, often referred to as K8s, is a robust open-source platform that has become the go-to solution for automating the deployment, scaling, and management of containerized applications. As businesses continue to embrace digital transformation, Kubernetes plays a pivotal role in ensuring that applications are not only scalable and resilient but also portable across different environments.

In simple terms, Kubernetes acts as an orchestration layer that allows you to manage your application containers in a way that optimizes resource usage, maintains high availability, and simplifies the overall management of complex systems. Let's explore some of its core features that have made Kubernetes a game-changer, especially in sectors like FinTech and, more recently, healthcare.

2.1 Scalability: Adjusting to Demand Effortlessly

One of the standout features of Kubernetes is its ability to scale applications seamlessly. Whether you're running a small application or a large, distributed system, Kubernetes can automatically adjust the number of containers running based on the current load. This means that during peak usage times, such as Black Friday sales in e-commerce or end-of-month processing in FinTech, Kubernetes can scale up the application's resources to handle the increased demand without manual intervention.

This dynamic scaling not only ensures that your application remains responsive and efficient but also optimizes the use of infrastructure resources, preventing over-provisioning and under-utilization.

2.2 Resilience: Ensuring High Availability

In the digital age, downtime can be costly—both in terms of revenue and reputation. Kubernetes addresses this by providing resilience through the distribution of workloads across multiple nodes. If one node fails, Kubernetes automatically redistributes the affected workloads to other healthy nodes, ensuring minimal disruption.

This feature is particularly crucial in industries like FinTech, where applications must be available 24/7 to handle transactions, process payments, and support customer queries. The same level of resilience is now being sought after in healthcare, where uninterrupted access to patient records and treatment plans can be a matter of life and death.

2.3 Portability: Flexibility Across Environments

One of Kubernetes' most compelling advantages is its platform-agnostic nature. This means that Kubernetes can run across various environments, including on-premises data centers, public clouds like AWS or Google Cloud, and even hybrid environments that combine the two.

For companies in highly regulated industries, such as FinTech, this flexibility is invaluable. They can develop and test applications in the cloud, then deploy them in an on-premises environment that meets regulatory requirements. The same concept is now being applied in healthcare, where data privacy and security are paramount. Kubernetes allows healthcare providers to leverage the cloud's scalability while keeping sensitive patient data within the confines of their private data centers.

2.4 Self-Healing: Automation at Its Best

Kubernetes takes automation to the next level with its self-healing capabilities. Imagine an application where certain components fail unexpectedly—Kubernetes automatically detects these failures, restarts the affected containers, and replaces them if necessary. It also reschedules containers that have been moved due to node failures or resource constraints.

This self-healing feature ensures that applications run smoothly without requiring constant human oversight. For FinTech companies, this means less downtime and fewer service interruptions, which is critical for maintaining customer trust. In healthcare, where every second counts, self-healing can be the difference between seamless patient care and a critical system failure.

2.5 Declarative Configuration: Defining Desired States

One of the reasons Kubernetes is so powerful is its use of declarative configuration. Instead of managing the system's state manually, users define the desired state of the application, and Kubernetes takes care of the rest. It ensures that the actual state of the system matches the desired state, continuously working to reconcile any discrepancies.

For FinTech companies, which often have to deal with complex systems requiring strict compliance and consistency, declarative configuration ensures that all components are configured correctly and remain in a compliant state. This same level of precision is now being demanded in healthcare, where the integrity and accuracy of data are critical.

3. Parallels Between FinTech and Healthcare

3.1 Regulatory Compliance: Navigating Strict Frameworks

Both the FinTech and healthcare industries operate within highly regulated environments, where compliance is not just a best practice but a legal requirement. For FinTech companies, regulatory frameworks like the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) dictate how financial data must be handled and protected. Similarly, healthcare providers must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which governs the security and privacy of patient information.

Kubernetes offers a robust platform that can help organizations in both sectors meet these stringent regulatory requirements. By providing a secure and compliant environment for managing sensitive data, Kubernetes ensures that applications not only function effectively but also adhere to necessary regulations. For instance, Kubernetes can be configured to enforce encryption of data at rest and in transit, crucial for both financial transactions and patient records.

In healthcare, the need for compliance is particularly pressing given the sensitive nature of patient data. Lessons from FinTech show that Kubernetes can streamline the process of maintaining

compliance, reducing the risk of breaches and ensuring that patient information is handled with the utmost care. With built-in features like network policies, role-based access control (RBAC), and integration with external security tools, Kubernetes provides the necessary infrastructure to protect sensitive data while meeting regulatory demands.

3.2 Data Security: Safeguarding Sensitive Information

Security is a top priority in both FinTech and healthcare, as both industries deal with highly sensitive information. In FinTech, the protection of financial data is paramount, as breaches can lead to significant financial losses and damage to customer trust. Healthcare, on the other hand, handles patient health information, which, if compromised, can have life-altering consequences for individuals.

Kubernetes offers a range of security features that are beneficial for both sectors. These include encryption of data, RBAC, and integration with advanced security tools that can monitor and mitigate potential threats. For example, Kubernetes allows for the automatic rotation of encryption keys, ensuring that data remains secure even in the event of a breach.

In the healthcare industry, where data breaches can lead to severe penalties and loss of trust, adopting a platform with such robust security features is essential. The lessons from FinTech's adoption of Kubernetes demonstrate that a proactive approach to security—utilizing Kubernetes' full suite of tools—can significantly reduce the risk of data breaches. By leveraging these features, healthcare providers can ensure that patient data is as secure as financial information in the FinTech sector.

3.3 Scalability and Performance: Meeting Demand Without Compromise

One of the most significant challenges for both FinTech and healthcare is managing fluctuating demand. In FinTech, companies must be able to handle varying transaction volumes, particularly during peak times like Black Friday or tax season. Similarly, healthcare providers must manage fluctuating patient loads and data streams, particularly during times of crisis such as pandemics or seasonal flu outbreaks.

Kubernetes shines in its ability to scale applications efficiently, ensuring that systems can handle increased loads without sacrificing performance. In FinTech, companies have benefited from Kubernetes' ability to automatically scale resources up or down based on demand, ensuring that they can handle peak loads without over-provisioning resources during quieter periods.

Healthcare can learn from this by leveraging Kubernetes to manage its own fluctuating demands. For example, a hospital's IT infrastructure must be able to scale rapidly in response to a sudden influx of patients, such as during a public health emergency. Kubernetes enables healthcare providers to meet these demands by automatically adjusting resources, ensuring that applications

remain responsive even under heavy load. This capability not only improves patient care but also optimizes the use of IT resources, reducing costs and improving overall efficiency.

3.4 High Availability and Disaster Recovery: Ensuring Continuous Service

In both FinTech and healthcare, downtime can have serious consequences. For FinTech companies, even a few minutes of downtime can result in substantial financial losses, not to mention the potential impact on customer trust. In healthcare, the stakes are even higher; downtime could mean the difference between life and death if critical patient data is unavailable during an emergency.

Kubernetes provides several features that ensure high availability and robust disaster recovery, making it an ideal solution for both industries. Kubernetes' self-healing capabilities, for instance, automatically detect and replace failed components, ensuring that applications remain available even in the event of hardware failures. Additionally, Kubernetes supports multi-region deployments, allowing organizations to distribute workloads across different geographical locations. This not only improves availability but also provides a robust disaster recovery solution, ensuring that services can continue uninterrupted even in the event of a significant outage.

The healthcare sector can greatly benefit from these capabilities. By adopting Kubernetes, healthcare providers can ensure that their applications remain available even during hardware failures or other disruptions. This is particularly important in a healthcare setting, where the availability of systems can directly impact patient outcomes. Lessons from FinTech show that investing in a robust, high-availability infrastructure like Kubernetes can pay dividends in terms of both reliability and patient trust.

4. Case Studies: Kubernetes in Healthcare

4.1 Case Study 1: Transforming Electronic Health Records (EHR) with Kubernetes

4.1.1

Challenge:

One of the biggest challenges faced by healthcare providers today is the management of Electronic Health Records (EHR). As the volume of patient data continues to grow, the need for a scalable and secure system to handle this information becomes critical. Traditionally, healthcare providers have struggled with legacy systems that are not only difficult to scale but also pose significant risks in terms of data security and compliance.

4.1.2

Solution:

A forward-thinking healthcare provider turned to Kubernetes to manage their cloud-based EHR system. The provider recognized that Kubernetes' ability to orchestrate containers in a cloud environment could offer the scalability and resilience they needed. By containerizing their EHR

applications and deploying them on Kubernetes, the provider was able to scale the system seamlessly as patient data volumes increased.

4.1.3

Impact:

The move to Kubernetes allowed the healthcare provider to handle more patients and data without compromising system performance or availability. Kubernetes' built-in features, such as automated rollouts and rollbacks, health checks, and self-healing capabilities, ensured that the EHR system remained robust and operational, even during unexpected spikes in demand. Furthermore, Kubernetes' security features helped the provider comply with stringent HIPAA regulations, ensuring that sensitive patient data was adequately protected. This approach not only improved the overall efficiency of the healthcare provider's operations but also significantly enhanced patient care by ensuring that critical health records were always accessible and secure.

4.2 Case Study 2: Scaling Telemedicine Platforms with Kubernetes

4.2.1

Challenge:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought telemedicine into the spotlight, driving an unprecedented surge in demand for virtual consultations. Telemedicine platforms faced the challenge of scaling rapidly to accommodate the increase in user load while maintaining high availability and reliability. Traditional infrastructure approaches struggled to meet these demands, leading to downtime and service disruptions during peak usage periods.

4.2.2

Solution:

A telemedicine company decided to leverage Kubernetes to address these challenges. By adopting Kubernetes, the company was able to containerize its platform's services and deploy them across a scalable, cloud-based infrastructure. Kubernetes' horizontal scaling capabilities allowed the platform to automatically adjust the number of running instances based on real-time user demand.

4.2.3

Impact:

With Kubernetes, the telemedicine platform could handle fluctuating user loads efficiently. During peak consultation times, the platform could scale up its resources to maintain performance and avoid downtime, ensuring that patients could always connect with their healthcare providers. Additionally, Kubernetes enabled the rapid deployment of new features and updates, allowing the company to quickly respond to the evolving needs of healthcare professionals and patients alike. The result was a more resilient and flexible telemedicine service that could adapt to the unpredictable nature of healthcare demands, ultimately improving access to care for patients around the world.

4.3 Case Study 3: Deploying AI-Powered Diagnostics with Kubernetes

4.3.1

Challenge:

The integration of AI in healthcare has the potential to revolutionize diagnostics, particularly in

the analysis of medical images. However, deploying AI-powered tools in a healthcare setting poses significant challenges, including the need for processing large volumes of data across diverse environments while ensuring that the tools remain compliant with healthcare regulations.

4.3.2

Solution:

A healthcare startup focused on AI-powered diagnostics chose Kubernetes to deploy their image analysis tool. Kubernetes' portability was a key factor in this decision, as it allowed the startup to deploy its tool across multiple environments, including on-premises, cloud, and hybrid setups. This flexibility was crucial in ensuring that the tool could be integrated seamlessly into the various healthcare systems used by different providers.

4.3.3

Impact:

The startup was able to scale its diagnostic tool efficiently, processing large volumes of medical images without compromising performance. Kubernetes' scalability ensured that the tool could handle the computational demands of AI algorithms, providing accurate and timely diagnostics. Moreover, Kubernetes' robust security and compliance features helped the startup adhere to healthcare regulations, making it easier to deploy the tool in different regions with varying compliance requirements. This approach not only accelerated the adoption of AI in diagnostics but also demonstrated the potential of Kubernetes in supporting advanced healthcare technologies.

5. Overcoming Challenges: Implementing Kubernetes in Healthcare

As Kubernetes continues to gain traction across industries, its adoption in healthcare holds immense potential. However, the journey to implement Kubernetes in a healthcare setting is not without its hurdles. From navigating the platform's inherent complexity to ensuring compliance with stringent regulatory standards, healthcare organizations face several unique challenges. Below, we'll explore these challenges in depth and discuss practical solutions that can help healthcare providers successfully implement Kubernetes.

5.1 Navigating the Complexity of Kubernetes

Kubernetes is powerful but inherently complex. It was designed to manage vast, distributed systems, which can be overwhelming, especially for organizations without prior experience in cloud-native technologies. Healthcare organizations, often deeply entrenched in traditional IT infrastructures, may find it particularly daunting to transition to a Kubernetes-based architecture.

- **Solution:** To mitigate this complexity, healthcare organizations should consider a phased approach to Kubernetes adoption. Start with non-critical applications to build familiarity and expertise. Investing in comprehensive training for IT staff is essential. If the in-house expertise is limited, partnering with external Kubernetes experts can bridge the knowledge gap, ensuring that the deployment is both effective and sustainable. Additionally, using

managed Kubernetes services offered by cloud providers can offload much of the operational burden, allowing healthcare teams to focus on core applications and services.

5.2 Ensuring Regulatory Compliance

Healthcare is one of the most regulated industries, with strict laws like HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) governing the handling of patient data. Kubernetes, by its very nature, introduces complexities in maintaining compliance, especially when data is distributed across multiple environments—on-premises, cloud, and hybrid setups.

- **Solution:** Compliance should be baked into the Kubernetes deployment strategy from the outset. Healthcare organizations must work closely with compliance officers to design architectures that meet regulatory requirements. This includes implementing encryption for data at rest and in transit, enforcing strict access controls, and regularly auditing the system to ensure compliance standards are maintained. It's also important to leverage Kubernetes-native tools like Kubernetes Secrets for managing sensitive information and RBAC (Role-Based Access Control) to limit access to critical resources.

5.3 Safeguarding Data Security

In the healthcare sector, data security is not just a priority; it's a necessity. With the rise of cyber threats, protecting patient data in a Kubernetes environment is a significant challenge. The distributed nature of Kubernetes can make it difficult to enforce consistent security policies, increasing the risk of data breaches.

- **Solution:** A multi-layered security approach is vital when deploying Kubernetes in healthcare. Begin with securing the Kubernetes cluster itself by hardening the nodes, using network policies to control traffic flow, and regularly updating and patching the system to close vulnerabilities. Implement encryption for all sensitive data, both at rest and in transit, to protect it from unauthorized access. Access control should be meticulously managed, using tools like RBAC to restrict permissions to the minimum necessary. Additionally, continuous monitoring and logging are critical; leveraging tools such as Prometheus and Grafana can help detect anomalies early, enabling prompt responses to potential threats.

5.4 Integrating with Legacy Systems

Many healthcare organizations operate with legacy systems that are deeply embedded in their operations. These systems, often outdated, may not be compatible with modern platforms like Kubernetes, posing a significant challenge during the transition phase.

- **Solution:** The key to overcoming this challenge lies in a well-planned integration strategy. Start by identifying which legacy systems can be phased out or upgraded. For systems that must remain in place, explore the use of APIs and middleware to facilitate communication

between Kubernetes and the legacy environment. Containerizing legacy applications can also be a viable solution, allowing them to run within a Kubernetes cluster without needing to be completely rewritten. It's important to ensure that these integrations do not disrupt existing workflows or compromise data integrity.

5.5 Addressing Cultural Resistance to Change

Beyond technical challenges, the shift to Kubernetes can meet resistance from within the organization. Healthcare is traditionally a risk-averse industry, and any change—especially one as significant as adopting Kubernetes—can be met with skepticism and resistance from staff accustomed to the old ways of working.

- **Solution:** Change management is crucial in addressing this challenge. Engage stakeholders early in the process to build a shared understanding of the benefits Kubernetes can bring. Offer clear, ongoing communication about how Kubernetes will improve patient care, streamline operations, and enhance data security. Training programs should not only focus on technical skills but also emphasize the positive impact of Kubernetes on daily work. By fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, healthcare organizations can help their teams embrace the change rather than resist it.

5.6 Managing Costs and Resources

Implementing Kubernetes, especially in a healthcare setting, can be resource-intensive. The costs associated with infrastructure, training, and ongoing management can add up, making it a significant investment.

- **Solution:** Effective cost management begins with a clear understanding of the total cost of ownership (TCO) for a Kubernetes deployment. Organizations should start small, using Kubernetes for specific projects or departments before scaling up. This allows for a gradual investment, spreading costs over time. Leveraging cloud-based managed Kubernetes services can also reduce the need for expensive on-premises infrastructure and the associated maintenance costs. Monitoring tools should be employed to continuously track resource usage and optimize it to avoid unnecessary expenditures.

6. The Future of Kubernetes in Healthcare: Lessons from FinTech

As the healthcare industry continues to navigate the waves of digital transformation, one technology is emerging as a cornerstone of this evolution: Kubernetes. Originally developed to manage complex microservices in cloud computing environments, Kubernetes is now finding a new home in healthcare, driven by the need for scalability, flexibility, and efficiency. But what does the future hold for Kubernetes in this space? By examining the trajectory of its adoption in FinTech, we can glean valuable insights into how Kubernetes might shape the future of healthcare.

6.1 Edge Computing: Bringing Care Closer to the Patient

One of the most significant trends in healthcare today is the shift towards edge computing. With the proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, wearable health monitors, and remote patient monitoring systems, there's a growing need to process data closer to where it's generated—the edge. This is where Kubernetes steps in.

Kubernetes is designed to manage and scale applications across various environments, whether they are in the cloud, on-premises, or at the edge. For healthcare providers, this means being able to deploy and manage applications on devices located in clinics, hospitals, or even in patients' homes. This flexibility is crucial for ensuring that real-time data processing happens where it's needed most, reducing latency and improving patient outcomes.

Moreover, as edge computing becomes more prevalent, the ability to manage these distributed workloads securely and efficiently will be paramount. Kubernetes offers a robust framework for automating these processes, allowing healthcare organizations to focus on delivering better care rather than managing infrastructure. This mirrors the path FinTech took, where edge computing enabled faster transactions and more responsive customer service.

6.2 AI and Machine Learning: Powering the Next Generation of Healthcare

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are transforming every aspect of healthcare, from diagnostics to treatment planning and patient engagement. However, these technologies require significant computational power and the ability to manage large datasets—a challenge that Kubernetes is well-equipped to handle.

In the FinTech sector, Kubernetes has already proven its ability to manage AI and ML workloads efficiently. By orchestrating containers that house these applications, Kubernetes allows for the seamless scaling of resources as demand fluctuates. This is particularly important in healthcare, where the need for real-time data analysis can vary dramatically depending on the situation.

As healthcare organizations increasingly adopt AI-driven solutions, Kubernetes will likely become a key enabler, ensuring that these applications run smoothly and efficiently. This includes everything from processing complex medical images to analyzing patient data for personalized treatment plans. The scalability of Kubernetes means that healthcare providers can innovate without being held back by infrastructure limitations, similar to how FinTech companies have leveraged Kubernetes to drive innovations in financial services.

6.3 Personalized Medicine: Tailoring Treatments to Individuals

Personalized medicine is one of the most promising developments in healthcare, focusing on customizing medical treatments to individual patients based on their unique genetic makeup,

lifestyle, and environment. This approach relies heavily on big data and real-time processing, areas where Kubernetes excels.

The ability of Kubernetes to manage large-scale, data-intensive workloads makes it an ideal platform for personalized medicine. By leveraging Kubernetes, healthcare organizations can efficiently process the vast amounts of data required to develop tailored treatment plans. This includes everything from genetic sequencing to the analysis of real-time patient data collected through wearables and other IoT devices.

The flexibility of Kubernetes also allows for the rapid deployment of new applications and services as personalized medicine evolves. Just as FinTech companies have used Kubernetes to quickly adapt to changing market demands, healthcare providers can use Kubernetes to stay at the forefront of medical innovation. This will be particularly important as new treatments and technologies emerge, requiring healthcare organizations to quickly incorporate these advancements into their operations.

7. Conclusion

Kubernetes has already made a significant impact in FinTech, streamlining the management of complex applications with enhanced security and scalability. As healthcare embarks on its own digital journey, there's much to learn from FinTech's experience with Kubernetes. By embracing this technology, healthcare organizations can optimize their operations, strengthen data protection, and meet stringent regulatory standards, all of which are crucial for delivering high-quality patient care.

Although the road to implementing Kubernetes in healthcare comes with its own set of challenges, the potential rewards are substantial. As more healthcare providers and tech innovators explore Kubernetes, we're likely to witness a transformative shift in the industry. This shift will lead to more agile, responsive, and patient-focused healthcare services. The digital future of healthcare is on the horizon, and Kubernetes is set to be a key driver in making that future a reality.

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