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The Productive Self

Simple strategies, approaches and tools to make you more effective in business and life!



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The 5W+1H of Productivity

The **5W+1H** productivity formula is a small shorthand that permit us to evaluate a given task or action from a productivity point of view. This scheme consists of a number of questions whose answer would provides us with all the necessary information and data for research or for evaluation of an action.

What the 5W+1H Productivity Formula is About?

The **5W+1H** productivity formula is analogous to the original **5W+1H** formula, referred to the information gathering and covers disciplines as the journalism, research, investigation, etc. Using this formula, we can have a solid reference matrix for evaluating and answering (*with a degree of certainty!*), questions related to the productivity.

Why we should concern with defining more accurate the productivity, you would ask? Because in order to be better in one thing is to define an objective, goal, task, etc. in **measurable** terms. It is to develop **SMART** goals and monitor through their implementation.

For instance, the **5W+1H scheme** can helps us in answering questions such as:

- When is productivity productive?
- Why, even though I'm working 12 hours a day, I can not meet the required results?
- How to **manage** more efficiently my time?
- What is my production to procrastination ratio?
- How to achieve **personal startups**?
- How much, really is my productive/creative time?
- How can achieve more goals, working less?
- How to plan new **startups**?
- How gain more time for creative/quality discussions, relations, etc?
- What should I do, in order to have a balance in my personal and professional life?

- How to develop better **habits for an efficient and productive day**?
- How to **develop a new skill** in an efficient way?

All these questions (*and many more*) can be answered for the **productivity** (*and for other disciplines as **business, blogging, leadership, personal development, social media, etc.***) if you follow the **5W+1H** productivity formula.

The 5W+1H Productivity Formula

The 5W+1H Productivity Formula can be implemented in any sector, subject or issue involving a task, activity, etc. In this mode, is neutral in its implementation and does not depend on any particular field, principle, discipline or other conditions.

Its implementation is based on a simple **algorithm**, which prescribes the answering of a set of some basic questions. In that context, for any given activity or task you can start your analysis with 6 basic questions.

The formula takes its name from the initials of the adverb of the 5 first questions (**5W**) and the initial letter of the last question (**H**) thus the name **5W+1H** formula. These questions are:

- **Who** can do it?
- **What** can be done?
- **When** can it be completed?
- **Where** can be implemented?
- **Why** have we to implement it?
- **How** are we going measure it or monitor it?

Providing and answer to these question, you are able to define more precise the activity or task and prescribes all its basic "**components**" (*who, how, when, where, etc.*)

The 5W+1H Productivity Formula: A Case Study

Case Summary

We try to define better the operation "**project budgeting**" we usually use in budgeting our projects. The activity related to the budgeting of every project assumed by the company.

Objectives

1. Define and optimize the project budgeting
2. Measure the success of the activity in each project
3. Evaluate the new scheme used

5W+1H Productivity Formula Implementation

- **Who** can do it? Project budgeting is the responsibility of the Project Manager in cooperation with the HR and Financial department of the company.
- **What** can be done? We should budget each project based on:
 - Out published/prize lists or established fees for similar projects
 - The ROI (**Return of Investment**) for our company
 - The available Resources
 - The cost of our services/products
 - The cost and quality of our services
 - Our margins of operations
 - The good business practices
 - Other?
 - <...>
- **When** can it be completed? The budget should be drafted before the inauguration of a project along with a **ROI** sheet, on the proposal phase, before the official contract signed in, and should be verified just before the official assumption of the project.
- **Where** can be implemented? The project budgeting should be implemented within the company and communicated towards all involved parties.
- **Why** have we to implement it? Without a proper budget for the project, we risk of economic failure and inadequacy in delivering the agreed outputs of the project.
- **How** we going measure it or monitor it? We going to measure the project budgeting procedure on the base of:
 - Budget efficiency
 - Positive ROI
 - Gross Profits for the company
 - other indexes

Conclusion

The above, case, should demonstrate the effectiveness of the formula in

the definition and evaluation of given activities and tasks. I believe that its application can provide various value added results for personal and business activities, providing:

- Better definition of any given task or activity
- Improved accountability and tractability
- Detailed specification for the implementation of an activity
- More exact implementation duration and timetables
- Better resource management
- Enhance clarification of the tasks and activities involved
- Better communication due to better understanding of the parameters involved.
- Better measurements of the procedures involved
- solid base for the establishment of **S.M.A.R.T.** goals
- Better defined objectives and quality outputs and results

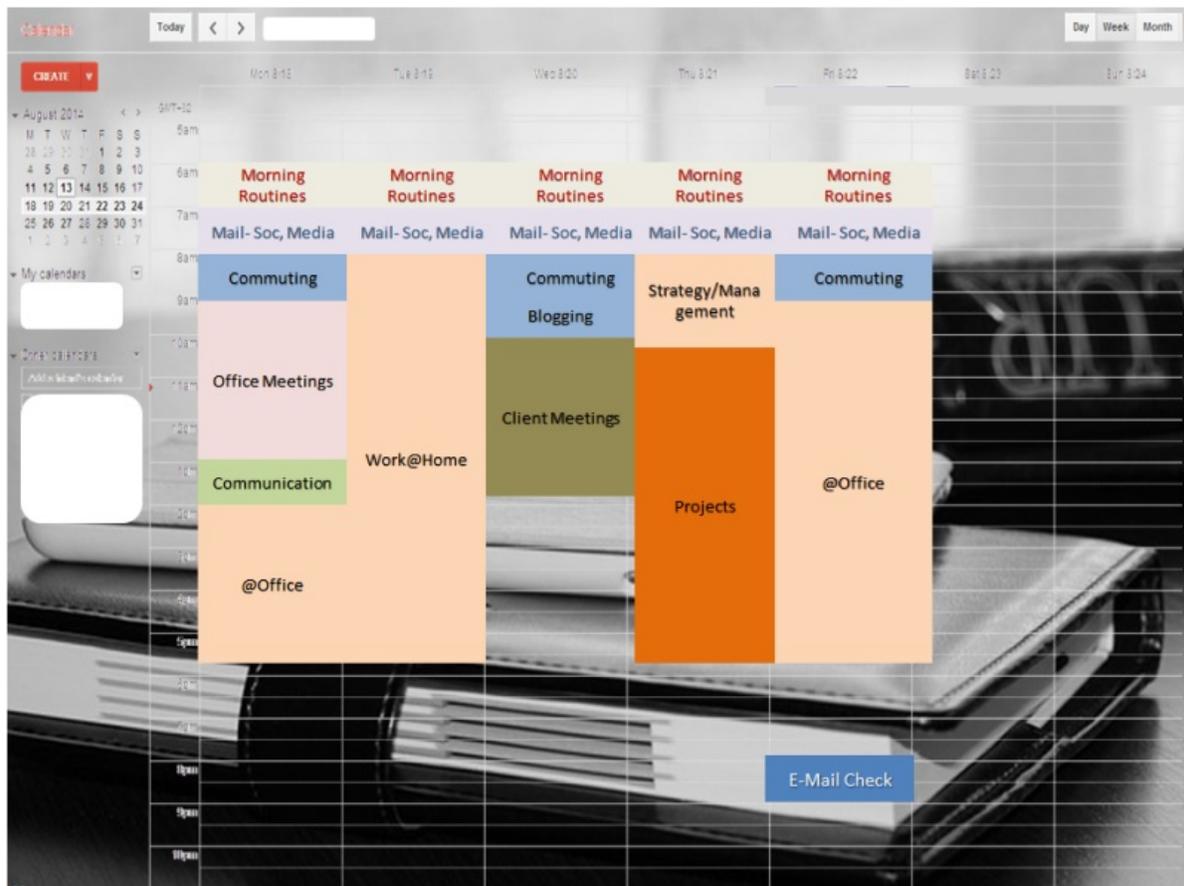
Based on the **5W+1H Productivity Formula**, a person or an organization can make better results, in shorter times and with better management of the available resources. What do you think?

Action Points: *Do you find useful the 5W+1H Productivity Formula? Can use the 5W+1H Productivity Formula in your work? Try to implement the 5W+1H Productivity Formula for a week in your projects to see the results!*

3 Productivity Tips To Make Your Day

You are always in demand for productivity tips that make our life easier. Productivity is a much elusive and much-required feature, by anyone, wants to do better and more effectively, today. Under the present living and working conditions, time, seems, never to be enough.

This is the reason you need to have some "aces up your sleeve" to cope better with the pressing demands of our life!



How To Use The Productivity Tips!

Productivity tips are not, just, shortcuts! It is not something you use sporadically and expecting to have good results.

They should be used within (*or in conjunction with*) a well-established framework of an **organization** system, an existing **workflow** or a **personal system**.

You should select and employ these systems, based on clear defined ideas of **accountability**, **limitations**, **boundaries time**, and **time management**.

In order a productivity tip you use to help you to do more effectively, efficiently and in less time your tasks, activities, projects, chores, etc. needs to be first:

- Selected based on your personal traits and workflow,
- Consciously adopted,
- Embedded in your daily habits, rituals, and customs,
- Cultivated continuously, and
- Used on an almost, daily basis.

You should not expect something to be efficient before it became a **habit**!

3 Productivity Tips To Make Your Day

3 such useful productivity tips and "habits" for the modern man/woman can be:

1. The **MIT** (*Most Important Task*). The **concept** of the Most Important task is actually simple: *the MIT is the one task you should absolutely need to be done for the day. It may be the paying of a bill, a mail you have to send, a phone call, something you have to write, or anything else.* How this it is work? Simple! From your task list (*if you use a productivity system, you should have a list or a calendar with tasks/activities should be done in the day!*) you select the one task you need to do, in order to have results for the day (*according to your goals, objectives, etc*). The MIT you select should be in alignment to your core values and goals and its completion would bring tangible personal and professional results for the person selecting it for implementation! Pretty simple, isn't it?
2. The **Time Blocking**. **Time Blocking** is a productivity technique, that allow you to maximize your focus on a task and eliminate distractions. It

includes the scheduling of specific time slots for the implementation of a task (*i.e. I make an appointment in my calendar for a 2 hours time block for writing a post or a report, or an article, a 3 hours block for preparing a marketing report for a client, etc*). A very important and very useful specialization of this technique is the scheduling of an appointment with yourself. This makes you focus on and do the critical tasks you should do eliminating the external distractions (*like budgeting, strategy drafting, personal crucial tasks, etc*). For more information on the subject, you can check the article "[How to Time Block](#)" and this video, by [Chris Brogan](#):

3. **Batch processing** of tasks. Another very useful productivity tip, I use often, is the **task batching**. Batch processing is a variation of Time Blocking principle but a very specialized one! It included the time scheduling for the accomplishment of specific and similar tasks! For instance, you can set a time block of 5 hours for do all the writing of your blog posts, or a 2-hour time block for social media or e-mail, etc. You can set time zones for the implementation of specific and repetitive tasks (*i.e. half an hour at the morning for checking my e-mail, or check social media, half an hour for exercise, etc*). If you **organize your life** as that, you can schedule all your tasks/activities, around such productivity principles!

How to Boost Up Your Productivity

Productivity is an essential factor in today personal and professional life. It is important for everyone wants to improve the conditions of his or her life. Furthermore, it is important for anyone wants to do more and make a difference! Productivity it is defined in different ways, by different people. But, in essence, it means to do the things you ought to do in a more efficient way.

There are many ways and methods to help you boost up your productivity. Among them are included:

- MIT (Most Important Thing(s))
- Timeboxing
- Time Quilting
- GTD (*in various forms and genres!*)
- Covey's approach
- McGhee's Methodology
- Michael Linenberger approach
- Autofocus
- Various Tips and Hacks

I usually use my **own system** for doing things and it is something it has grew organically over the years of my work! I also have done a lot of work on my goals and **priorities**, the procedures and systems I could use more effectively, the tools that may help me produce more quality results in the shorter amount of time (*as the **templates**, are*), etc.

But in the end all the planning should output in a coherent workflow that would support you to any activity you want to implement and support you to achieve your goals! For me, this workflow has the following steps:

- **think** and set your goals **SMARTly** (*life goals, business goals, family goals, health goals, financial goals, etc.*) and with **clarity**, according to your **life scope**, your **beliefs**, your values and your lifestyle!
- break down your life goals to small manageable **SMART** tasks. The smaller the better!
- find the suitable **motivation** for you
- follow a constant system or methodology it **suits** you to achieve your objectives
- **decide** carefully your **next move**
- be **present** when you're doing the task you have select for implementation and try always to provide more **value** to the output from the one it is expected (*not only for the other people but for yourself as well*)
- Do not expect the ideal conditions to do the task or the activity you have chosen to implement. Take a big breath and **start doing it**, even if the conditions are not so favourable! Just start it and build upon that activity!
- Track your results and do what's possible to perform better (*faster, more confident, more relaxed, etc.*), next time!

Multiply your Productivity by a Factor of 10

As a person, sometimes, I am an impetuous one! I use to grasp quickly the situation and respond or decide quickly for the next steps! I usually like very much complex situations because they suit me just fine! I do not like delays and I try to process everything in a single swipe (*or more actually in a dedicated time slot*)! That's why I was thrilled to read the "processed once rule" presented by David Allen in his [GTD](#) methodology! It is a rule I found of maximum importance for many aspects of my personal and professional life!

The Decision Status

Most situations in our life do not require too much mental process. Many situations are common in your daily life and you, over the years, have developed the mechanisms and the procedures (*habits, customs, experience, etc.*) to handle them. As in driving, many things we have learned during the years have been "embedded" in our autonomous system and conducted in an automatic mode!

The same happens in life. The new, extraordinary or not familiarized situations happen does not span in a more than 5-10% top of the situations you have to decide or take a different approach fro your custom ones!

This small block of situations you will be called to handle are those need your readiness, your focus, and your consciousness to be handled effectively towards your favor.

The problem usually lays in the fact that you have never prepared to handle any situation, at all in a consistent and structured way, which is the way you need to make conscious decisions about various subjects. The problem here is how to take decisions and if the choices around you (*choices dictated by your abilities, your resources, your capacity, your environment, your habits, etc.*) can help you make good decisions or not!

A good decision is the one that can help you in your life, promotes your goals, help your family, your friends, etc. A bad decision leads to action, inaction or "blind spots" deteriorate your conditions of life (*in many levels*)

Why One is usually Enough

Check yourself in a supermarket! You have a list of groceries you have agreed upon with your spouse, but coming to your favorite supermarket you find other things you would like to buy as well. And you do, and you quarrel a lot with your wife!

Your **decision** of buying, for instance, a replacement razor set which does not exist in your grocery list it was a perfectly logic decisions but contradicts, perhaps, to the money spending limitations you have agreed with your wife! So basically you have the razor set and a bad situation with your wife. The results is a lousy evening! Isn't it?

If you have followed your list all would be okay! Or not? Well, perhaps! The problem is that in the supermarket you have too many choices for too many thugs to selects from, things you have originally doesn't thought of, when you wrote your list.

So the "freedom" of choosing in a rich alternative environment, actually impaired your ability to **choose** well.

This is one of the most valuable and less published keys of **maximum productivity** for the productivity gurus. You need more **productivity**, less your options on the nonimportant things and focus on what's important!

For the 80%-90% of the things we do daily you have not to decide anything if you have prepared a little bit yourself and your environment. You should structure your life around some intentional and steady choices to help you carry yourself withing your day.

For instance:

1. You structure your life around strong habits you follow without question (*because you have tested them and see their value*). You wake up in the same hour, you dine on the same hour, you use a limited set of healthy food you enjoy, etc.
2. You reinforce habits you want to root in your autonomous system like

- reading or writing daily, listening podcasts, stop watching TV, etc.
3. You start to develop a mindset that would eliminate the redundant decisions and further you towards your goals.
 4. You implement systems, recipes and procedures would benefit your life as a whole.
 5. You prioritize, automate, outsource, etc. other tasks to leave room for the important ones or the ones only you can do them!

When you take this kind of actions, usually you never need to go back to the question or cancel your previous decisions, or choices. This is the once processed rule!

When One Time isn't Enough!

The once processed rule though is not globally applicable. Because there are the other 10% of situations need you full attentions and focus. These might be life threatening situations, cases of sickness (*of you or of a person you care about it*), career or serious work decisions, etc.

These are the case you need to be present. To pay attention. The first thing you should do about those situations, are to develop your readiness. What's means that? You need to be the person can handle those situations to manage those situations effectively!

It means to prepare yourself to:

- be able to recognize these situations and respond accordingly
- to have enough experience permit you handling these situations in the best possible manner
- to grow the proper mindset permits you to be pro-active and not reactive
- to acknowledge quickly all the critical features of the situations and channeled them in the most favorable way. It needs preparation, planning, and experience.

At the end of the day, there is nothing it can prepare you to handle effectively such situations but the life you have lived and the lessons you have drawn from it!

How to Multiply your Productivity by a Factor of 10

The first thing the most experienced and skillful productivity gurus know is that there are no shortcuts or universally applicable solutions! Every **solution**, in productivity field or everywhere, needs to be customized to the special needs and requirements of the person use it and there is a lot of work involved to incorporate that solutions to his/hers daily working routine.

The second things productivity gurus do is the process once rule! The rule is simple! You pay attention only once to a specific task and you do not spend more time for it!

How that can work? Let's say you have to buy some things in the supermarket. You decide, once, on the things you need, you go to the supermarket and buy exactly and only the things on your list. No matter what!

In your **mail inbox**, you are not "organizing" your incoming emails for future reference. You have to **decide** what you have to do with each mail. For **instance** if you are subscribed to many newsletters, select the most crucial for you and unsubscribe from the rest. Delete whatever is not pertinent to what you do or you are never going to use it again! Use a system (as the **GTD** is) for organize your tasks and projects.

Process each incoming e-mail just once and either archive it for future reference, or put it an action folder for doing something with it (*or to a defer folder, or to a waiting for folder*), or just delete it! Do not leave withing your inbox. There are much more interesting things to do with your time!

NOTE: For a better mail organization you can download my free guide [here!](#)

Recurring tasks that fall in an organization scheme can be easily accomplished, but when you postpone an action related to a message, a mail, a phone call, a task, this going to come back in a different form and perhaps providing different results.

The "**process once rule**" is a valuable tool to your productivity toolbox, but is not a solution for every productivity problem! Actually there is no a specific solution for everyone. There are solutions that work for some people and solutions that don't. It is you that you have to find how and why you can use this rule in your workflow and how to "tweak" it to be fitted to your personal and unique requirements! You are the sole responsible of how you can use it.

You cannot live a life in auto mode. The trick here is to focus on the things that are important to you and make you a better person, husband, father, workers, associate, etc. Not to live a life without conscience! The concept is exactly the contrary! How to live a meaningful life focused on the things that are important to you and to the people you care about!

The Hidden Infrastructure For A Productive Day

Modern working conditions require modern tools to help you manage your work and focus on what's important. I use daily a set of tools that help me to manage my work and connect me with the people I need to communicate.

Select Your Best Productivity Tools

I've heard once by a carpenter that in order to work effectively the wood you need to work it across its **grain direction**. Exactly like human habits. You cannot oppose them without considerable thinking, a plan and a direction because this is the best way to have to oppose, from the intended ones, results.

There are many productivity applications out there can help you achieve your objectives and a lot of **ways** to help you select them.

Their effective usage depends on **you** and your:

- personal values,
- goals and objectives,
- preferred personal and business philosophies and strategies
- **productive methodology**,
- **workflow**,
- working **habits**,

among **many other** parameters.

The Hidden Infrastructure For An Efficient Day

A productive day may have many parameters and many activities you have to complete. But a day you have truly achieved the bulk of the things you have planned for and supposed to do is not just a productive day is an

effective day, bringing you closer to the accomplishments of your goals.

To this end, a large contributor is the selection of the right, for you, productivity tools and applications can help you **maximize** your productivity and **focus** on the things are important for you life and business.

My productivity toolkit, include many applications, but there are some I use almost daily. The most important one, are described below.

Text Expanders

One of the first productivity tools I ever used in my business life, was the text expanders. Text expanders are the software you use a small phrase or a combination of keystrokes and they produced full phrases or even predefined texts. Useful for repetitive writing tasks (*formal emails, standard company's correspondence, key phrases like your e-mail, signatures, etc.*)

At first, there was the text expanding capabilities of **Microsoft Word** but later on, many tools of this category have added. I have used many of them at the different platforms I use, but my best selection by far is:

- **PhraseExpress** (Windows, Mac, iPhone, Android)
- **AutoHotkey** (Windows)
- **aText** (Mac)
- **TextExpander** (Mac)
- **Typinator** (Mac)

Text Expanders need a little bit initial time and though investment to prove their worth, but once they have set up and configured to your working habits the provide a huge positive impact on the final results.

Templates

Text expanders are particularly good when they combined with **templates**. Templates are pre-written and pre-arranged writing blocks you can use as blueprints for the development of newly written assignments.

You can have templates for almost any writing tasks (*and there are many **writing strategies** can help you in this*) as letter, e-mails, repetitive mail answers, pre-sales material, etc.

Actually, you can have templates for almost anything if you gave some thought of what you want to say and how to say it.

Workflows/Processes

Workflows are a very particular subset of templates in the sense that also provide a blueprint for corresponding actions, but their power is far greater and provide a huge impact on the final outcome. In essence are **algorithms** for activities aiming at providing a specific and always the same output.

Basically, workflows (*as processes*) are series of steps of a specific procedure or steps of a procedure (*usually in a written form or in the format of an illustration depicting the separate steps of a process, the actions accompanied each step and the output*) used to achieve specific outcomes.

For instance, the **GTD methodology** is a generalized workflow which when applied at your inbox for instance and can help you to process your mailbox faster and more efficiently. There are many such workflows/processes in the business area from how to write a blog (*not just writing but all the steps from the idea to publicize it to social media, etc.*), how to communicate with a client requiring some information, etc.

These workflows/processes are very important today that you have not the time to do all the required activities by yourself and you have to delegate some activities to other people. A documented workflow can save you a lot of trouble and for entrepreneurs, startup owners and freelancers are extremely useful

There are many tools can help you documented your workflows and processes. Tools as the **Process Street** (*not an affiliate*) or the **SweetProcess** (*not an affiliate*).

Business/Marketing Funnels

A very specialized sub-set of business and marketing processes are the so-called **business/Marketing Funnels**.

Business and marketing funnels are in essence purchasing channels. More specifically:

is a consumer focused marketing model which illustrates the

theoretical customer journey towards the purchase of a product or service. (Wikipedia: Purchase funnel)

Usually, they based on marketing techniques and **analysis** prescribing ideal **sales processes** for a product or a service and aiming at optimizing the process.

It is excellent blueprints for entrepreneurs, small business owners, and freelancer because they can help them to optimize their sales procedures, formalize their marketing and sales operation and having more sales and profits.

Other Productivity Tools

These are some of the "hidden" tools for an enhanced productivity, but according to your line of work, there are much more you can choose from to do your work more efficiently.

Some of these productivity tools are:

- **Gmail** (*for all your mail communication requirements. Complete expendable with **many extensions** which can cover many requirements*)
- **Google Docs** (*for all your working requirements. Includes Word processing, presentation, spreadsheets, compatibility with Microsoft Word and integration with the **Google Drive***)
- **Evernote** (*for all your **note-taking** and task listing requirements*)
- **Dropbox & Google Drive** (*for all your **storage** requirements, business or/and personal*)
- **Trello** (*affiliate link - for all your task and project management requirements. Excellent for working with remote and distributed teams*)
- **LastPass** (*excellent password manager, able to help you to organize and use effectively your passwords across the different browsers and computing environments*)
- **Skype** (*provides video, audio calls capabilities, instant messaging and file sharing*)
- **Coursmos** (*affiliate link - e-learning platform and **system** for developing and delivering courses**)
- **Wrike** (*affiliate link - a web-based project management tool, very useful when you have to lead or participate in a project*)
- **Slack** (*a team communication and collaboration tool with many*

advanced features, to help you do your tasks more effectively)

- **Act-On** (*a marketing automation platform for all the marketing requirements of a business*)
- **HubSpot CRM** (*an excellent and free CRM for every modern business*)
- **Buffer** (*an excellent post manager and scheduler for all your social media accounts*)
- **Hootsuite** (*an integrated social network management suite*)
- **ViralTag & ViralWoot** (*excellent **Pinterest** and **Instagram** management platforms*)

As I have tell you all these tools depend on your working habits and your preference. You need to invest some thought and time before adopting any tool to your workflow because a wrong for you tool can bring the wrong results to your work, life, and productivity.

Click here to get your free book of 'The Hidden Infrastructure'

Question: What are the tools you are using to do your work? You can leave **here** your comments and your questions.



What's your next action?

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