

What Can We Learn from Trait Theories and Charismatic-Transformational Leadership?: A Note to Develop Personal Career Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how personal strategies for career advancement and leadership skills can be developed by drawing a red line from the trait theories of leadership and charismatic-transformational leadership. Shackleton's experience will provide an important example and reinforce those two theories which suggest that no leadership theories can be applied in isolation and that directly or indirectly, those theories will be manifested in a successful leader. Some challenges to the future leadership are examined in order to develop some personal career strategies that may be applicable for future careers. Five strategies (personal vision, personal development, mentoring, team building, and learning and change) of future leadership career are finally suggested. The first two strategies deal with the development of personal leadership started by setting a personal mission which inspires the development of personal leadership qualities. The next two strategies, mentoring and team-building are intended to incorporate the personal leadership into an organisational setting and make the leadership meaningful for other people. Finally, it can be inferred that those four strategies are not sufficient in a turbulent and dynamic environment and thus the last strategy is required to enhance the leaders' ability to stimulate learning and change in the organisation.

Keywords: leadership, the trait theories, charismatic-transformational leadership.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui secara mendalam tentang bagaimana strategi-strategi untuk meningkatkan karir dan kemampuan kepemimpinan seorang individu dapat dibangun dengan berfokus pada teori kepemimpinan trait dan teori kepemimpinan transformasi karismatik. Pengalaman Shackleton akan menjadi contoh yang penting dan menguatkan,

* The author is indebted to Michael Craig, Prof. Neal Ashkanasy and Prof. Ken Wiltshire for setting his interest in behavioural science.

bahwa tidak satupun dari kedua teori kepemimpinan tersebut dapat diaplikasikan didalam suatu keadaan yang terisolasi, dan bahwa kedua teori tersebut, baik secara langsung maupun tidak, akan termanifestasikan dalam diri seorang pemimpin yang sukses. Berbagai tantangan terhadap kepemimpinan di masa mendatang juga dibahas dengan tujuan untuk merumuskan beberapa strategi karir perorangan yang mungkin dapat diaplikasikan untuk pencapaian karir seseorang di kemudian hari. Terdapat lima strategi karir yang disarankan yaitu visi pribadi, pengembangan pribadi, mentoring, pembentukan team, dan pembelajaran dan perubahan. Dua strategi pertama berkaitan dengan pembangunan kepemimpinan pribadi yang didahului dengan penetapan misi pribadi yang mengilhami pembentukan kualitas kepemimpinan seseorang. Dua strategi selanjutnya ditujukan untuk mengintegrasikan kepemimpinan pribadi ke dalam sebuah kerangka organisasi dan membuat kepemimpinan tersebut berdampak bagi orang lain. Akan tetapi, keempat strategi tersebut tidak cukup mampu untuk diterapkan dalam suatu situasi yang tidak menentu dan dalam lingkungan yang selalu berubah secara dinamis, sehingga diperlukan strategi kelima untuk meningkatkan kemampuan para pemimpin dalam merangsang atau memotivasi minat belajar dan perubahan dalam organisasi.

Kata Kunci: *kepemimpinan, teori kepemimpinan trait, kepemimpinan transformasi karismatik.*

INTRODUCTION

It has been recognized that the business environment has become more and more turbulent these days. What is important in this changing environment which also forces the business to change is the existence of leadership which can see the future business and change the organization to the desirable state. Yukl (2002) defines leadership as the process of influencing others to know what they have to do and how it can be done effectively and the process of facilitating people to pursue the common and shared objectives. In this context, Kanter (1983) suggests that what is necessary to bring a renaissance for companies is the change masters or simply, leaders who is capable of bringing about the change. Similarly, Kotter (1988) also argues that the non-existence of leadership capacity is the source of American business failure.

The context of this paper is how people can devise their own career strategies to develop their leadership skills by looking at two strands of leadership theories: leadership traits and transformational charismatic leadership. It examines the personal strategy for career advancement and development of leadership potential, mainly based on Shackleton's Leadership Journey and extensive literature review. The strands of leadership literature which will be evaluated extensively are the trait theories of leadership and the charismatic-transformational leadership.

This essay begins with the trait theories of leadership which mainly describes a set of characteristics which should be possessed by a leader. The charismatic-transformational leadership is then explained and discussed extensively to remind us that future leaders should not be inward looking, but their leadership should have positive impact to their subordinates. Some challenges in future leadership, which will

be faced by the author, is explored. Finally a personal career strategy for career advancement is developed by incorporating the appropriate key lessons from the literature and the experience of contemporary leaders.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Leadership Traits and Qualities

Leadership trait theory refers to the distinguishing characteristics, be they personality, social and physical, that differentiate the leaders from the followers. The basic idea of this is that leaders are born to lead and they possess certain unique traits (Latimore and Callan, 1998). Not surprisingly, this theory fails to determine specific traits that ensure leadership success and leadership experts have suggested different traits. However, the theory is useful in identifying strengths and weaknesses of a person, so that strengths and weaknesses can be improved through continuous learning and self development (Latimore et al., 1998). Furthermore, Tomlinson (2004) suggests that the quality of character (personal trust worthiness, interpersonal trust, managerial empowerment, and organisational alignment) determines primary leaders. Table 1 shows several dominant traits related to the successful leadership in which some are similar and some are different.

Table 1. Leadership Qualities and the Experts

| EXPERTS | TRAITS |
|--|---|
| Stogdill (as cited by Sarros, Densten, and Santora (1999)) | Intelligence, dominance, self confidence, high energy level, and task knowledge |
| Kouzes and Posner (1987) and Sarros and Butchatsky (1996) | Honesty, trust, competence, forward looking (strategic thinking), inspiration, intelligence, fair mindedness, broad mindedness, straight forwardness, imagination, dependability, supportiveness, courage, caring behaviour, cooperation, maturity, ambition, determination, self control, loyalty and independence |
| Avolio and Bass (as cited by Latimore et al., (1998)) | Dominance and need for power, self confidence, achievement for orientation (goals), dependability or consciousness, stress tolerance (energy and coping skills), self monitoring, sociability and agreeableness. |
| Saint (2004) | Decisive, strategic thinker, mental agility, honest communication, and objective |

Shackleton is a great leadership story of Sir Ernest Shackleton who was able to save his crew when his ‘Endurance’ expedition was trapped and lost in the Antarctic land of ice. Shackleton also showed some of these traits in his leadership journey

(Morrell and Capparell, 2001). He showed his extraordinary self confidence and brave heart by saying “I love the fight and when things are easy, I hate it” and “I won’t fail” when he wanted to assure to the investor of his “Endurance” journey. He also had good communication skills which were apparent when he worked hard to get adequate funds in selling his vision of the Antarctic journey. His skills were gained from formal studies and past mistakes of others (such as Sir John Franklin’s ill-prepared expedition to the Northwest Passage through the Arctic Circle) as well as from his personal experiences. His professional competence was apparent when his ship was lost, and he directed his crews to discard all non-essentials that would not save their lives.

Some leadership traits can also be seen from the profile of Jakarta’s Governors from 1977-1997 (Tempo Interaktif, 2005). Each Governor has different dominant traits which guide his action and program to develop the city of Jakarta. For example, Wiyogo Atmodarminto, the governor of Jakarta from 1987-1992, showed an open-mindedness and hard-worker profile when he proposed a program to make Jakarta as a clean and humane city. Also, the leadership of Tjokropranolo, the governor of Jakarta from 1977-1982, was influenced by his military background. He showed loyalty, dedication, toughness and most importantly, a passion to the poor. During the period, he used to visit many factories in order to have a glance on the workers’ wealth. He allocated 425 sites for 46,000 small entrepreneurs so that they can have a legal place to start and develop their business.

The trait theory unfortunately does not prescribe the most effective traits that successful leaders should have. Nonetheless, the theory makes good sense when interpreting successful leaders with their remarkable traits. The most important problem in applying it is how leaders can know better about themselves and their leadership qualities. One of the tools to assess those qualities would be Kolb’s learning styles inventory (Callan, 2003), which describes of how people tend to learn by the combination of thinking, watching, judging, and sensing. A research study has found that managers with dominant intuition combined with auxiliary thinking decision making styles were the most effective ones (Senior, 2003). Moreover, Goleman as cited by Senior (2003) also suggests leaders should have three capabilities – technical, cognitive, and emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence which has 5 components – self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills is particularly useful in turbulent times which determine of whether the leader is really effective.

It is also interesting to note that these traits may be learnt from other people. Wilson (2004), for example, stated that his leadership was shaped by some influential people in his life such as Bob Templeton, a coach of an Australian football team, who was capable of making hard and tough decision but never forgot a name (more personalised in social interaction to the subordinates) and Graham Turner, the founder of Flight Centre, one of the biggest travel specialists in Australia, who passionately pursued a dream but was not particularly interested in money. This supports the notion that leaders have a particular outlook which is influenced and determined by the strong vivid inner theatre – a specific script that determines the characters of the leaders (de Vries, 1994). Shackleton’s leadership, for example, was shaped by his

family's sympathetic and broad view of the world, Christian values and resentment towards alcohol. The theatre can also be interpreted as the archetypes, the predisposition to act, the mould into which we pour specific images from life's experiences (Latemore, 2001). Moreover, archetypes can also be influenced by heroes or heroines through which people can learn from their courageous example. For example, a supreme confidence and arrogant sense of right to rule can also be seen and learnt from Julius Caesar, an emperor of Ancient Rome, even though he finally died because of assassination. The Christian values also teach us about the servant leadership, which implies that leaders do important activities for the community (Latemore, 2001). Wilson (2004) also reinforces this idea when saying that his examples were drawn from business and community experience and that the performance measurement applied in his stockbroking firm is not the number of transaction but the benefits that the clients' received.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leaders are often associated with charismatic leaders, even though these types of leaders have additional characteristics such as vision development and abilities to motivate the followers, both of which reside in the relationship between the leaders and followers (Latemore et al., 1998). This leadership style is also often differentiated with transactional leadership which emphasises the notion that leaders monitor the works of their subordinates who are rewarded in the basis of their performance and that the leaders only intervene when things go wrong (Nahavandi, 2003 and Sarros et al., 1999). Howell and Avolio (1999) assert that transformational leadership with its five key pillars – vision, inspiration, stimulation, coaching, and team building – will bring tremendous payoffs in business performance and innovation. They also suggest that *laissez faire* leadership, characterised by the leaders who are indecisive, inaccessible, and indifferent, or even transactional leadership will only bring mediocre or worse results. Similarly Nahavandi (2003) suggests that there are 3 transformational leadership factors – intellectual stimulation to generate new ideas and empowerment, charisma and inspiration to overcome resistance to change, and individual incentives and consideration to motivate and encourage the followers.

However, there are also some limitations of charismatic-transformational leadership. De Vries (1994) suggests that this type of leadership may fail because of “the faust syndrome” when a leader feels that he or she has got everything and that there is nothing more to achieve; “the false connection” when the followers do not respond appropriately to the reality of the situation and they become “yes-man”; and “the leadership fear” when the leaders are afraid of envy or betrayal response from the followers. Nadler and Tushman (1990) raise some additional problems with the transformational leadership such as unrealistic expectations about a vision, over dependence on the leaders, disenfranchisement of the next levels of managers due to the strong influence of the leaders, and the limitations of the leaders. They also imply that effective leaders need charismatic leadership (envisioning, energizing, and enabling) as well as instrumental leadership which focuses on the management of

teams, structures, control and reward mechanisms to create individual instrumentalities. The increasing demand on leadership is also mentioned as “breakthrough leadership” which goes beyond leadership by inspiring people through behaviour that encourages continuous learning, commitment and confidence in order to achieve a committed workforce (Sarros et al., 1996). Moreover, Karpin’s (1995) study also reports that having charisma was not seen as an important attribute of ideal managers. Therefore leadership qualities require certain charismatic profiles centred on the followers and additional mechanisms directed towards building teamwork and strong camaraderie.

Shackleton’s transformational leadership was clearly apparent when he, after building strong camaraderie spirit among his followers, intended to march the crew to the west and drag the lifeboats over the rough icy terrain in order to escape from the unstable layer of ice (Morrell et al., 2001). He gathered his crew, proposed a simple message and a realistic solution, thanked them for their efforts and asked them for their support. He motivated his followers by saying that the march could be done if they worked together.

It is also important to note that charismatic leaders in Indonesian business may have another organizational implication on whether they like to develop their successors from inside the organization or they like to put imported leader from the outside. Khasali (2005), for example, reported that Matari Advertising, founded by Ken Sudarto, a charismatic leader, has just passed his leadership role to the second generation of leaders developed from inside the organization. Similar practices can also be revealed from GE’s top leaders (Jack Welch, Reginald Jones, Gerald Swope and Ralph Cordiner) which were developed internally from the GE companies.

A good example of transformational leadership is when Bossidy, who was the CEO of AlliedSignal, a giant industrial supplier of aerospace systems, automotive parts and chemical products, built and led a competitive organization capable of sustained performance over the long term (Tichy and Charam, 1996). His experience reveals that the new role of a leader is not to ensure top-down control, but rather, to coach the followers to the change process. The first action that he did was to unite the followers with vision of being top organization and seven values: customers, integrity, people, teamwork, speed, innovation, and performance. The second point he made was to set clear goals which set the ground for the organization victory. This is not to say that the transformational leader will be one step in front of the trait leader. Even transformational leaders, like Bossidy, also demonstrate some essential traits of personal character. They are driven by high ambition, have a deep sense of humility, passionately search for the truth, take personal responsibility for what they have done, are always discipline in their lives, and are always authentic or distinctive (Champy and Nohria, 1996). This argument also reveals the fact that there is no single leadership theory that can explain the reality of every successful leader.

Management and Leadership

Normally in every career stage, people initially played significant managerial roles during his or her early career but then these roles were shifted to the transformational leadership qualities which forced them to become a generalist and ignore the technical detail aspects of the jobs. This experience was coined with The Business/Higher Education Round Table 1995 which suggests that as staff progress in their career and assume greater authority, they have to develop the capacity to see the big picture in terms of corporate strategies.

However, having strong leadership qualities is not enough. Parry (1996) stated that one may be a good manager without being a good leader, but he/she cannot be a good leader without being a good manager. To examine this concept, it is necessary to describe different roles between leaders and managers as illustrated in Table 2.

In summary, the basic idea of this difference is that leadership is often associated with change and it deals with vision and inspiration, while management tends to maintain the status quo by minimising the tensions and maintaining the balance of ideas. While sometimes it is easy to identify management and leadership separately, the differences may often be less clear. Karpin's (1995) study reports that the distinction between leaders and managers are less relevant in 1990s. Therefore, it can be inferred that effective leadership also needs high managerial skills. Sarros (1991), for example, suggests that the effective leadership style can be illustrated by a combination of managerial and leadership skills. He argues that leaders should be proactive and empowering which requires both high managerial and leadership skills, rather than being reactive and de-energising which is characterised by low managerial and leadership skills.

Shackleton's leadership effectiveness is also influenced by his excellent managerial skills, especially his ability to prioritise and schedule tasks while working to deadlines imposed by the Antarctic ice (Morrell et al., 2001). After an incident of disobedience, Shackleton referred to the employment contract in the discussion with his crew. Without these managerial skills, he might not have been able to focus his amazing energies and skills on the requisite single vision.

Again, Bossidy's leadership also reveals his technical skills in finance field as he started his career at the finance department of GE. It also makes more sense when he put an ambitious pressure to the finance people at AlliedSignal by saying that the good finance people must be good in the sense of well-rounded business people who contribute to the business solution, not just scorekeepers (Tichy et al., 1996). In many other cases, he incorporates his managerial roles into the leadership roles. The financial target set at the company also shows his managerial roles which basically are getting the financial targets achieved through his followers, but it is also interesting to note his roles in persuading his finance people to make significant contribution to the operations of the company.

Table 2. Managers and Leaders

| AUTHORS | MANAGERS | LEADERS |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Kotter (1998) | Coping with complexity by planning, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem solving | Coping with change |
| Sarros et al. (1996) | Create consistency and achieve result through orderly, predictable process | Create vision of where the organisation is directed and create the conditions to achieve this goal |
| | Control of resources | Creation of ideas, the motivation and celebration of people |
| Zaleznik (1992) | Manager adopt passive attitudes towards goals | Leaders adopt personal, active attitudes towards goals |
| | Consider the work as a process involving a combination of people and ideas to make decisions and try to reduce tensions | Develop fresh approaches to problems and often open to new options |
| | Tend to maintain low level of emotional involvement with subordinates | Use empathy and the capacity to sense intuitively the thoughts and feeling of others |
| | “Once born” in which adjustment to life have been straightforward and the lives tend to be more peaceful | “Twice born” in which the lives are marked with continual struggle to attain some sense of orders |

CHALLENGES IN FUTURE LEADERSHIP

Before developing a career strategy plan, it is essential to identify some leadership challenges which may affect the effectiveness of the career strategy implementation. There are three main challenges in leadership qualities, as follows:

1. Dynamic changes in the competitive environment may necessitate a change of leadership style, for example managers of a certain nurturing role model may be effective in Generation X which was characterized by followers who expect their managers to be a role model and put their greatest commitment on their immediate colleagues, but not in Generation Y which values most on personal skills and development and prefer to work outside without office border. Therefore, this model should be adjusted and thus transformational leadership may be essential (Saint, 2004).
2. The cultural constraints on leadership theories. A study by Hofstede (1993) indicates that management theories which were developed in US with their culture may not be applicable in other parts of the world, each of which have their own

unique culture. Managers need to understand cultural differences and similarities in different countries and their implications to behave effectively in a culturally sensitive way (Javidan and House, 2001). Particularly, the GLOBE project on cross cultural study of leadership behaviour indicates that Indonesia has a high score on power distance, group and family collectivism, and humane orientation (Gupta et al., 2002). This research also suggests that a transformational leadership with a charismatic, team oriented, and humane emphasis may be strongly preferred in that country.

3. Maintaining the balance between two conflicting needs – work and life. This influences the leader's unique roles in managing change (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992). The personal career strategy, therefore, should address this issue to ensure that effective leaders can perform well both in family and in business organisation.

PERSONAL CAREER STRATEGIES

The suggested personal career strategies try to address what future leaders should have to cope with the always changing world of business. These strategies are the combination of both trait and transformational leadership theories.

Building a Personal Vision

Covey (1989) asserts that we have to begin with the end in mind about what we would like to achieve with our talents, tools and time. The analogy is of successful companies which have a core ideology and envisioned future in their mission statement (Collins and Porras, 1996). In that case, a core ideology consists of core values - the essential and enduring tenets that remain fixed while the personal strategies are to adapt endlessly to the changing business environment – and core purpose – big, hairy, audacious goals about what the future leaders want to achieve. For example, Saint (2004) stresses the behavioural leadership practice of Bechtel which employs leadership coaches in order to align the motivations of employees with the corporate vision by still upholding the values (integrity, safety, and never undermining colleagues). Wilson (2004) also started his leadership journey by trying to build a picture, a good plan and envisioned future and then enthusiastically accepting reality. He also suggests that we have to find a cause that can bring permanent change in order to achieve the vision. Shackleton also set a big goal and his ambition was to initiate the Antarctic journey and then he made strenuous efforts to achieve his goals (Morrell et al., 2001). Leaders, in this case, can keep their values of leadership to be meaningful by doing the best for other people.

Personal Development Strategies

This strategy tries to address the potential characteristics of effective leaders, particularly those related with the ability to work effectively in a team. The development strategies will be focused on the following aspects:

1. Practice Humility (Tomlinson, 2004). The GLOBE project indicates that Indonesia has a high power distance between leaders and followers. In such

condition, it can be inferred that humility is needed to bridge the power distance. Personal humility simply means a compelling modesty, an ambition directed towards the company's purpose rather than the individual leader. Collins (2001) stated that the transformative leaders from good to great companies should have a combination of personal humility and professional will.

2. Practice Empathy (Tomlinson, 2004). Leaders should show concern for their teams. It is important to note that showing concern means that leaders should give what the teams need not what they want. However, since it is hard to know what the teams need because of the existence of perceptual biases, leaders should also have a good sensing (Goffee and Jones, 2000). For example, Shackleton made himself accessible to his crew by leaving his door open, even during busy times, so that he could listen to his crew's concerns and keep them informed about his plan (Morrell et al., 2001).
3. Developing people skills such as communication skills are also important in team building. Communication is essential to inspire vision to followers (Kouzes and Posner, 1987) and under-communication is one of the main causes of the failure of change efforts (Kotter, 1995). Moreover, two-way communication with employees is essential for supportive leaders in order to gain positive feedback and help them to complete tasks (Higgins and Duxbury, 1999). Shackleton also showed good communication skills when he spoke calmly, confidently, and strongly about the unstable ice layers, and thus, managed his crew in the crisis (Morrell et al., 2001).

Team Building

Team building strategy is very important in order to capitalize on the power of team and networking activities, especially in businesses which require a portfolio of different people with different characters and specializations of knowledge. An effective team requires the establishment of conditions necessary to team cohesiveness, the development of a plan, and goal-setting (Mikalachki, 1999). Moreover, Shackleton's experience revealed another important aspect which is the selection of people with unique talents and the same vision (Morrell et al., 2001). The specific strategies, therefore, are creating interdependency among team members, building positive regard among the team members and not undermining members' capabilities (Saint, 2004) and stimulating learning processes among team members so that the leaders can get the best out of people's capabilities and leveraging that to the completion of specific tasks. However working in a team does not require a stand alone strategy, but rather a unique combination of personal leadership strategies and team building strategies. The roles, therefore, are to monitor the work of my subordinates effectively, to provide socio-emotional support for them, to praise and reward good performance, and to consult subordinates about their work (Lagace, 2004).

By implementing these three strategies, leaders can establish a leadership relationship with its 4 pillars: direction, integrity, consistency, and connection (Robbins, 2003). However, these strategies do not ensure that the leadership values will impact on other people, and so the last strategy will be more important.

Mentoring

Mentoring has two sided effects. Wilson (2004) gave a simple formula which is to observe good people and learn from them and his leadership was shaped by his father, John Wilson, who also served as his role model. On the other hand, mentoring also helps the followers to enhance self-efficacy and promotability, and thus their know-how competencies. A study by de Janasz, Sullivan, and Whiting (2003) also reveals that multiple mentors can help the protégés to learn new knowledge which can be used to leverage their future career and personal success within and across organizational boundaries. Moreover, Tomlinson (2004) also distinguishes the roles of mentors, coaches and sponsors. While Mentors provide assurance and personal reflective space, coaches set goals, identify solutions to problems, and provide feedback on the subordinates' performance. On the other hand sponsors serve as a positive role model and an insight into opportunities.

Based on these ideas, the prospective leaders may find mentors from whom they can learn and develop from. Particularly, they have to learn about how the mentors deal with complex situations and how they cope with change. The leaders should also be a good mentor to their subordinates and guide them to achieve higher career and personal successes.

Stimulating Learning and Change

This last strategy is intended to cope with the turbulent environment. In such a dynamic environment, strategic change is the imperative of every business (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). The necessity of change implies two implications for leadership strategies. Firstly, the improvement in bottom-line results does not rely on only one leadership style and that the effective leaders may use many styles depending on the business situation (Goleman, 2000). Secondly, as Tomlinson (2004) put an environment component in his authentic success to leadership, effective leaders should be able to learn from their environment by monitoring and seeking out significant features of the environment (Clarke and Clegg, 1998). Two strategies can be derived from these implications. The first strategy would be learning different leadership styles (from coercive to participative) and try to use them in appropriate situation. The next strategy is to encourage followers to learn together through brainstorming and sharing activities, especially in frequent training session.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it should be noted here that becoming a great leader requires personal skill and organizational leadership skills. In many cases, personal leadership skills are still needed in order to be a born-leader. Tomlinson (2004) provided an equation of authentic success which requires a combination of talent, passion or purpose, vision, and environment. However, a great leader in the future must have outstanding organizational leadership skills especially the capabilities to work in a team, and more importantly, the capabilities to be a mentor for his followers, so that the effect of that

leadership will pervade to the other people. The first two strategies deal with born leadership and the next two address the challenge of leadership in organization. Being a great leader requires a successful completion of all strategies. However in the dynamic environment, a leader that stimulates learning and change in organization is imperative. Therefore the last strategy tries to emphasize this aspect and propose the effective leadership style.

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