

A Brief Introduction to Ansoffian Theory and the Optimal Strategic Performance-positioning Matrix on Small Business (OSPP)

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Received: February 29, 2012

Accepted: January 24, 2013

Published: April 1, 2013

doi:10.5296/jmr.v5i2.3129

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jmr.v5i2.3129>

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to briefly introduce the reader to Igor Ansoff and briefly examine the praxis of the components of Ansoff's Strategic Success Paradigm which when implemented have proven empirically to increase the firm's probability of strategic success.. We will look at efficacy of use of each of its components relative to the formulation and implementation of strategy in a for-profit Small sized enterprise. coalesced with other modeling techniques like Porter's, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT), Ansoff's strategic diagnosis with the Optimal Strategic Performance Position (OSPP) tool can provide management with an enriched capability to evaluate the firm's current and future performance position providing both a descriptive plan as well as a prescriptive diagnosis

Keywords: Ansoff, Strategy, Environmental Turbulence, Strategic Success Paradigm, Optimal Strategic Performance Position (OSPP) tool

Introduction

There is a recognized need to have a consistent and comprehensive framework to analyze a Small Business's (SB) strategic posture. Conduct a strategic gap analysis to identify where are company's shortfalls in capability can be important. Using the Optimal Strategic Performance Position (OSPP) tool in order to ascertain the competitive positioning of a small SB may assist in company ascertaining its gaps in capability. Using this tool and Ansoff's model may yield a descriptive and prescriptive plan that enables the managers of a small business to optimize the firm's performance.

Thus far, most research on Ansoff's approach to strategic positioning has been focused on large and medium sized organizations. This article will focus on a small business as defined by SBA. Even though this article will be conceptual, it will endeavor to present a real life, robust model combining Ansoff's strategic diagnosis with elements of the performance matrices to provide the SB management with an enhanced capability to evaluate a firm's current and future performance position.

The purpose of this paper is to examine Ansoff's theories and to briefly examine the Optimal Strategic Performance Position (OSPP) tool that may be used by management analyze its strategic posture. Discuss how Ansoff's contributions may enhance a businesses performance through the analysis of an industries environment turbulence level relative to its aggressiveness, responsiveness of its capability or Strategic Success Paradigm (SSP). The OSPP tool asserts that it allows a manager to assess their business and its different variables mathematically to match the current and future environment of its industry by testing the SSP factors.



H. Igor r Ansoff (1918-2002) was an applied mathematician and business manager. He is well known as the pioneer and has been declared by some to be the father of Strategic Management. Although Russian born, Ansoff studied at Brown University, where he received his Doctorate in applied mathematics; his mathematical expertise served as the basis for his analysis of strategic management techniques. Ansoff's career was quite varied ranging from academia to the US Navy and engineering departments at private sector firms (El-Kadi Consulting, n.d.) . In 1950 he worked at the prestigious think tank, RAND. While at RAND

he focused on developing solutions for NATO's strategic challenges; this work became the underpinning for his theories on strategic management (The Economist, 2008). At the end of his career, Ansoff was a distinguished professor at United States International University (now Alliant International University) where his work in strategic management research is still continued

Ansoff introduced the concept of balancing “external characteristics of the product-market strategy and [creating] internal fit between strategy and business resources” (Ansoff, 2007). Ansoff's work is based on developing an instrument which facilitates a top manager's ability to analyze data with the objective of exploring and exploiting the “future profit potential” and, as a result, improve the firm's competitive position. Ansoff's approach can quantify information in a way that enables management to match their behavior and capabilities to the external operating environment. He noted that managers frequently try a “one-size fits all” approach and do not vary their plans and behaviors based on current conditions; instead they tend to develop plans and manage in ways that are based only on historical data. Ansoff was able to empirically prove that using data to account for both historical and future scenarios as well as changing plans and behavior to match these scenarios as they evolve is a valid method for optimizing the firm's success (Ansoff, 2007).

We will discuss Ansoff's Strategic Success Paradigm and principles for use by Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, which when implemented have proven empirically to increase the firm's probability of strategic success. There is also strong empirical support linking a positive causal relationship between formalized strategic planning and achieving optimal financial success of a business organization (Ansoff, Brandenburg, and Radosevich. 1971)

Ansoff divided the environment primarily into two large categories: historic and discontinuous. In historic environments, decisions about the future are based on past and present events that can be extrapolated into the future. Change is incremental, predictable, and visible. In discontinuous environments, the future is partially visible and predictable; therefore, change is possible by using weak signals from the environment. Lastly, the future could be completely unpredictable and invisible; hence, changes are based on building scenarios utilizing weak environmental signals (Emery and Trist, 1965).

Scenario building using weak environmental signals as well as planning for discontinuous environments is the natural operating environment for a small business SB and is why Ansoff's theories may be relevant to the analysis of a SB. Although Ansoff's theories have been empirically validated for large firms, very little research has been done on their applicability to small business (Kiple, 2009). This analysis will use selected Ansoff theories and the OSPP models to determine SB descriptive and prescriptive outlook as well as ability to ensure Anasoff's Strategic Success Paradigm (SSP) in alignment. Alignment is complete when the SSP can declare three things:

“[1.] the aggressiveness of the firm's strategic behavior must match the turbulence of its environment, [2.] the responsiveness of the firm's capabilities must match the aggressiveness of its strategy and [3] the components of the firm's capabilities must be supportive of one another” (Ansoff, 2007).

The SSP uses the strategic gap analysis SGA to assess strategic effectiveness. SGA is a technique in which the difference between the desired performance levels and the extrapolated of the present performance levels is measured and examined. This will indicate should be done and what resources are required to meet its goals

An analysis of the strategic gaps” of SB will be conducted and reported; this analysis shows any disparity in the alignment between a SB’s current and desired positions with respect to environmental turbulence, strategic aggressiveness and management responsiveness. Ansoff stipulated, “as the strategic gap increases, performance of the business in highly intense competitive environments declines more rapidly than performance of a business in a less intense competitive environment” (Ansoff, 1984).

Kipley and Lewis’ Optimal Strategic Performance Position (OSPP) tool was used to assess the firm’s strategic gaps with the goal of improving the match between the firm’s operating environment and its current level of strategic aggressiveness and organization capability. The OSPP specifically measures the alignment between environmental turbulence, strategic aggressiveness and management responsiveness of a business in essence testing Ansoff’s SSP. (Figure 1) depicts Ansoff’s environment turbulence matrix.

TURBULENCE LEVEL	1	2	3	4	5
Environmental Turbulence (includes: available resources, market demand, competitors, regulatory frameworks, socio- political climate)	REPETITIVE	EXPANDING	CHANGING Planned Obsolescence	DISCONTINUOUS Unplanned Obsolescence	SURPRISEFUL System Shock (e.g. financial crisis) Natural Disaster Disruptive Innovation/ Unforeseen New Player (e.g. competitor announces unforeseen & gamechanging breakthrough)
Levels of capability:	CUSTODIAL	PRODUCTION	MARKETING	STRATEGIC	FLEXIBLE
TYPE OF RESPONSE	REACTIVE		PROACTIVE		
Strategic Aggressiveness	STABLE	REACTIVE	ANTICIPATORY	ENTREPRENEURIAL	CREATIVE
Management Responsiveness	STABILITY SEEKING	EFFICIENCY DRIVEN	MARKET DRIVEN	ENVIRONMENT DRIVEN	ENVIRONMEN T CREATING
Market/Product Position	MARKET PENETRATION (Existing Products w/ Existing Markets)	PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (New Products w/ Existing Markets)	MARKET DEVELOPMENT (Existing Products w/ New Markets)	DIVERSIFICATION (New Products w/ New Markets)	UNKNOWN Hybrid Strategy

Figure 1. Compiled Ansoff Matrix (Created and adapted from various sources)

Environmental Turbulence is the complexity, rapidity and predictability of change in the business environment. Strategic Aggressiveness is defined as the discontinuity and novelty of strategies and speed at which they are developed and implemented. Management Capability/Responsiveness is defined as the characteristics of the organization that give it the ability to support its strategies and respond to changes in the business environment.

At a turbulence level of 1, there is virtually no change in the business environment. The pace of change at two is relatively slow and businesses can easily keep up with change. The pace of change at level three is comparatively fast (i.e., businesses must react quickly to keep up with changes). It is important to note that at turbulence levels two and three, changes occur but are largely predictable. When a business is at a turbulence level of four, some of the external changes are irregular or are not predictable from previous changes. The highest turbulence level is five; at this level, changes occur quickly, often, and sometimes unexpectedly. Successful organizations anticipate each of the levels of change.

For a small business, it is sensible that once the plan is implemented, employees have guidance for carrying out the plan and are not thrown off course many times for different reasons. An old saying from an unknown author says, “no plan survives first contact.” To prepare for a level 4-5 environment, a business should develop plans as well as contingencies so that (a) when the business experiences outside turbulence, a business need not take its time to form a basic strategy, or, (b) the business is better positioned to change the turbulence level to its advantage.

When environmental turbulence occurs, if one has a strategic plan in place, reactions are quicker, and it is more likely that the business will not fall into a deep reactionary state which would typically be seen in a level 4 or 5 environment. This augments the entrepreneur or manager’s ability to think strategically and react creatively. It is important to remember that uncertainty in all strategy “is a necessary element brought on by the intelligent and resourceful opposition” (Cleary, 1988).

Environmental Turbulence Level ETL OSPP Analysis

A SB strategic gap analysis was simulated using the Optimal Strategic Performance Positioning (OSPP) software tool. (Kipley & Lewis, 2011, 2012).

OSPP measures a business with respect to Strategic Readiness, Budget, Future Competitive Position and Future Prospects. Ansoff’s assessments for strategic aggressiveness, environmental turbulence, management responsiveness, culture, innovation, marketing, and technical capacity are incorporated in the model. This analysis is limited to environmental turbulence, strategic aggressiveness and management responsiveness.

Ansoff’s first rule of the strategic success paradigm is: “the aggressiveness of the firm’s strategic behavior must match the turbulence of its environment” (Ansoff, 1979). The analysis examined the start-up firm’s aggressiveness characterized by the level of novelty, riskiness of strategies, and creativity; these factors were assessed in relation to the firm’s current environment. To optimize the small business’ performance and its level of strategic

aggressiveness, this examination compared the level of turbulence. Refer to (Figure 2-9) simulation of analysis.

(ETL) Environment turbulence level assess on OSPP assessed a Future industry innovations turbulence of 2.00

Environmental Turbulence Level Assessment (1-5)						Enter Number Here
Industry	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Frequency of New Products In Industry	Infrequent 5 or more yrs	Low	Moderate	High	Very High -Several per yr	1
2. Length of Product life Cycle in industry	Very long 10 or more yrs	Long (7-10)	Moderate (3-7)	Short (1-3)	Short - less than 1yr	1
3. Number of Competing Technologies in industry	None	1	2 >3	4>5	5+	1
4. Industry Technological Intensity	Low	Low increasing	Moderate	High	Very High	5
5. Rate of Technological Obsolescence	Low	Low	High	High	Very High	1
6. Level of Product Performance Differentiation in industry	None	Low	Moderate	High	Drastic (based on Discontinuous Technology)	4
7. Industry Societal Pressures	None	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong	Strong and Novel	1
8. Visibility of future change events in industry	Complete visibility	Future visibility is extrapolative	Future visibility is predictable	Future visibility is partially predictable	Future visibility is completely unpredictable	3
9. Industry's Demand for Growth Capital	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Very High	1
10. Rate of Change in Technology in industry	Very slow	Slow	Fast	Discontinuous Familiar	Discontinuous Novel	1
11. Barriers to Entry of New Competitors in industry	None	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	3
	Future Industry Innovation Turbulence (2A)					2.00

Figure 2. Environmental Turbulence Level

Strategic Aggressiveness

Strategic Aggressiveness OSPP Analysis

(SAA) Strategic aggressiveness: Present strategic aggressiveness is 2.02 with Innovation gap of 0.41, a marketing component gap of .01. With an overall strategic aggressiveness leaves the SB with a gap of .21

STRATEGIC COMPONENTS		COMPONENT GAPS	CLOSING COSTS
INNOVATION AGGRESSIVENESS	1.82	0.41	
MARKETING AGGRESSIVENESS	2.22	0.01	
FIRM'S AGGRESSIVENESS LEVEL	2.02		
STRATEGIC AGGRESSIVENESS GAP		0.21	

Figure 3. OSPP Strategic Components

Management Responsiveness/Capabilities

The capabilities analysis focused on six areas: managers, culture, structure, systems, technology and capacity. The goal here is to align general management capabilities to industry environment.

According to Kipley, Managerial capabilities are those capabilities which align the essential personal managerial drive, such as: skills and abilities, knowledge of the (industry and other),

cognitive problem solving skills, leadership abilities, communication skills, propensity for risk, creativity, anticipatory, exploring, and entrepreneurial instincts (Kipley, 2009, p13).

Capability Assessment OSPP Analysis

(CCA) Capability component assessment: Present general manager responsiveness is 3.56 with a Gap of 1.33, culture 1.29: Gap 0.94, structure 1.86/Gap .37, systems 1.71/Gap .51, technology 2.57/Gap .34 and capacity of 2/Gap .23. The firm's overall firm's responsiveness level is 2.16 with a capability responsiveness Gap of .06. (See Figures 4-9)

Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	GENERAL MANAGERS					Enter Number Here
Managers Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Current Leadership Style	Political / Custodial	Disciplinary/ Controllership	Inspirational/ Common Purpose	Entrepreneurial/ dynamic	Futurist	4
2. Primary Problem Solving Approach	Trial and Error	Diagnostic	Optimization	Seek Alternatives	Creative	3
3. Risk Propensity	Reject Risk	Accept familiar risks	Seek familiar risks	Seek new risks	Gamble on innovation	3
4. Knowledge base of Managers	Internal Politics	Internal Operations	Traditional Markets	Global Environment	Emerging Environment	3
5. Time Orientation	Based on Past Precedents	Historical	Historical Extrapolated Future	New Future Opportunities	Invent the Future Opportunity	3
6. External vs. Internal Orientation	Introverted	>>	<Balanced>	>>	Extroverted	3
7. Mentality	Custodial	Production Efficiency	Planning	Entrepreneurial	Creator	4
8. Power of GM	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong	5
9. Managers perception of success factors	Stability/ Repetition	Growth/ Economies of Scale/ lowest price	Response to market needs/ image differentiation	Strategic Positioning/ balanced portfolio/ flexibility/ societal responsiveness	Technological creativity/ Creation of needs	4
					Present General Manager Responsiveness Level (4A)	3.56
					Managers Gap (1B)	1.33

Figure 4. GM Assessment

Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	CULTURE					Enter Number Here
Culture Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Current Rewards and Incentives	Length of service	Past Performance	Contribution to future growth	Entrepreneurship	Creativity	2
2. Values and Attitudes	Stability	Adaptation	Grow	Diversify	Create	2
3. Attitude toward Change	Reject	React	Seek familiar change	Seek Novel change	Create change	3
4. Propensity toward Risk Taking	Avoid	Only when forced	Tolerates	Accepts Moderate Risk	Accepts High Risk	3
5. What Triggers the need for Change	Crisis	Accumulation of Unsatisfactory performance	Responding to market	Seeking Change	Creating Change	4
6. Time Perspective in which Management perceives its problems	Past	>	Present	>	Future	2
7. Success Criterion	Stability	Efficiency/ Performance	Effective Response to competition and market needs	Dynamic balance of the organization portfolio/ Growth	Innovation leadership	2
					Present Culture Responsiveness Level (4B)	2.57
					Culture Gap (1B)	0.81

Figure 5. Culture Assessment

Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	STRUCTURE					Enter Number Here
Structure Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Current Organizational Form	Bureaucratic	Functional	Divisional	Matrix/ New Venture	Flexible structure	2
2. Organizational structure focus	Specific task	Performance	Organic Growth	Industry Opportunity	Industry Growth	2
3. Organizational Structural Flexibility	Rigid	Low Flexibility	Moderate Flexibility	Adaptive	Highly Adaptive	2
4. Current System	Control	Budgeting	LRP	Strategic Planning	Issue/Surprise Management	2
5. Management Focus	Control of deviation	Allocation of resources	Coordination of growth/profits	Management of Strategic Innovation	Management of Partially/ unpredictable change	2
6. Primary purpose of structure	Maintain status quo	Minimize operating costs of the firm	Optimize the firm's profits	Develop the firm's near term profit potential	Develop the firm's long term profit potential	2
7. Power Center within the organization	Bureaucratic	Production	Marketing	General Management	Research & Development	1
					Present Structure Responsiveness Level (4C)	1.86
					Structure Gap (1B)	0.37

Figure 6. Structure Assessment

Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	SYSTEMS					Enter Number Here
Systems Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Current Information gathering system	Precedent based	Historical success	Extrapolated Future	Scenario Planning/ 'what-if scenarios'	Artificial Intelligence/Data Mining	2
2. Current purpose priority of systems within organization	Status Quo	Performance	Growth	New Opportunities	Creativity	1
3. Organizations problem 'trigger'	React to crisis	Accumulation of unsatisfactory performance	Anticipated threats	New Opportunities	Breakthroughs	2
4. Organizations system for decision making strategy	Systems & Procedures	Budgeting	Extrapolative strategic planning	Entrepreneurial strategic planning/ capability planning	Strategic Issue management / Crisis management	2
5. Current Systems typical problems	Control of Deviation	Resource allocation	Coordinating growth/profits	Strategic Coherence	Management of discontinuous changes	2
6. Procedures for Systems Improvement	None	When forced by competition	Accommodate current growth	Planned for Future Capability Needs	Planned for Future Creative Capability Needs	1
7. Which phrase best describes the organization when control is lost	Deviation from stable state	Deviation from budgets	Deviation from plans	Seek new opportunities	Creative drive	2
					Present Systems Responsiveness Level (4D)	1.71
					Systems Gap (1B)	0.51

Figure 7. Systems Assessment

Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY					Enter Number Here
Management Technology Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Current Analytical Model being used by organization	Standard procedures	Work study/ Ratio analysis/ Equipment replacement	Capital budgeting/ Optimization	Futurology	Creativity	3
2. Process Technology Level	None	Low	Moderate	Advanced	Industry Leader	3
3. Technology Acquisition	Minimal	Reactive	Proactive	Opportunity Seeking	Opportunity Creating	2
4. Product/Service Innovation	None	Low	Moderate	High	Industry Leader	3
5. Investment in Technology	None	Low	Moderate	High	Industry Leader	3
6. Technological positioning	Imitator	>	Follower	>	Innovator	3
7. Current Technological Surveillance system being used by organization	Statistical Files	Statistical performance control	Performance Extrapolation	Non-linear forecasting/ what-if models	Artificial Intelligence	1
Present Management Technology						2.57
					Technology Gap (1B)	0.34
Capability Component Assessment (1-5)	MANAGEMENT CAPACITY					Enter Number Here
Management Capacity Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Which term best describes the capacity of your organization's general management	Minimal	Adequate for breakeven	Sufficient for profit making work	Sufficient for strategic and profit making work	Sufficient for creativity/ strategic/ and profit making work	2
2. Which term best describes the capacity of your organizations's staff	Minimal	Adequate for breakeven	Sufficient for profit making work	Sufficient for strategic and profit making work	Sufficient for creativity/ strategic/ and profit making work	2
Present Management Capacity						2.00
					Technology Gap (1B)	0.23
Capability Responsiveness Gap (1B)						0.286

Figure 8. Technology & Capacity Assessment

GENERAL MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY COMPONENTS		COMPONENT GAPS	CLOSING COSTS
MANAGERS	3.56	1.33	
CULTURE	1.29	0.94	
STRUCTURE	1.86	0.37	
SYSTEMS	1.71	0.51	
TECHNOLOGY	2.57	0.34	
CAPACITY	2.00	0.23	
FIRM'S RESPONSIVENESS LEVEL	2.16	SUB TOTAL COSTS	
CAPABILITY RESPONSIVENESS GAP		0.06	
		TOTAL COST	

Figure 9. OSPP output Matrix

Combined Strategic Aggressiveness and Management Capability Assessment

The OSPP gap analysis shows (Figures 4-9) the firm is decently aligned (i.e. small gap) with respect to strategic aggressiveness and marketing. However, present general manager capabilities show a suboptimal gap. Previous research has shown that a Strategic Gap in the vicinity of 1.5 to 2.0 performances declines to zero (Ansoff, Sullivan, et al., 1993, p. 194). In order to correct this problem the management must transform its capability so that it is better

aligned with the current environment.

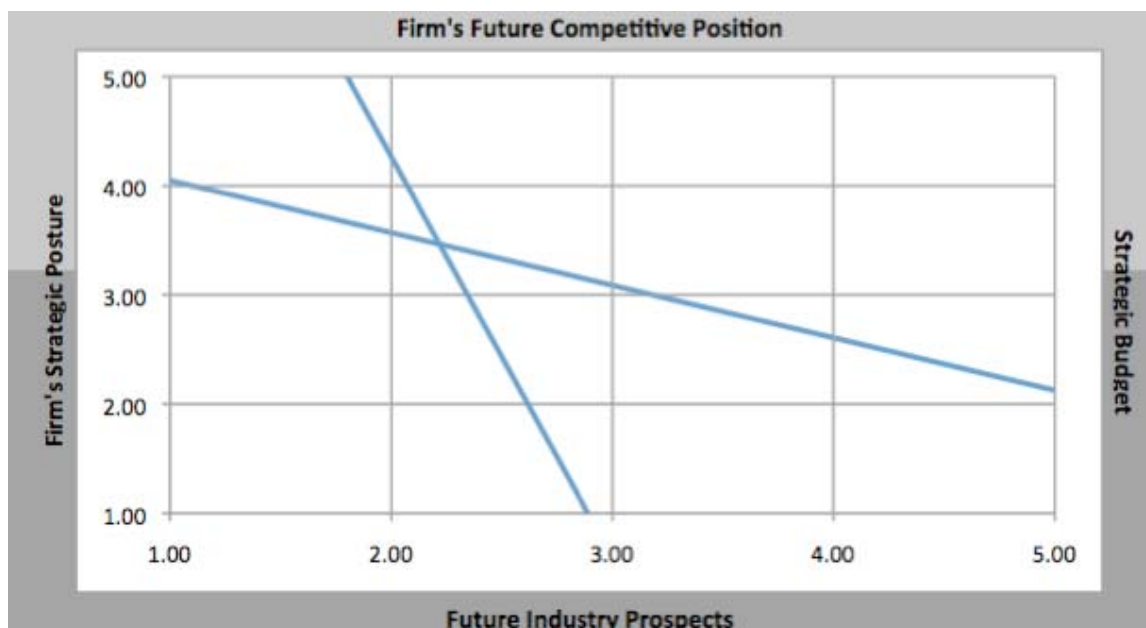


Figure 10. OSPP Matrix Alignment Graph

The matrix (Figure 10) shows a visual reference of where the SB posture is and where management can increase its strategic position. Strategic posture is aggressive while strategic budget can increase. Future industry prospects are relatively moderate while management may choose to increase the strategic budget to align more with the environment.

Summary

The purpose of the article was to give you a brief introduction to Igor Ansoff, his theories, and review the OSPP tool in accordance with the strategic success paradigm variables:

Ansoff theories have been backed by several empirical studies. We discussed Ansoff's Strategic Success Paradigm and principles for use by small business, which when implemented have proven empirically to increase the firm's probability of strategic success. There is also strong empirical support linking a positive causal relationship between formalized strategic planning and achieving optimal financial success of a business organization.

A SB theoretically can better position itself to be successful by following Ansoff's theories and incorporating and using the OSPP tool by aligning the business capabilities with the environment and thus providing both a descriptive plan as well as a prescriptive diagnosis to their strategic plan. Utilized along with knowledge, practical experience, other modeling techniques, using the OSPP tool, for can lead to a small business's successful strategy. Future research needs to further study Ansoffian theories, the OSPP and its effects on small business performance.

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