



GO Global Organization
Design Society



Readings in Global Organization Design
Success Stories

The Roche Canada Story
(long version)

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The Roche Canada Story

(long version)

Background

The pharmaceutical industry has long been one of the world's most complex. That complexity began accelerating in the early 1990's at a spectacular rate.

F. Hoffmann-La Roche, Ltd, one of the leading global, research-oriented health care companies, realized that this rapidly accelerating complexity meant "business as usual was no longer an option". The industry's critical issues were growing in intensity - patent expirations, price pressures, drug development challenges, and regulatory and political pressures.

"Roche" initially responded to these issues with mergers and acquisitions, improved manufacturing processes, licensing-in of new drugs, and strategic alliances. It also articulated other new directions, including - managers acting as coaches and mentors (not commanders and controllers), the elimination of "turfs" and organization silos, and the building of a stronger goal and process orientation.

In the mid-1990s the senior management of the Canadian affiliate of the company, Roche Canada, asked Elliott Jaques to help them build an organization that could meet the demands and expectations of their corporate parent and achieve success, short and long term, in this unprecedented business environment. The following highlights the work of the Canadian senior management with Elliott to - establish an optimal organization structure, clarify accountabilities and authorities and cross-functional working relationships, develop the talent and capability of employees, establish high performance project teams, and to implement the best managerial leadership practices to strengthen organizational governance, performance and success.

Roche Canada Prepares for the 21st Century

Early in 1993 the President and CEO of Roche Canada, Donald B. Brown, and his management team held an off-site meeting to identify responses to Company and industry issues that would provide the highest value "payoffs" to move the Canadian operation forward.

We considered several of the latest, and best management practices; re-engineering, total quality management, and leadership training and development. However, we eventually decided that while these approaches were sound, they would be fragmented, partial solutions to what we sensed were far more fundamental and systemic issues. We needed to find an approach that would help us better define our issues and provide long lasting solutions.

A few months after this meeting, I attended one of Elliott Jaques's workshops on his Requisite Organization Principles. He presented a science of organization and management; clearly defined concepts about the underlying structure of the organization - its parts, and properties and the relations between them. He explained that many organizational issues, widely diverse in appearance, were often just dissimilar forms of the same thing or had the same root causes. Many of the problems of organization and management were problems with the systems we used and not actually problems with the people.

I thought this was an approach the Roche Canada management team would find useful. It could help address issues, such as - retaining talent, creating a learning organization, eliminating "turfs" and functional silos affecting individual and organizational performance, helping managers get better at managing people, realizing the anticipated benefits of mergers, and improving the execution of our plans.

I presented the Requisite Organization approach to CEO Don Brown and he quickly saw it as a set of comprehensive, logical and integrated principles and practices that could help us structure and manage the organization for success. After learning about the Principles and how to apply them in a three day intensive workshop led by Kathryn Cason and Nancy Lee, the senior management group unanimously agreed that these Principles represented the way they wanted to manage the people and the business. Moving ahead to implement the Principles was delayed however due to other business issues. After a major acquisition (Syntex Corporation) and under the direction of a new President and CEO, Vic Ackermann, the senior managers felt we needed the Principles even more. Perhaps the Principles could help us better manage the challenges of integrating the two organizations.

I was asked to take on the role of internal Project Manager and work with Elliott and Nancy Lee to develop a plan for optimizing the organization structure we had created after the acquisition. We expected that with an optimal structure we'd have a critical part of what was needed to achieve the anticipated benefits of the acquisition and long term success.

Organizing To Deliver Roche Strategy

Vertical Organization Alignment

Working with Elliott and Nancy the management team learned exactly what organization structure is and why it is so essential to developing and executing strategy.

First, Elliott's Time Span concept and his definition of levels of complexity of work were applied to help the management group answer that most vexing question of how many working levels or layers the new organization should have.

Elliott interviewed CEO Vic Ackerman to discuss his mandate and what he hoped to achieve. Together they discovered the level of complexity of work in his role and the boundaries of the top organization level. Next they discussed what Vic expected from each of his Vice Presidents to determine the complexity of work and organizational level of these roles. Nancy Lee and I interviewed managers below the vice president level and measured the Time Span for all other roles throughout the organization.

The Time Span concept reflected Elliott's 50 years of research which showed that the more complex the work, the further out in time it extends, and the greater the capability required by a person to do the work. It was the task, in a role, with the longest targeted completion time which determined the complexity of work in the role, and the capability required to do the work.

Using Time Span we determined the right number of organization levels we needed, defined the unique complexity of work to be done at each level and placed each role at the right level.

We measured how far out in time roles needed from the operating level to the level of the President required individuals to plan and execute specific and continual goal directed activities. There was a high correlation between the Time Span method and the job evaluation system for measuring role complexity we had been using but Time Span proved to be more effective and efficient. Time Span was a single clear concept for measuring work complexity and it enabled us to place roles at the right organization level.

Using Time Span we also learned that work complexity changes state from level to level and that the type of information processing or "brain power" required to do the work at each level was different.

One of the most fundamental concepts of the Requisite Organization approach is that organization levels are a reflection of levels of human capability. Unless we got this alignment right, sustainable organization growth and development would be greatly constrained.

The information that Elliott, Nancy and I gathered showed that Roche overall already had the right number of organization levels. As a result, the key challenge would be ensuring that the complexity of work in each role and employee capability were aligned with the levels.

I, along with my Directors of Human Resources, became well versed in applying the Time Span method so that we could support the management team in establishing and maintaining the right design of vertical levels and the role complexity required to do the work of the new organization.

Functional Organization Alignment

The management team next examined the somewhat top-heavy and fragmented functional structure resulting from the recent merger.

We decided on the best grouping of core business functions (Sales, Marketing, Regulatory Affairs, Clinical Research, etc) and support functions to sustain a focus on customers, markets, competitive shifts, and significant changes in the external environment. We developed clear definitions of accountabilities and authorities within and across functions.

The changes in the organization's vertical and functional alignment set the foundation for carrying-out the long term strategic, operational and tactical, as well as the day to day work of the organization.

Establishing Better Cross-Functional Working Relationships

Elliott, Nancy and I held workshops managers from with each function to identify cross-functional working relationships negatively impacting the quality and speed of work done across functions. The managers identified issues related to cross-functional accountabilities, authorities and role relationships. We assisted the accountable managers, the first manager that had accountability for all of the relevant functions, in resolving issues in a way that made good business sense and improved individual and departmental working relationships.

For example, the President clarified the accountability and authority that he wanted the Vice Presidents of each function to have with respect to the development of marketing materials. He assigned to Regulatory Affairs - the group accountable for securing government approval to market drugs – the monitoring and auditing authority for all materials with respect to their scientific and medical accuracy. The Clinical Research function had the accountability and authority to provide input/advice to Regulatory Affairs. The Marketing function retained accountability and authority for the final production of medically and scientifically accurate marketing materials. Once these clarifications were in place, the Marketing, Regulatory Affairs, and Clinical Research functions were able to work more efficiently together.

Managers learned the importance of clarifying cross-functional accountabilities and authorities, establishing conflict resolution mechanisms and setting context for conflict resolution by their direct reports working across functions.

Organization silos, and the lack of collaborative efforts thought to be due primarily to negative “politics” and “personality conflicts” were lessened due to greater clarity of accountabilities and authorities between roles and functions. These clear cross-functional accountabilities and authorities replaced the vague or ill-defined integration mechanisms often used by organizations, such as -

“matrix organizations”, “dotted-line relationships”, “liaison task forces”, “sponsors and champions”, and committees.

Clarifying the cross-functional role relationships allowed people to get on with their work in a more effective way, reducing conflict and inefficiencies, and releasing employee energy, initiative and creativity.

The HR team and I found ourselves busy helping managers prepare new role descriptions to clarify and communicate cross-functional accountabilities and authorities which would facilitate more collaborative work among individuals and functions.

Establishing High Performance Product Development and Launch Teams

With the optimal vertical and functional alignment of the organization established and clear accountabilities and authorities defined, we had a new framework for analyzing and resolving various problems including those experienced by the product launch teams.

It had become apparent that the Canadian product development and launch teams were not functioning as well as anyone had thought. Vic had established six or seven of these cross-functional teams and had assigned accountability and authority for the teams to the Executive Committee. He had experience working with these types of teams and knew their value to the timely launch of new products. A few weeks delay in launching a new product could cost the organization millions of dollars.

The teams were producing good outputs and results, however they were “leaping high hurdles” and “running obstacle courses” to do so. The Director of New Product Development (and internal coach for the teams) asked me for assistance in reviewing the team issue. She and I agreed to bring in an external consultant to help the teams identify their problems. The issues were well identified but the team leaders decided resolutions were beyond them. They needed the help of senior management and requested time on the agenda of an Executive Committee meeting to present their issues:

- They were quite pleased to be team leaders. However several members of the Committee were assigning tasks to them and this “workload” along with that assigned by their “home base” managers was no longer bearable. Soon it would be impossible for them to continue performing well. Frankly, they had too many “bosses to please”. Could the Executive Committee help them resolve this problem?
- The “home base” or functional managers still expected completion to standards of 100% of the “regular” work they assigned to their direct reports who were on the teams. Who would decide the work priorities?

Who would help the team members “mend” the deteriorating work relationship with their “real” or “regular” managers?

- Team members had concerns with performance appraisals and compensation for the “two jobs” they were performing. What effect should their team work have on their annual overall performance appraisal and compensation awards? Who would appraise their “team work” and decide on rewards and recognition?
- Team leaders and members were having difficulty fielding questions from their peers regarding how one got chosen to be on a team and especially appointed team leader. Employees knew selection criteria had not been established and concluded the decisions were “political”.
- There were other conflicts to be dealt with. Who would help resolve problems within the teams or between the teams and other functions, and departments after team leaders had exhausted their best influencing and persuasive skills but to no avail? What accountability and authority did team leaders and members have anyway? How were team leaders and the team coach, to solve problems such as members’ non-attendance at important team meetings, or a member’s sub-optimal performance? Who could initiate the removal of a team member from the team when removal was warranted? How should the teams and the functional departments interact? Were the “home base” or functional department managers in any way accountable for the teams’ success and performance?

On hearing these complaints, the Executive Committee was somewhat shocked. They had no idea of the extent of the teams’ problems. They considered a number of solutions including giving the teams a “break”, controlling the flow of work to teams through one identified committee member, more leadership and “technical” training for the teams, and of course granting much deserved rewards to them.

While these measures were somewhat helpful they did not address the root causes of the teams’ issues which we learned were organization structure issues, such as - lack of clear role relationships (accountabilities and authorities) between the teams and the functional departments (marketing, regulatory, clinical research), appointment of an accountable manager/executive for the teams, effective selection criteria for team members and leaders, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, etc.

How to structure and manage six or seven critical teams - the number growing due to several new products in the pipeline - was an organization design problem which even brought a “furrowed brow” to Elliott’s face. A small senior management task force was formed with Elliott as the external consultant and me as the internal advisor to review the issues. Elliott advised us that our product

launches required two very different types of teams, project and coordinative teams, and we would need to know how to transition from project teams, needed to analyze and recommend a product's inclusion in the portfolio, to coordinative teams needed to plan and execute the development and launch phases of the product launch process.

We analyzed and resolved the teams' issues using requisite organization design principles and practices. We developed the accountabilities and authorities of team leaders and members for both project and coordinative teams, clearly defined role relationships between teams and the rest of the organization, selection criteria and processes for team leaders and members, processes for delegation of authorities, and guidelines for applying human resource management policies-personal effectiveness appraisals, rewards and recognition, training and development, and other types of team support.

Guidelines for establishing and maintaining the teams were reviewed, revised and documented. The new team design and infrastructure reduced team frustration, increased morale and enabled the teams to get on with their work, including reducing launch times.

Celebrations were held and rewards and recognition granted. Elliott's principles were turning out to be useful and practical "stuff."

Assessing the Talent Pool and Communicating the Results

Roche, as all organizations, had increasing concerns about talent retention. A well designed organization structure would be meaningless if the Company could not retain and develop good talent.

A talent pool assessment process was developed to determine the strength of the current and future talent pool and the requirements for training and development, recruitment and succession planning.

The process cascaded down from the top to the operating level of the organization. Elliott, Nancy and I held discussions with immediate managers and their bosses about the capability of each of the individuals on their teams. Previous methods asked managers to rate employees on several different skills, behaviours, traits and factors indicating capability. This process had one central question or focus - at which organization level did the individual have the capability to do work now - if they could get the necessary training and experience and if the role was one which the individual valued doing?

Elliott and Nancy prepared and previewed with me a "wall-sized" progression chart showing all the data collected in our discussions; the organization level at which each individual could work today, his/her judged capability level and predictions about how that capability would mature over time.

I led a meeting of the Executive Committee to review and discuss the talent pool information displayed on the progression chart. The entire talent pool was displayed on the chart and the Committee could determine whether or not the organization had the current and future talent needed, information for employee development and succession planning, and information to help managers and their bosses to develop and sustain an effective team of people. As the discussion progressed, changes were made to some assessments to achieve the highest levels of fairness and accuracy.

We decided on a pilot test to communicate the assessment results to 50 randomly selected employees (stratified sampling). The pilot test results showed that these employees felt that the new system produced simpler and fairer assessments: simpler because employees and managers were using the same language and concepts about capability and considering one major factor; and fairer because of multiple inputs, including the employees' own input. They especially liked knowing assessments would be reviewed on an annual basis. The judgments were not "once and for all" judgments, but could be changed as significant and additional information about an employee's capability was revealed through the completion of task assignments or other accomplishments.

The pilot results showed that 49 of the 50 employees agreed with the assessments and all 50 commented that they felt the process was an excellent one. Our policy was that disagreements about assessments were noted and marked for review and resolution at a later time when more information was available

The immediate manager provided input to the assessment of a direct report and helped him/her prepare for talent pool discussions. The immediate manager's boss (Manager-once-Removed) made the judgment about an employee's capability and was accountable for helping that employee understand how his/her capability could best be developed in the context of the company's business requirements.

Roche Canada could see that, long term, effective management of the new system would allow for more accurate forecasting and planning of human resources, better training and career development programs, and more appropriate and respectful treatment for all employees. Overall, it was a clean and efficient process.

Managerial Leadership Training

Creating and presenting managerial leadership training programs was another important part of the Requisite Organization approach at "Roche".

Cognitive capability was a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective management. Managers needed to be trained and held accountable for specific managerial practices. The training placed emphasis on management practices not on “management styles”. As long as a manager’s behaviours were within the limits or bounds clearly articulated by the company, we learned to leave their personalities alone.

Nancy Lee, my staff and I provide all managers with opportunities to understand the managerial practices and the minimum authorities they needed to lead effectively and earn the trust of their direct reports.

Through role plays and discussions each practiced - selecting new employees, training and coaching, conducting two way planning meetings, setting context, direction and prescribed limits, defining tasks, appraising performance, conducting merit reviews, and initiating the removal of a direct report from a role.

Managers-once-removed learned they were accountable for - setting context and direction for the work of the two levels below them, integrating cross-functional work flows, human resource planning and development, making sure that the immediate managers exercise effective managerial leadership practices and treat their direct reports equitably and with respect.

These practices became the backbone of the company’s management training for all management levels. Our Human Resource management system and policies had been modified where necessary to be consistent with this training, that is, policies and procedures related to Recruitment, Interviewing and Hiring, Personal Effectiveness Appraisal, Career Planning and Advancement, and Reward and Recognition.

The training and development of Roche managers would ensure that managers were using consistent management practices, in line with the organization’s values, to secure the willing commitment and best endeavours of their direct reports. This would enable achievement of the organization’s desired outcomes and results, improve employee morale, and improve governance. Even our senior managers said they enjoyed and found the training beneficial.

Requisite Rewards and Recognition

We took an approach to rewards and recognition which was far “outside the box”. The nature of work is complex and employees must face and overcome unpredictable and unanticipated obstacles on their way to achieving a task/goal. This unpredictability, inherent especially in the complex work in the higher level roles, renders predictive criteria-based pay systems somewhat ineffective. These systems make no allowance for actual performance conditions that vary significantly from the predicted conditions and reward employees for achieving a

certain level of results or outcomes, usually quantitative. This directs employees to focus on how to achieve the numbers which could require behaviours not consistent with doing the right thing given the circumstances. Also, one employee might accomplish more complex and higher quality work under more difficult circumstances but with lower quantitative results and therefore a lower bonus amount than another whose less complex work under less difficult circumstances generated higher quantitative results and therefore a larger bonus amount (for example the inevitable “windfalls” in sales).

As a result the bonus programs sometimes caused poor morale, precipitated employee behaviours outside of acceptable standards, and created poor relationships between management and employees. Employees would often ask, “What does the bonus, compared to base pay, reward or pay me for?” “Does it mean the company does not expect my full commitment and best performance for the base pay I receive?” These were difficult questions to answer.

Each of the three Roche Canada business divisions had the authority, however, to decide what they felt was best for their business - to retain or eliminate bonus pay schemes. They decided to roll incentive pay into base salary. Two divisions retained incentives as a small part of total compensation for sales and marketing staff.

Special awards, reviewed by the appropriate manager and the Human Resources department to ensure consistency of treatment, could still be granted to any employee for exceptional performance. But these cases were determined after the fact - that is, at the end of the performance period.

There was a great deal of work for the Human Resources department reviewing the impact of this change on salary driven benefits programs and particularly on the defined benefit pension plan. It was a change affordable by the company.

The entire compensation program was reviewed to ensure pay ranges were linked to organization levels and levels of complexity of work. Clearly defined role accountabilities and alignment of work complexity with organization levels reduced concerns about lack of equity and fairness in performance assessment and increased consistency and reliability amongst managers in judging performance. Managers were able to make more accurate judgments about performance and recommend fair merit increases. We replaced the five performance appraisal categories, which ranged from “outstanding” to “unacceptable”, with six performance categories which would enable more accurate judgments of an individual’s performance against the requirements of the role. The new rating categories asked the manager to judge where in the range of the role an individual was performing-like someone in the top or bottom half of the role and at which of three levels in each of these halves - high, mid or low.

The manager-once-removed (the manager's boss) reviewed the performance ratings and recommended merit increases prepared by his/her managers, to ensure each was applying a standard, fair and accurate rating process to all employees.

Performance appraisals and merit increases, two highly emotionally charged issues could now be handled more efficiently and effectively.

Employees were fully aware that the changes in the compensation and performance management program meant the "performance bar" had not been lowered (it had just been raised) and they agreed this exchange was fair.

The Requisite Principles and Roche Strategic Planning

The Requisite Organization Principles had another important impact. Vic was interested in implementing Norton and Kaplan's "Balanced Scorecard" concept but wanted to ensure it was consistent with the Requisite Organization approach. He asked Elliott, Nancy and I to work out how to apply the Scorecard concept. What needed to be worked out was how to apply the Scorecard concept in a multi-functional, multi-level organization.

The approach we developed strengthened the business planning process for managers who were already very adept at business planning. Scorecard deliverables or "Key Goals" and "Indicators" were developed with targeted completion times appropriate for each organization level. Goals were aligned and integrated, including appropriate Time Spans, from the level of the President down to the first organization level and horizontally across all functions.

This process enabled every employee to have a "Key Goals" card and to see how his/her "Key Goals" aligned with those at the next higher organization level. For example, function Vice Presidents working with the President were accountable for developing and achieving "5 year end goals or deliverables" which were integrated with the President's "5 year interim goals" which led to achievement of his "10 year vision" for the organization.

"Key Goals" would be updated annually or as dictated by events. A mid-course "temperature reading" was planned for each six months. A periodic review of the Key Indicators would be used to reveal any deviations from course and determine satisfactory performance. In addition the senior team would reflect upon the progress made and the soundness of the premises upon which the "Key Goals" were set. Regardless of whether or not the Indicators showed progress to be on target, further reflection on emerging conditions and further changes might suggest that the original goals were too conservative, or too optimistic or in the wrong direction and therefore in need of modification.

The overall goal of the process was of course to ensure that every function and employee understood what individual and team contributions were necessary to help Roche Canada achieve its goals.

Summary

Ten years have gone by since the work with Elliott Jaques and Nancy Lee was completed. Many parts of this “Roche Management System,” despite changes in senior management, have been retained.

The scientific approach to organization and management had provided Roche a sharper understanding of the nature of the organization - just what sort of thing it is, how it is made up, how it functions, and some of the best ways of managing it. It added value by enhancing the decisions which depend upon or impact good organization and management. For example, Roche had better answers to questions such as, How do we retain our focus on customers, markets, and the competition? How can we better execute our strategies? What employee development investments will provide the greatest return for the company and the employee? How do we link our human resources to the company’s strategy?

The Principles enabled Roche Canada to strengthen its organization structure, accurately assess employee capability, train and hold managers accountable for the best managerial practices and clarify managerial and cross-functional accountabilities and authorities.

The approach provided immediate benefits to Roche Canada and there was much more to be learned and gained if management could have maintained, long term, a full commitment to the Requisite Organization Principles.

Lessons Learned at Roche Canada

I believe that many of the lessons learned at Roche Canada about organization and management could form part of the innovative and successful recovery strategies needed to address the continuing crisis in the pharmaceutical industry. While a wide variety of interdependent and complex solutions are necessary to steer the industry through a turbulent environment, one that has not been considered, is a scientific and well researched approach to organization and management.

The key lessons on organization and management for the pharmaceutical industry include:

1. Getting the number of organization levels right

Getting the number of organization levels right is paramount. Unless we got just the right number, sustainable organization growth and development would be greatly constrained. In this we were lucky that Roche already had the number of levels right overall.

2. Aligning organization levels and employee capability

Organization levels are categories of work complexity. The alignment of these levels, employee capability and compensation are necessary to obtain efficient and effective results and outcomes.

3. Alignment of the organization's spine

The correct number of vertical levels and the optimal grouping of functions form the spine of the organization. Until the levels and groupings are optimal, all other initiatives will be sub-optimal (e.g., business planning, defining accountabilities and authorities, selection and development of employees, establishing and managing teams, etc).

4. Vertical Distance Between Managers and Direct Reports

Managers must be one level above the direct report in terms of capability and the level of complexity of work performed. When the relationship is too close, with manager and direct report working at the same organization level, the direct report is micro-managed and cannot use his/her initiative. When the relationship is too far apart, the manager feels the direct report lacks capability and initiative. Likewise, the direct report feels the manager does not provide good context, direction and support for the work. Getting this working relationship right is the most powerful factor in organization structuring and design.

5. Clear and common understanding of what it means to be a manager and clearly defined managerial accountabilities and authorities

Effective understanding and implementation of these accountabilities and authorities ensures good governance, good leadership and the development and maintenance of a trust based organization.

6. Clear cross-functional accountabilities and authorities

Clear cross-functional accountabilities and authorities (rather than the vague and confusing definitions of "dotted line or lateral relationships" and "matrix organizations") are essential to reduce organization silos, "turfs" and create effective working relationships between functions increasing the flow and quality of work across the organization.

The increasingly intense levels of interactions required between functions, corporate offices and country level affiliates, and across the supply chain demands clear specification of accountabilities and authorities. Unclear accountabilities and authorities lead to extreme inefficiencies and acrimonious working relationships.

7. Effective Managerial Leadership Practices

Capability or raw cognitive power is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective managerial leadership. Clearly defined managerial leadership accountabilities, authorities and practices are essential for good organization governance and performance.

8. High Performing Teams

Well-established project and coordinative teams can accomplish the intense collaborative work required within and between the major functions of pharmaceutical organizations. To enable high performing teams requires - clear accountabilities and authorities of team leaders and members for both project and coordinative teams, clearly defined role relationships between teams and the rest of the organization, selection criteria and processes for team leaders and members, processes for delegation of authorities, and guidelines for applying human resource management policies - personal effectiveness appraisals, rewards and recognition, training and development, and other types of team support.

Summary

With good organization and management as one of its key initiatives, the pharmaceutical industry would be better positioned to regain credibility with customers, suppliers and other key stakeholders. This would be an additional strategic resource to generate a robust future for an industry that creates critically important health care solutions.

Charlotte Bygrave, Toronto

April, 2005



OUR PURPOSE

The Global Organization Design Society is a not-for-profit corporation registered in Ontario, Canada to promote the following objective:

The establishment and operation of a world-wide society of academics, business users and consultants interested in science-based management to improve organizational effectiveness for the purposes of:

Promoting among existing users increased awareness, understanding and skilled knowledge in applying concepts of Levels of Work Complexity, Levels of Human Capability, Accountability, and other concepts included in Requisite Organization and/or Stratified Systems Theory.

Promoting among potential users of the methods, appreciation of the variety of uses and benefits of science-based management, and access to resources.

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