ASSESSING LEADER GOAL-ORIENTATION, FOLLOWER-FOCUS, AND PURPOSE-IN-LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENT AND INITIAL TESTING OF THE *PURPOSE IN LEADERSHIP INVENTORY*

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ABSTRACT

Various, and sometimes divergent, threads in the leadership literature emphasize the importance of leaders focusing on followers, focusing on goals, and having a sense of purpose and meaning in leadership. In order to facilitate further study into follower-perceptions of leaders around these themes, the researcher has developed and initially tested the Purpose in Leadership Inventory. Based on the relevant literature an item pool was developed for leader attitudes around the leadership themes of follower-focus, goal-orientation, and purpose-in-leadership. A convenience sample of followers (N=354) was used to evaluate their leaders around the three leadership themes. In addition to providing this evaluation, participants also provided an assessment of their leader's effectiveness. After a factor analysis process, including a principal component analysis extraction method and an Oblimin rotation method, a 24-item inventory provided the strongest overall set of factors. The three factors explained 70.01% of the variance in the factor analysis, and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also conducted with positive results. The three scales had the following Cronbach alpha scores: (a) Follower-Focus, .966, (b) Goal-Orientation, .919, and (c) Purpose-in-Leadership, .896. As expected, the three factors positively correlated with the leadership effectiveness scale demonstrating the inventory's convergent validity. In this report, an overview of the instrument's development as well as the associated data collection and analysis is provided.

INTRODUCTION

Developing new instruments to measure leadership variables is one of the keys to ongoing advancement of the field. The inventory developed in this study was designed to measure three dimensions of leader attitude and practice—*goal-orientation, follower-focus, and purpose-in-leadership*. As the field of leadership studies has grown throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century, noticeable shifts are observable. Leader-centered models have been moderated by the emphases brought through approaches such as transformational leadership and servant leadership. With these emphases have come, "an important step toward balancing the needs of both leaders and followers as they work toward fulfilling organizational goals" (Matteson & Irving, 2006, p. 36). Although balancing the needs of leaders and followers is important, it is also important to navigate the balance of follower-focus and goal-orientation—leader behaviors historically associated with different approaches to leadership.

Key authors in the area of servant leadership note that follower-focus is a hallmark of servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977; Laub, 1999; Patterson, 2003; van Dierendonck & Patterson,

2010). In contrasting transformational leadership with servant leadership, Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) argue that "The transformational leader's focus is directed toward the organization, and his or her behavior builds follower commitment toward organizational objectives, while the servant leader's focus is on the followers, and the achievement of organizational objectives is a subordinate outcome" (p. 349). Drawing from both of these theories of leadership, effective leaders generally need to engage in both follower-focus and goal-orientation within organizations. The current study provides an inventory for measuring follower perceptions of leaders around both of these critical areas of leadership focus.

In addition to these two important areas of *follower-focus* and *goal-orientation*, the inventory developed in this study adds a third variable—*purpose-in-leadership*. Purpose-in-leadership as a variable is based on the work of individuals such as Paul Wong. Wong (1998; 2006; Wong & Fry, 1998) and others have focused on meaning-centered approaches to leadership and management that take seriously the importance of meaning and purpose for individuals—leaders and followers alike. Such approaches arguably serve as a basis for shaping an organization's culture that both focuses on followers and orients the community around goals. As such, the three constructs measured in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory (PLI) are discrete variables but are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The researcher hopes that the PLI may be used to advance the study of leadership around these important variables, and contribute to further understanding how these leader attitudes and associated behaviors relate to one another and other important organizational variables and outcomes.

In a previous article, the researcher (Irving, 2011) identified three primary leadership clusters associated with effectiveness: (a) beginning with authentic leaders, (b) understanding the priority of people, and (c) helping followers navigate toward effectiveness. This model of leadership clusters provides a conceptual backdrop to the current study emphasizing the attitudinal dimensions of purpose-in-leadership (*authentic leaders*), follower-focus (*understanding the priority of people*), and goal-orientation (*navigating toward effectiveness*). In this article, the researcher provides a review of the literature surrounding each of these variables, provides an overview of the research methods used to evaluate the PLI, provides an overview of the analysis and findings, and provides a discussion of how the new inventory may be used to further the study of leadership around these three variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW: GOAL-ORIENTATION
For the literature review, we will begin with the most common of the three leadership characteristics. Healthy organizations generally include leaders and organizational stakeholders who care about outcomes and meeting goals. This is likely most evident in the business sector where managing bottom-line financial outcomes and goals is critical for ongoing existence as a business. But goals matter for other sectors as well. An emphasis on measuring performance in government, public, and nonprofit organizations is growing (Poister, 2003; Marr, 2009). Accrediting associations for educational institutions increasingly emphasize the importance of measuring student learning outcomes (Hernon & Dugan, 2004; Nusche, 2008). And as organizations across multiple sectors continue to prioritize goals and performance, so leaders who orient around goals become a priority for these organizations.

One leadership theory dominating the field in the 1970s and 1980s was path-goal theory. Path-goal theory, initially discussed by Evans and House (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House and Dessler, 1974; House and Mitchell, 1974) emphasizes the importance of leaders coming along side followers and subordinates as they work toward goals. Path-goal leaders help by defining goals, clarifying the path, removing obstacles, and providing support. Based on subordinate and task characteristics, path-goal leaders draw from directive, supportive, participative, and

achievement-oriented behaviors in their work of motivating followers toward goal achievement and productivity. The variable of goal-orientation in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory is consistent with the general goal-orientation of leadership in path-goal leadership.

As follower-focus is addressed next, it is important to emphasize that although some in leadership may emphasize goal-orientation more than follower-focus, or vice versa, goal-orientation and follower-focus are not mutually exclusive—they can, and do, exist in harmony within the leadership practice of many leaders. From a servant leadership perspective, which emphasizes serving the needs of the followers as a primary leadership responsibility, it is arguable that "a commitment to providing accountability is consistent with a commitment to valuing and developing followers" (Irving, 2011, p. 127). While different leaders will emphasize one of these more than another, healthy and effective leaders understand that there is an intimate relationship between both focusing on followers and seeing goals accomplished.

LITERATURE REVIEW: FOLLOWER-FOCUS
Building on goal-orientation, the 1970s through today have seen increased emphasis on the role of followers and the importance of leaders focusing on followers. A major thread of this emphasis is found in the work of servant leadership theorists and researchers. Greenleaf (1977), known by many as   pioneering the emphasis on follower-focus in contemporary leadership studies, wrote about the servant-leader in the following manner:

> The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 27)

Based on Greenleaf's comments, we may observe that those leaders approaching their task from a leader-first orientation often have a tendency to use service for the purpose of achieving goals and may do so to the exclusion of authentically considering followers. In contrast, the servant-first orientation is focused on making "sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 27) and is a follower-oriented approach to leadership (Laub, 1999; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Matteson & Irving, 2006; Irving & Longbothom, 2007). In line with this path of study, Patterson (2003) engages the role that servant leadership theory plays in contrast to other leadership approaches by prioritizing and highlighting the needs of followers. Similarly, Hale and Fields (2007) emphasize follower development and argue for the importance of placing the good of followers over the self-interests of the leader.

Several works have compared the focus of transformational leadership and servant leadership. Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) emphasize the contextual differences with transformational leadership being more oriented toward dynamic organizational environments and servant leadership being more oriented toward stable organizational environments. Others emphasize transformational leadership being more focused toward the organization and organizational goals while servant leadership is more focused on followers (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Matteson & Irving, 2005; van Dierendonck, 2011). On this point, van Dierendonck writes: "This is exactly where servant leadership and transformational leadership differ. The primary allegiance of transformational leaders is the organization (Graham, 1991).

The personal growth of followers is seen within the context of what is good for the organization, because of a desire to perform better" (p. 1235). In contrast to this emphasis of transformational leaders, servant leaders see the value and growth of followers as primary, not secondary. Matteson & Irving (2006) argue that while transformational leadership provided a significant step toward balancing the needs of leaders and followers, theoretical models such as servant leadership and self-sacrificial leadership have followed with an intentional approach that is more and primarily follower-oriented. The follower-focused variable in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory is consistent with and flows out of the general emphases in the literature stream noted above.

LITERATURE REVIEW: PURPOSE-IN-LEADERSHIP
Building upon *goal-orientation* and *follower-focus*, we come to the literature review of the third variable in the inventory—*purpose-in-leadership*. As noted in the introduction, purpose-in-leadership as a variable is based on the work of individuals such as Paul Wong. Wong (2006; Wong & Fry, 1998) and others (Autrey, 1994; Leider, 1997; Conyne, 1998; Terez, 2000; Weisbord, 2004) engage the importance of meaning-centered approaches to leadership and management. These approaches highlight the significance of meaning and purpose for individuals and organizations. Wong (2006) notes that people inherently desire to belong to meaningful and purposeful agendas and organizations. Making a similar point, Albrecht (1994) writes, "Those who would aspire to leadership roles in this new environment must not underestimate the depth of this human need for meaning. It is a most fundamental human craving, an appetite that will not go away" (p. 22). This human craving for meaning shapes leaders and followers alike, and is increasingly important to study in our day.

As Coombs (2002) notes, "People are thinking about the words 'meaning' and 'purpose' more than ever before" (p.46), and it is arguable that purpose and meaning may be viewed as a key pathway to intrinsic motivation for leaders and followers. In contrast to approaches that aim to manage particular follower behavior toward desired outcomes, meaning-centered approaches aim to motivate organizational members intrinsically. This holds the power to shape organizational culture. Engaging the connection between meaning and organizational culture, Wong (2002; 2006) argues that meaning-centered approaches to leadership and management help to avoid toxic corporate cultures such as those that are overly authoritarian, conflictive, laissez faire, corrupt, and rigid. He further argues that a shift to positive corporate cultures such as progressive-adaptive, purpose-driven, community-oriented, and people-centered contribute to intrinsically motivated high-performance in light of the capacity of these cultures to meet people's deepest needs for meaning, community, spirituality, and agency.

One foundational theory to meaning and purpose-based approaches is Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy (Pattakos, 2004). Viktor Frankl, who lived from 1905-1997, was a survivor of imprisonment in a concentration camp during WWII. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (1984), Frankl identified meaning as a central factor enabling people to endure torture and injustice. The will to meaning is the focal structure of Frankl's system of logotherapy according to which "man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a 'secondary rationalization' of instinctual drives" (p. 121). Frankl (1992) also analyzed what he called purpose-in-life. Regarding purpose-in-life, Sosik (2000) writes, "PIL represents a positive attitude toward possessing a future-oriented self-transcendent goal in life. PIL can be described in terms of its depth (strength) and type (content) of meaning associated with the goal" (p. 4). The purpose-in-leadership variable in the present study applies the logic of Frankl's purpose-in-life to the realm of organizational leadership, and builds on Wong's (2006) argument for the priority of meaning-centered approaches to working with followers.

Sosik (2000) defines personal meaning, "as that which makes one's life most important, coherent and worthwhile" (p. 61). Similarly, Korotkov (1998) defines meaningfulness as, "the degree to which people's lives make emotional sense and that the demands confronted by them are perceived as being worthy of energy and commitment" (p. 55). Irving and Klenke (2004) argue that, "A leader's sense of personal meaning provides him or her with the conceptual spine to endure in difficult circumstances." In light of such conceptual spine, and the related priority of resiliency in leadership (Howard & Irving, 2012; Howard & Irving, 2013), the capacity of meaning-centered approaches to aid individuals and leaders in helping them see "that the demands confronted by them are perceived as being worthy of energy and commitment" (Korotkov, p. 55) highlights the importance of purpose-in-leadership. As Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) note, "Employees [and leaders of these employees] want to feel that the work they do is worthwhile, rather than just a way to draw a paycheck," and to see their investment in work and their organization as, "a transformation of its meaning—from drudgery to a source of personal significance and fulfillment" (p. 18). The purpose-in-leadership scale in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory provides a tool for studying this important dimension of meaning and purpose in leadership.

METHOD

A convenience sample of followers (N=354) responded to the instrument and evaluated their leaders around the three leadership themes as well as provided relevant demographics and a measure of the effectiveness of their leaders. The average age of followers in the study was 45.56, and 55.2% were male and 44.8% were female. The education level of followers was .6% less than high school, .3% high school or GED, 5.5% some college, 2.3% associates, 25.1% bachelors, 46.1% masters, and 20.2% doctorate. The leaders evaluated by followers had an average age of 51.33, and were 77% male and 23% female. The leaders evaluated worked in the following organizational sectors: 12.1% business, 2.3% government, 28.6% education, 9.8% nonprofit, 43.6% religious, 3.2% other. The education level of the leaders was .3% less than high school, 2.3% high school or GED, 2.0% some college, .9% associates, 22.9% bachelors, 35.7% masters, and 35.9% doctorate. Followers reported an average of 6.03 years reporting to the leaders evaluated in the study.

An item pool of 46 items was developed for the instrument around the themes of follower-focus, goal-orientation, and purpose-in-leadership. The items were developed based on relevant emphases in the associated literature, and the researcher gathered scholarly perspectives on the format and wording of the research instrument. Participants were contacted by email and invited to an electronic version of the inventory housed through Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). Participants were asked to respond to a set of questions about one current or past leader. An example of three items in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory is provided in Figure 1:

Figure 1: *Example PLI Items*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please respond to the following items based on the degree to which the statement characterizes your leader.						
My leader is focused on the needs of followers.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My leader is able to stay focused on organizational goals.	○	○	○	○	○	○

My leader believes that what our organization does matters.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Once the participants responded to the inventory, the researcher analyzed the data to determine the strongest set of items; the item pool was reduced based on this analysis. After this, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was taken along with Bartlett's test of sphericity. The researcher was looking for a KMO value of .8 or higher and a Bartlett's significance value of less than .05. A principal component analysis extraction method and an Oblimin rotation method were used. Eigenvalues were analyzed, and factors were included when the eigenvalues were greater than 1.0. Of the factors included, the researcher was looking for these factors to cumulatively account for at least 60% of the total variance. Once the factors were identified, alpha coefficients were calculated for the scales; the researcher was looking for a minimum alpha coefficient of .70 for each of the scales. Additionally, participants were asked to evaluate the leadership effectiveness of their leaders, and this measure of leadership effectiveness was hypothesized to positively correlate with each of the PLI factors. Pearson r correlations were conducted to evaluate the relationship between these items and the three factors. A significance level of .05 or less was set to accept the relationships as statistically significant.

FINDINGS
Based upon initial analyses, the item pool of 46 items was quickly reduced to 33 items after item coefficients less than .3 were suppressed and items that loaded on multiple factors were removed. The initial 33-item factor analysis yielded 18 items for follower-focus, 8 items for goal-orientation, and 7 items for purpose-in-leadership. For this solution, these three factors each had eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and explained 69.659% of the cumulative variance. Additionally, this solution had a KMO value of .967, a Bartlett's test of sphericity significance value of .000, and the alpha coefficients for the three scales were .979 (follower-focus), .919 (goal-orientation), and .896 (purpose-in-leadership). All of the findings noted for the 33-item solution meet the standards set for accepting the factors and scales noted in the previous section.

Because the 18-items on follower-focus were over twice as many as goal-orientation and purpose-in-leadership, items in the factor with coefficients less than .8 were suppressed in order to reduce the number of items in the follower-focus factor. After doing this, a 24-item solution yielded 9 items for follower-focus, 8 items for goal-orientation, and 7 items for purpose-in-leadership (See Pattern Matrix, Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Pattern Matrix for 24-Item Solution* (values below .3 suppressed in factor analysis)

	Pattern Matrix Components		
	1 – Follower-Focus	2 – Goal Orientation	3 – Purpose-in-Leadership
Follower-Focus – 1	.903		
Follower-Focus – 2	.873		
Follower-Focus – 3	.872		
Follower-Focus – 4	.869		
Follower-Focus – 5	.856		
Follower-Focus – 6	.828		
Follower-Focus – 7	.824		
Follower-Focus – 8	.813		
Follower-Focus – 9	.808		
Goal-Orientation – 1		.830	
Goal-Orientation – 2		.764	
Goal-Orientation – 3		.747	

Goal-Orientation – 4	.736	
Goal-Orientation – 5	.730	
Goal-Orientation – 6	.715	
Goal-Orientation – 7	.665	
Goal-Orientation – 8	.624	
Purpose-in-Leadership – 1		.906
Purpose-in-Leadership – 2		.878
Purpose-in-Leadership – 3		.753
Purpose-in-Leadership – 4		.610
Purpose-in-Leadership – 5		.604
Purpose-in-Leadership – 6		.554
Purpose-in-Leadership – 7		.548

For this solution, the three factors each had eigenvalues greater than 1.5 (1.0 was set as a minimum) and explained 70.013% (60% was set as the minimum) of the cumulative variance (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: *24-Item Solution*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1 – Follower-Focus	12.468	51.951	51.951
2 – Goal-Orientation	2.768	11.533	63.485
3 – Purpose-in-Leadership	1.567	6.528	70.013

Additionally, this solution had a KMO value (see Figure 4) of .967 (.8 was set as a minimum), and a Bartlett's test of sphericity significance value of .000 (.05 was set as a maximum).

Figure 4: *KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.949
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6559.143
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

The alpha coefficients (a minimum was set at .70) for the three scales were .966 (follower-focus), .919 (goal-orientation), and .896 (purpose-in-leadership). The reduction of follower-focus from 18 items to 9 items only resulted in a reduction of the alpha coefficient from .979 to .966, both very strong indications of scale reliability. The alpha coefficients for goal-orientation and purpose-in-leadership also are strong indications of scale reliability and well above the stated minimum of .70 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: *Alpha Coefficients Scale Reliability Analysis*

Scale	Alpha Coefficient
Follower-Focus	.966
Goal-Orientation	.919
Purpose-in-Leadership	.896

All of the findings noted for the 24-item solution meet and exceed the standards set for accepting the factors and scales. Because the 24-item solution largely parallels the results of the 33-item solution in critical areas, and because it offers a more efficient set of items, the 24-item solution has been adopted.

Once the 24-item model of three factors was adopted, the scales were measured against a six item leadership effectiveness scale. The three factors were hypothesized to positively correlate with the leadership effectiveness scale and this analysis was used to help establish convergent validity for the Purpose in Leadership Inventory. The six items of the leadership effectiveness scale were developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) and used in Hale and Fields' study (2007). The leadership effectiveness scale focuses on follower perceptions of their leader around the extent to which the respondents believed they (a) worked at a high level of performance under their leader, (b) enjoyed working for their leader, (c) got along well with their leader, (d) found the leadership style of the leader compatible with their own, (e) admired their leader, and (f) felt this leader was similar to their ideal leader. The alpha coefficient for the leadership effectiveness scale used in this study was .906. The scale correlated with the three factors in the Purpose in Leadership Inventory at a high level of significance ($p = .000$). The Pearson r correlations for the relationship between leadership effectiveness and three PLI scales are .840 for follower-focus, .684 for goal-orientation, and .690 for purpose-in-leadership (see Figure 6). Because these were measures of follower perceptions of their leader, it is also relevant to note that it is logical that followers would evaluate follower-focus more positively.

Figure 6: *PLI Correlations with Leadership Effectiveness (LE)*

	Follower-Focus	Goal-Orientation	Purpose-in-Leadership
Correlation with LE	$r = .840$	$r = .684$	$r = .690$
Significance	$p = .000$	$p = .000$	$p = .000$

DISCUSSION
Based on the findings, the Purpose in Leadership Inventory performed well in its initial testing. The factor analysis revealed a solution explaining 70.01% of the variance with items loading strongly on three discrete factors. The reliability of the factors was strong as evidenced by the following alpha coefficients: .966 for follower-focus, .919 for goal-orientation, and .896 for purpose-in-leadership. The instrument has face validity with the items loading around logical factor sets consistent with the item content. Additionally, the construct validity of the factors was confirmed in an examination of convergent validity. Each of the Purpose in Leadership Inventory factors demonstrated convergent validity with the leadership effectiveness scale used by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) and Hale and Fields (2007). One weakness of the study is that an additional measure was not included in the study in order to examine a test of discriminant validity.

The Purpose in Leadership Inventory holds promise for advancing the study of leadership around the leader variables of follower-focus, goal-orientation, and purpose-in-leadership. The inventory provides a tool that measures follower perceptions of their leaders based on their leadership attitudes and associated behaviors. This approach is based on Matteson and Irving's (2006) discussion of the ontological, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions of leadership, and focuses on studying leadership behavior through an evaluation of the attitudinal dimension of leadership. As a 24-item inventory with three scales, the instrument is an efficient approach to measuring follower perceptions of their leaders around these important factors. In this study, leadership effectiveness was found to be significantly correlated with all three of the leadership variables in

the Purpose-in-Leadership inventory.

While each of the scales are a helpful addition to the field, the purpose-in-leadership scale perhaps holds the most promise for adding a unique contribution to the future study of leadership. In a previous article, the researcher suggests the vital role that meaning and purpose play in leadership effectiveness (Irving & Klenke, 2004). With the addition of the purpose-in-leadership scale, a significant tool now exists for establishing the connection between meaning and leadership effectiveness. In fact, one of the findings of this study demonstrates the connection of purpose-in-leadership and leadership effectiveness ($r = .690$; $p = .000$). Hopefully this study opens the door to future study of the role of meaning and purpose in leadership, as well as the role of follower-focus and goal-orientation.

RECOMMENDATIONS
While the factor correlations presented in Figure 6 provide convergent validity, the instrument would also benefit from establishing discriminant validity; as noted above, including a scale that allows for an analysis of discriminant validity would help to strengthen the validity of the inventory. Also, additional factor analysis with the inventory is in order; pursing confirmatory factor analysis with structural equation modeling software like LISREL would be helpful. Further, it would be helpful to administer the instrument with diverse populations and among diverse sectors to insure it functions similarly among various demographic populations. It would also be helpful to use the Purpose in Leadership Inventory to see how the three scales relate to diverse variables—variables such as leadership effectiveness (included in this study) and other important leadership and organizational variables.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION
In this paper the researcher provided an overview of the development and initial analysis of the Purpose in Leadership Inventory. An overview of the literature related to follower-focus, goal-orientation, and purpose-in-leadership was provided. Methods and findings of the factor analysis, reliability coefficients, and convergent validity analyses were presented. Finally, a discussion and set of recommendations were brought reflecting on the significance of the inventory and how it may be further studied and used in leadership studies in the future. It is the researcher's hope that the Purpose in Leadership Inventory may serve many other leadership researchers as together we seek to advance the field of leadership studies.

AUTHOR NOTE
Those interested in using the Purpose in Leadership Inventory for research or within their organization may contact the author in the following manner: j-irving@bethel.edu or justinirving@gmail.com

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