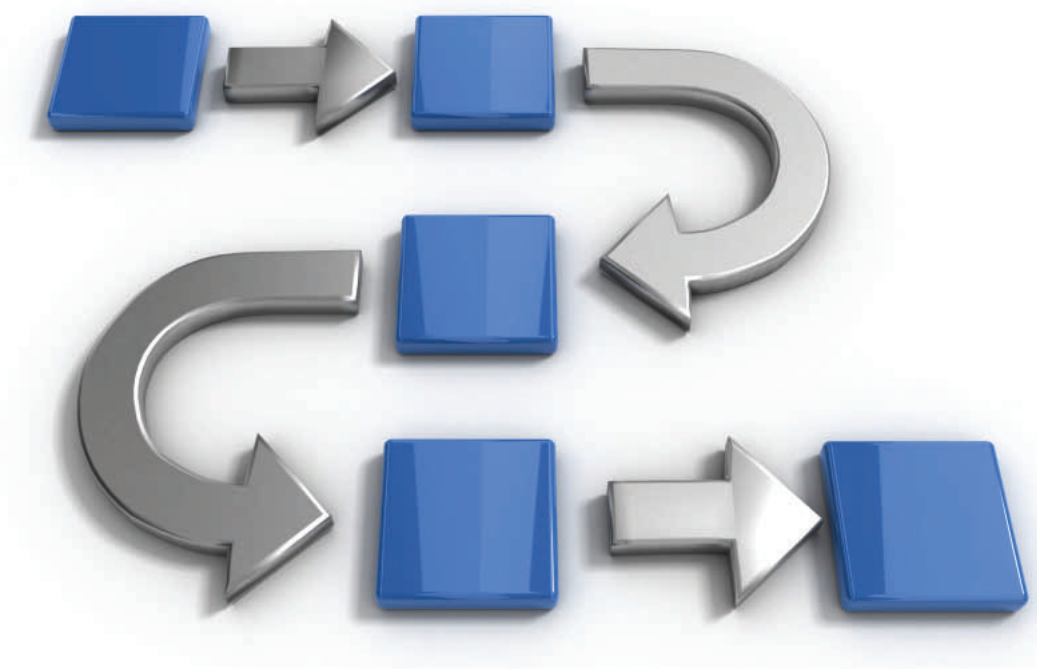


Retreat to Advance:

The Process of Strategic Planning



Nora Riva Bergman

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Basic Strategic Planning Terms

Mission

This mission statement sets forth the association's reason for existence. It can be thought of as the "constitution" of the organization by which all decisions are measured, including the strategic plan.

Vision

A vision statement literally creates the vision of the association, i.e. "Where do we want to be in five or ten years?"

Values

The values statement defines what the association stands for. The values expressed must be consistent with the mission of the association.

Objectives

Objectives are specific accomplishments that must be achieved in total, or in some combination, to realize the goals in the plan. Objectives are usually "milestones" along the way when implementing the strategies.

Strategies

These are the methods or processes required in total, or in some combination, to achieve the objectives.

Action Steps

Action steps are those very specific tasks required to implement the plan. They are assigned to specific people for completion and include deadlines, measurable outcomes, and resources required. When executed, the action steps literally bring the plan into reality. Without them, most plans fail.

Resources

Resources include the people, materials, technologies, money, etc., required to implement the strategies or processes. The costs of these resources are often depicted in the form of a budget.

Plan Champion

The person responsible to report on the plan's progress and ensure the plan is regularly reviewed during board meetings and considered during the budgeting process.

*"If you don't know
what you are building,
no tool will help."*

- Nirenberg



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I. Pre-Retreat: Planning & Preparation

What is strategic planning?

Although most bar associations regularly engage in what they refer to as strategic planning, many may not have really considered exactly what strategic planning is. Simply put, strategic planning is a process that determines where an association is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there, and how it will know when (and if) it arrived.

Adapted from *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning & Facilitation*, by Carter McNamara, M.B.A., Ph.D., Authenticity Consulting, LLC., Copyright 1997-2008

Most strategic planning processes involve three stages: 1. Scanning the environment – this stage includes obtaining both internal and external feedback, most often through member satisfaction surveys, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) surveys. 2. Creating the plan/setting objectives – this stage typically involves the strategic planning retreat, itself, which can take place in one day or over several days. 3. Implementation – In the implementation phase, strategies are developed to achieve the set objectives. Implementation includes the ongoing actions that translate the ideas of the retreat into results.

The following guidelines may help your association get the most out of the strategic planning experience.

1. The real benefit of the strategic planning process is the process, not the plan document.
2. There is no "perfect" plan. There's doing your best at strategic thinking and implementation, and learning from what you're doing to enhance what you do the next time around.
3. The traditional strategic planning process is usually not an "aha!" experience. It's like the management process itself -- it's a series of small moves that together keep the association doing things right as it heads in the right direction. (*But see Traditional v. Results Oriented Planning, below.*)
4. In planning, things usually aren't as bad as you fear, nor as good as you'd like.
5. Start simple, but start!

Adapted from *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning & Facilitation*



"Whatever you can do or dream, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

- Goethe

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Traditional v. Results-Oriented Planning

According to Roger Kaufman, in his book *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance and Payoffs*, Traditional Planning can be characterized as planning that improves the present model. The change created is incremental. Results Oriented Planning Strategic Planning is, “by definition, paradigm busting.” It involves new concepts, new rules, new skills. The change created is exponential. “It often requires leaving the comfortable behind.” What type of planning would be most effective for your association?

Traditional Planning vs. the High Payoff Results-Oriented Paradigm.	
Traditional Planning	The High Payoff Results-Oriented Paradigm
1. Improve the present model—more of the same. Incremental changes to the present way of doing things. Stick to same old rules but do it better.	1. Strategic thinking is by definition “paradigm busting.” It involves new concepts, realistic new rules, new techniques, and new skills to be successful.
2. Short-term objectives. Objectives project five years at most.	2. Long-term objectives that design a better world for both today’s and tomorrow’s members.
3. Dwells on tactics and activities unconnected to measurable results. Wants are often confused with needs.	3. Focuses on designing future results in measurable terms before selecting relevant strategies and tactics.
4. “Needs” are defined as gaps in resources methods and means (We “need” more buildings, we want more computers).	4. Needs are defined as gaps in results between current and desired results. Requirement for more resources are quasi-needs.
5. Level of planning focuses on immediate members.	5. Planning includes the integration and linking of members & non-members
6. Goals are more often general, vague, and exclude measurable elements.	6. Objectives are SMARTER. They are written for results at three levels, and include a measurable element.
7. Visions are more often short term. Organizational missions are “fuzzy” and sound good but don’t include the next generation of members.	7. The organizational vision defines the contribution the organization will make to the ideal vision in measurable terms. Visions are about value added—now and in the future.
8. No shared meaning of what an organization is or must deliver—usually treated as collection of unrelated parts.	8. Shared meaning on the elements common to all organizations, systemic mental models emphasize relationship between the parts.

Adapted from *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance and Payoffs*, by Roger Kaufman, Hugh Oakley-Brown, Ryan Watkins, and Doug Lee

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Why are we changing?

Change is a process, not an event. Change must be useful and aligned with the mission of the association. It cannot simply be change for the sake of change.

Bar leaders must balance between their vision and their bar association's mission when creating a strategic plan. This balance may be a delicate one. If the bar association has a mission statement or current strategic plan in place, then the leader's vision for the association must take those things into account.

Before setting forth on a strategic planning mission, bar leaders must review their association's mission statement and strategic plan, then ask themselves: How can I contribute in way that is consistent with our mission and plan and, at the same time, create a vision that I'm passionate about? How can I create a vision that will inspire others who come after me to continue to move our association forward consistent with our mission and plan? Bar leaders are caretakers of their associations. There is an ancient Native American saying that serves as a wonderful metaphor for bar leadership.

"Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Bar leaders must think of the bar association as their planet – their earth. You are the caretaker. As the caretakers, bar leaders can set a bold path for the association that is consistent with its mission and strategic plan.

*"Change is the law of life.
And those who look only to
the past or present are
certain to miss the future."*

- John F. Kennedy



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The process of strategic thinking and strategic planning involves shifting our paradigms and asking hard questions:

1. Why are we changing?
2. What are we changing to?
3. What are we changing? And what is staying the same?
4. How can we change effectively?
5. How can we measure whether change has occurred?
6. Is it the right change?
7. Have we improved performance and payoffs as a result of the change?
8. Was the change worthy enough to justify the effort?

From *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance and Payoffs*, by Roger Kaufman, Hugh Oakley-Brown, Ryan Watkins, and Doug Lee

These questions require the leaders (sponsors, champions) to agree on what they are changing and why. This is essential to the planning process. Effective change cannot take place without a clear understanding of the answers to these questions.

Bar leaders are responsible for creating change that moves their associations forward in a way that is consistent with the association's mission and strategic plan, not change for the sake of change or change that's built upon personal preferences. Bar leaders must also understand that people react to change in different ways; there is not one universal response. However, for most people, change is scary. Change brings with it the new, the different, the unknown. Understanding the change process is key for effective strategic planning.

*"The greatest danger
in times of turbulence
is not the turbulence.*

*It is to act with
yesterday's logic."*

- Peter Drucker

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In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, author Michael Fullan sets forth a six-step process for understanding change:

- **The goal is not to innovate the most.** Relentlessly taking on innovation after innovation can alienate both staff and members.
- **It's not enough to have the best ideas.** Remember, it's possible to be "dead right." Your best ideas will go nowhere fast if you can't get anyone to buy into them.
- **Appreciate the implementation dip.** The implementation dip occurs when we realize we need to develop new skills and competencies to effectively implement the change.
- **Redefine resistance.** What you may perceive as resistance, may be legitimate concerns about an issue you may have overlooked. Or it may be a manifestation of fear. Listen to the resisters.
- **Reculturing is the name of the game.** Reculturing means creating an association that has the capacity to selectively incorporate new ideas and practices on a continual basis.
- **Never a checklist, always complexity.** There can never be a step-by-step process for change. Change is not linear.

Laying the foundation for success.

Planning cannot guarantee the outcome you want. Instead, it can help you to achieve something integral to any future success: readiness to face the challenges that change presents. After clarifying why the association is changing, the association must determine if the conditions are present for a successful strategic planning process. In other words, to get ready for strategic planning, an association must first assess if it is ready.

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An association should assess the following conditions before deciding to begin the strategic planning process:

- Commitment and support of top leadership, especially the president and executive director
- Commitment to clarifying roles for all participants in the planning process
- The right mix of individuals on the planning committee: board members, staff, members, non-members, visionaries, detail-oriented thinkers
- Willingness to encourage board participation so that people feel “ownership” of the process
- Adequate commitment of resources of staff time and dollars
- A willingness to change the status quo
- No serious conflict between key players

See *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance and Payoffs*

If the above factors are present, then the association can begin to scan the environment by gathering feedback from internal and external stake holders.

Relevant documents to gather include:

- The association’s mission statement and values statement
- Current strategic plan
- Needs assessments, member satisfaction surveys, SWOT surveys
- Financial statements
- Budget reports
- Internal procedure manuals
- Board manual
- Board minutes

“If you don't know where you are going, you will wind up somewhere else.”

- Yogi Berra



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2. The Retreat: Content and Logistics

Creating a successful retreat

Once the relevant data have been collected, the association should take the following initial steps in scheduling the strategic planning retreat:

Decide who should participate in the retreat and how they should be involved in planning. The right mix of individuals is critical.

List some of the main issues that face the association. This need not be a complete list, nor does it have to be fully organized. However, knowing some of the concerns of the association will help those who will be asked to be involved in planning to prepare.

Decide when the plan should be adopted by the board. Developing and drafting a plan will take a few weeks to a few months. The board should set a future board meeting to be the target date for adopting the plan.

Set aside some time for the planning process. Members of the board and staff who will be involved in planning should agree to take time for the planning process. For most bar associations, a strategic planning retreat involves a single day or weekend. The plan writers, of course, will spend more time than others as they will be preparing a document that represents decisions made at planning meetings. The total time frame from starting the planning process to adopting the plan can be accomplished within three months for a small association. This time frame may be expanded for larger associations, but generally, should not exceed six months.

Decide if a facilitator would be helpful. Some associations find that an individual who is not directly involved with the association's regular work can be quite useful in the planning process. The use of a facilitator is recommended for most bar associations. The facilitator may also be involved in writing the plan.

*“Begin with the end in mind. . .
The extent to which you begin
with the end in mind often
determines whether or not you
are able to create a successful
enterprise.”*

- Stephen R. Covey

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Find a place for the planning meetings to occur. It is often helpful to meet someplace other than the standard meeting location for the association because a different setting can help members of the group step out of their usual patterns. The planning location should be comfortable, include tables or other surfaces for participants to write, and have room to move around. Having the ability to provide refreshments for planning participants is also needed. Some associations use large sheets of paper to record ideas, so having a planning location that permits hanging paper (using masking tape or other nondestructive adhesive) on the walls is ideal.

Adapted from Nonprofit Capacity Building Project funded by W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Use SMARTER Objectives

The concept of SMARTER Objectives is set forth in *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance and Payoffs*, by Roger Kaufman, Hugh Oakley-Brown, Ryan Watkins, and Doug Lee. SMARTER Objectives offer a different perspective from the idea of SMART Goals. SMARTER Objectives call for the objective to be “Audacious,” not merely “Achievable,” as SMART Goals suggest. In addition, SMARTER Objectives must be “Encompassing.” Objectives must encompass “results and consequences, not just for individuals, but also teams, the entire association, non-members, and the broader society.” All objectives must relate to each other. Finally, SMARTER Objectives must be reviewed and revised frequently.

“Set your target and keep trying until you reach it.”

- Napoleon Hill



S = The objective is written for a *specific* result or area of performance.

M = Each objective must be observable and *measurable*. The objective must answer these questions: How much? How many? How well?

A = The objective is *audacious*. It aims at significant change designed to “stretch horizons” and exceed the present level of results.

R = The objective must clearly define the *results* to be achieved. However, it should not include the methods and means to achieve the results.

T = Each objective must have a targeted *time* for completion.

E = The “sum total” of all of the objectives are *encompassing*. They are aligned, supportive of each other, inclusive, and linked.

R = All objectives are *reviewed* frequently to check for progress toward results.

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Developing Objectives and Timelines

1. Objectives are specific, measurable results produced while implementing strategies.
2. When identifying objectives, keep asking “Are we sure we can do this?”
3. Integrate the strategic plan’s SMARTER Objectives as performance criteria in each “implementer’s” job description and performance review.
4. Remember that objectives and their timelines are only guidelines, not rules set in stone. They can be deviated from, but deviations should be understood and explained.

Adapted from *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning & Facilitation*, by Carter McNamara, M.B.A, Ph.D., Authenticity Consulting, LLC. Copyright 1997-2008

Develop Specific Action Plans

1. Actions plans specify the actions needed to address each of the strategic objectives, and who will complete each action and according to what timeline.
2. Develop an overall, top-level action plan that depicts how each strategic objective will be reached.
3. Develop an action plan for each SMARTER Objective in the strategic plan. These plans, in total, should depict how the overall action plan will be implemented.
4. The format of the action plan depends on the nature and needs of the association. The plan for each SMARTER Objective, might specify:
 - The steps to achieve each objective to be accomplished.
 - How each objective contributes to the association's overall strategic vision.
 - What specific results must be accomplished to make the objective a reality.
 - How those results will be measured.
 - When the results will be achieved (or timelines for each objective).
 - Who is responsible for overseeing the completion of each objective.

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3. Post-Retreat: Implementation, Measurement, Review

Now what? How do we ensure implementation of our plan?

A frequent complaint about the strategic planning process is that it produces a document that ends up collecting dust on a shelf and the association fails to implement the plan. The following guidelines will help ensure that the plan is implemented.

1. When conducting the planning process, involve the people who will be responsible for implementing the plan. Use a cross-functional team (representatives from each of the major association's products or service) to ensure the plan is realistic and collaborative.
2. Ensure the plan is realistic. Continue asking planning participants "Is this realistic? Can we really do this?"
3. Organize the overall strategic plan into smaller action plans, often including an action plan (or work plan) for each committee on the board.
4. In the overall planning document, specify who is doing what and by when (action plans are often referenced in the implementation section of the overall strategic plan). Some associations may elect to include the action plans in a separate document from the strategic plan, which would include only the mission, vision, values, key issues and objectives, and strategies. This approach carries some risk that the board will lose focus on the action plans.
5. In the implementation section of the plan, specify and clarify the plan's implementation roles and responsibilities. Be sure to detail particularly the first 90 days of the implementation of the plan. Build in regular reviews of status of the implementation of the plan.
6. Translate the actions of the strategic plan into job descriptions and personnel performance reviews.
7. Communicate the role of follow-ups to the plan. If people know the action plans will be regularly reviewed, implementers tend to do their jobs before they're checked on.

"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

- Aristotle



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8. Be sure to document and distribute the plan, including inviting input from all. Publish it in the association's newsletter and post it on your web site.
9. Appoint a Plan Champion: one internal person who has ultimate responsibility that the plan is enacted as designed.
10. The chief executive's support of the plan is a major driver to the plan's implementation. Integrate the plan's objectives into the chief executive's performance reviews.
11. Place huge emphasis on feedback to the board's executive committee from the planning participants.

Consider all or some of the following to ensure the plan is implemented.

12. In addition to the Plan Champion, have designated rotating "checkers" to verify, e.g., every quarter, if each implementer completed their assigned tasks.
13. Have pairs of people be responsible for tasks. Have each partner commit to helping the other to finish the other's tasks on time.

Adapted from *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning & Facilitation*, by Carter McNamara, M.B.A, Ph.D., Authenticity Consulting, LLC. Copyright 1997-2008.

Supporting Your Team Through the Implementation of the Plan

The core reality of strategic planning necessarily creates change. For many of us, change = unknown = fear. Leaders must recognize this equation and understand that what they may perceive as resistance to change – whether among members or administrative staff – may simply be fear of the unknown. As an association changes, the leadership must acknowledge that people will go through several stages in the transition process.

"It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power."

- Alan Cohen

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In their book, *Dangerous Opportunity: Making Change Work*, Chris Musselwhite and Randell Jones explain the process of change in four stages. It is the leader's role to support people through these transitions. Leadership here applies not only to the bar leaders, but to the executive staff, as well.

	Do's	Don'ts
Acknowledging Leadership Imperative: Give Information	Give visible support & provide information consistently & repeatedly Provide facts Assist with support networks	Hit people over the head with the truth Push for acknowledgment (this intensifies denial)
Reacting Leadership Imperative: Give Support	Listen Acknowledge the feelings of those in resistance Provide time (as the situation allows) Provide facts Be empathetic Identify areas of stability	Argue Provide reasons why they should not feel the way they feel Convince them this is good for them Push exploration (this can result in movement back to denial)
Investigating Leadership Imperative: Give Encouragement	Create opportunities to explore new possibilities Reward exploration Employ participative decision making Outline pros & cons of new possibilities	Push choices Rush choices Punish mistakes Overestimate or misrepresent future options
Implementing Leadership Imperative: Give Reinforcement	Clarify desired outcomes Reward effective performance Support risk taking & innovation Encourage communication Get out of the way	Micro-manage Control choices Limit participation

Table 8: Leading People in Transition - *Dangerous Opportunity: Making Change Work*, Chris Musselwhite and Randell Jones, 2004, Exlibris, Corp.

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Measure progress and continuously review

So, you've written your strategic plan, you've created SMARTER Objectives and you've create an action plan designed to make the objectives of the plan a reality. Are you finished? No. Strategic planning is a dynamic process. It is never really completed. Formal strategic planning should occur every three to five years. However, implementation, measurement and evaluation are going on all the time.

Ideally, an association should make review of the strategic plan a component of each of their board meetings. The strategic plan should always be on the “front burner”; it should inform all of the decisions made by the association during the life of the plan.

One method for monitoring, measuring and continuously evaluating the plan is to assign one individual to be the prime mover or champion for each objective contained in the plan. The “champion” can then report on progress at each board meeting, but no less frequently than once per quarter. With this type of ongoing measurement and reporting it will make it easier for the board or planning committee to evaluate whether any adjustments should be made to the plan.

As part of the evaluation process, the planning committee should meet annually in the years between planning to focus on the following questions:

- Is the current strategic plan on target? What has or has not been accomplished?
- What are the current issues facing the association, and after discussing these issues, do any changing or new priorities need to be added to the strategic plan?
- Are there new performance targets and/or modified intermediate checkpoints that need to be addressed?

Adapted from *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*, by Michael Allison and Jude Kaye.

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The process of strategic planning and, indeed, strategic thinking is the responsibility of the leadership in every association. Understanding that the creation of a strategic plan is only the first step in moving the association forward is critical to any association's ongoing success. The ultimate success of the association depends upon having commitment to implement, measure and continuously review their plan.

"Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

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Nora Riva Bergman

As a coach and Practice Advisor with Atticus, Nora is dedicated to helping attorneys create the lives and law practices they dreamed of when they were in law school. She knows the frustrations that attorneys experience every day and is committed to helping them change their lives for the better.

Nora brings a deep understanding of the practice and business of law to her work as coach and Practice Advisor. She has practiced as an employment law attorney and certified mediator and has served as a professor at both Stetson University College of Law and the University of South Florida, teaching courses in alternative dispute resolution and negotiation. In addition, Nora has been a speaker at conferences for the American Bar Association, The Florida Bar and other national legal associations. She has also served as the Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Bar Association.

Her background as an attorney, law professor and bar executive gives her a unique perspective on the challenges lawyers face and makes her a powerful coach. In addition to her broad experience with all aspects of the law firm, Nora understands the importance of, and is committed to, helping attorneys leverage technology in order to maximize their ultimate success.

Nora is a graduate of the Leadership Development Program (LPD) at Eckerd College, and is certified in the Conflict Dynamics Profile[®] developed by the LDP to help individuals and organizations learn how to deal with conflict constructively. She is also certified in the DISC Behavioral Style Assessment.

Nora received an undergraduate degree in journalism, *summa cum laude*, from the University of South Florida and her J.D., *cum laude*, from Stetson University College of Law, where she was a member of the law review and served as a mentor for incoming students.

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