TRAINING NEEDS OF SECRETARIES AND OFFICE MANAGERS TOWARDS IMPROVING OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY IN AN ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

This study examined innovative management and administrative skills for secretarial practitioners in an organization. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The research instrument used for the study was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained A-49 items which was administered to 50 secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi for data collection after being validated by two experts with internal consistency coefficient value of 0.87. The data collected were analyzed using mean rating of the respondents. It was found that secretaries and office managers strongly agreed that items on Information Technology relations Communication training, human training. administrative/managerial training, reprographic technology and micrographic technology training are needed by secretaries and office managers in an organization. The study therefore concludes that since office technology and management is a dynamic career that goes along with the wind of modern changes and development and for secretaries and office managers to contribute effectively and efficiently to the achievement of goals and objectives of the organization they have to be trained and retrained on continuous basis in order to acquaint themselves with new challenges in the office. It was therefore, recommended among others that secretaries should enroll themselves in tertiary institutions or any good

computer institutions to package themselves fully on excellent information technology courses so that the sky become their limit in the labour market. The management/organization should prepare short courses, workshops for their secretaries and office managers in ICT related subject to make them fit well into automated office.

Keywords: Innovative, administrative, skills, Secretaries and office managers, training, Management, practitioners

Introduction

As a result of the constant change in the society and in the world over, it becomes absolutely necessary that the content of the curriculum be adjusted to suit the inevitable changes. This change brought about the introduction of new technologies in education, Office Technology and Management is inclusive. New Office Technology and Management curriculum provides the introduction of ICT in the form of ICT-literacy, Application of ICT, Infusing of ICT skills and ICT specialization. These reforms have added good quality to secretarial education curriculum content which is geared towards meeting the demands of the society (Risikat & Okegbemiro, 2019). Moreover, it is important to note that the training of an effective Office Technology and Management courses should cover not only skills in shorthand and typewriting, but also skills in entrepreneurship, advanced ICT-based courses, and skill in the use of various office machines and appliances. However, Office Technology and Management training is offered in University and Polytechnic which offer professional secretarial programmes leading to the award of Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Diploma.

Secretarial education which is a subset of the general education can be seen as the development of person's head, heart and hands, for his self-fulfillment and optimum services to humanity. While the head responds to reasoning, intellect or understanding, the hearing refers to emotions of feelings, habit, attitude while values and the heads refers to motor or manipulation (Ohakwe, 2009). Secretaries play unique roles which necessitate the great demand for their services in every type of office (big or small) to assist their boss in carrying out their responsibilities. This means that no organization can survive without the services of a secretary. Secretaries are the life wire of the organization by performing and coordinating an office administrative activities, storing, retrieving and integrating information for dissemination to staff and clients. They serve as information and communication managers for any offices; plan and schedule meetings and appointments; organize and maintain paper and electronic files; manage projects; conduct research; and disseminate information by using the telephone, mail services, Web sites, and email. They also handle travels and guests' arrangements. Ugiagbe (2002) adopted the definition of the National Secretaries Association International as an assistant to an executive possessing mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiate, exercise judgment and makes decision within the scope of his/her authority.

As secretaries and office managers work continue to evolve along with new office automation and organization restructuring, office secretaries have assumed and learned to operate different office equipment. In the new responsibilities midst of these changes, though, their central responsibilities remain much as they were. Secretaries and office managers increasingly use personal computers to run spreadsheet, word processing, data base management, desktop publishing, and graphic programs. For secretaries and office managers to seek opportunities for advancement, they need to develop soft skill, such as office negotiation and creative problem solving, networking with other office secretaries and actively promoting their own goal within the company. Therefore, Secretaries and office managers must be prepared to be retrained whenever an employer introduces new equipment. He/she must have to attend classes to learn the use of computers and other automated office equipment. The frequency with which such equipment is changed or updated makes retraining and continuing education an integral part of the job, and employers seek workers who understand and accept the inevitability of change.

Conceptual Reviews Concept of Skills

Daniel (2016), defined skill as learned responses, often as a result of specific training which afford someone the ability to perform a particular task and achieve a particular objective. Uzor and Ike (2010) described skill as ability to do something well, gained through training and experience. They defined skill as one's personal competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. In a similar vein, Achilike and Okwuanaso (2011) defined competencies as those abilities of power and authority of knowledge, attitudes and facts necessary for accomplishing tasks. Ojukwu and Ojuwu (2012) stated that competencies are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for accomplishing a given task. Skill therefore is the rapidity, precision, expertise, dexterity and proficiency exhibited through mental and manual repetition of performance of an operation. Etonyeaku (2018) opined that skill is the capacity of a person to accomplish a task within desired precision and certainty. Skill involves a practical knowledge in combination with clearness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in the school or training centres through learning, experience. In the world of business those who possess relevant business skills and office competencies, coupled with entrepreneurial zeal have better gainful employment opportunities and business success than those who are deficient in such skills.

Concepts of Training

Training is the process of teaching a skill for a particular job. Armstrong (2013) opines that it is the use of systematic and planned instruction development activities to promote learning. The focus of training is the job or task that needs to have efficiency and safety in the operation of particular machines or equipment and for an effective sales force with competent management in the organization. Training is deliberate intervention with the sole aim of acquiring the knowledge or knowledge necessary for the improvement of job performance. Also, training is any learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of an occupation. Training is the means by which information, ideas, skills, attitude and feeling are transferred to learners.

Training is a long life process in which an employee is constantly learning and adapting to new challenges of his job. This secretaries and office managers does through reading of book, journals and magazine in his areas of specialization, though discussion with colleagues and supervisors on matters concerning his profession and attending courses and conferences relating to his profession. The aim of training includes to update the employees and revamp their professional knowledge, skills and competencies and to broaden their knowledge of the core areas of specialization (Itoho, 1996).

According to Osuala and Okeke (2016) training involves providing employees with directed experience that enable them to be more effective in performing the various tasks that constitute their jobs. If effective, the training experience results in changes in employee's attitude, work habits and performance. Aminu and Ibeneme (2015) defined in-service training as a calculated attempt towards improving quality of an employee in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude with a view to obtaining qualitative and quantitative output from him. Inservice training needs arise when workers or employees cannot cope with new techniques and innovation in their professional areas. They maintained that inservice training is a well-planned and organized effort to change the behaviour and to improve on the skills acquired by an employee as to perform to acceptable standard on the job. Scholars like Mustapha (2012), and Onuh (2013) among others have emphasized the importance of in-service training as it increases both quality and quantity output, engenders self-confidence and good judgment, develops positive orientation towards works, it very crucial in organization especially in exchanging environment in which executive secretaries work. Collins (1994) opined that there should be some constant retraining exercise for executive secretaries in order to be well equipped and up-date to adequate knowledge, attitude and skills. He went further to state that such retraining should be in all areas of secretarial development which include information and communication technology skills, human relation skills, stenographic, communication, administrative and managerial skills, reprographic, micrographic and electronic record keeping skills, retraining and developing the executive secretaries in the above areas will enable them to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently and with higher degree of performance.

Training and development is designed to ensure that the organization has a competent and skilled workforce to meet present needs and taking a step to ensure that fresh and knowledge are being developed to meet future needs. These inservice training programmes could be achieved through attendance to Universities, through study leave, self-tuition, use of on-line packages, undertaking new responsibilities (Ade, 2017). According to Adelakin (2019), the skills needed for office managers can be acquired in various ways. Office Technology and management training ranges from high school vocational education programs that teach office practice, shorthand, and typing to 1-2 years' programs in secretarial science offered by career schools, vocational technical institutes, and community colleges.

Statement of the Problem

Advancement in modern Information Communication Technologies as really affected the work of an office managers/secretaries and his profession. The challenges of new technologies and innovation demand from office managers/secretaries much greater responsibilities and improved performance on their jobs. The essence of providing on-the job training and off-the-job training for office managers/secretaries are to enable them develop professionally, keep abreast on new knowledge and technology in their office procedures and operation. Ironically, Oldroyd (1994) and Mustapha (2012) observed that public establishment pay only lip service to in-service training of their employees and this automatically accounts for staff inadequacies such as poor job performances. It is in this that Gbosi (1999) maintained that where in-service training exits, it is haphazardly coordinated, poorly monitored and organized. In-service training programmes have continued to experience the constraints of inadequate funds. This is because employees' retraining in public establishment is considered expensive in terms of time and maintenance of staff during the programme (Ofordile, 2017). Ofordile (2017) maintained that, lack of willingness by the employees to be retrained and some staff with long experience may not show interest in in-service training programmes that do not have any weight for purpose of assessment and they hardly take re-training seriously as a means of changing behaviour of the organization. To this end, it becomes very necessary to find out the training needs of secretaries and office managers to improve office productivity in an organization, which is the thrust of this write-up.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study is to examine the innovative management and administrative skills for secretarial practitioners in an organization. However, the study specifically finds out:

- 1. The Information Communication Technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers in Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
- 2. The human relation skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers in Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
- 3. The administrative/managerial skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers in Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
- 4. The reprographic technologies skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers in Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
- 5. The micrographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers in Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the researchers in carrying out the study:

- 1. What is the Information Communication Technology needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?
- 2. What are the human relation skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?
- 3. What are the administrative/managerial skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?
- 4. What are the reprographic technologies skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?
- 5. What are the micrographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Five research questions were raised for the study. The main research instructions used was questionnaire which was administered to a sample of fifty (50) secretaries and office managers. All the data collected were analyzed using mean ratings of the respondents. A structured questionnaire of a 49 item was used for data collection. The questionnaire was given to two experts in Office Technology and Management department for content and face validity. The reliability of the instrument which gave a coefficient value of 0.87 was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The study used a four-point rating scale.

The questionnaire was made up of five parts A, B, C, D and E. Part A was designed to elicit information on Information Communication Technology skills needed for in-service training of secretaries to improve office productivity. B sought information on human relation skills needed for in-service training of secretaries to improve office productivity, Part C sought information on the administrative/managerial skills needed for in-service training of secretaries to improve office productivity, Part D sought information on reprographic technology skills needed for in-service training of secretaries to improve office productivity.

while part E sought information on the micrographic technology skills needed for in-service training of secretaries to improve office productivity.

The researchers administered 30 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. Mean were used to answer the research questions. The research questions were analyzed using mean based on a 4-point Rating type scale of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed.

Decision Rule

For 4-point Likert scale, the degrees of agreement or disagreement to the averages of the following variables are: 4+3+2+1/4 = 10/4 = 2.50. Any value (average) that is less than 2.50 is considered to be below the cut-off point and rejected and any value that is greater than or equal to 2.50 will be considered within the cut-off point and accepted on a 4-point rating scale.

Results

Research Question One: What is the Information Communication Technology needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?

Table 1: Mean(\underline{X})response on Information Communication Technology neededfor in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

S/N	Information Communication Technology Skills	X	SD	Decision
1.	Secretaries and office managers needs training on how to creating file, edit, correct, print and storage of information it need arise in an organization	3.50	.502	Agreed
2.	Use of micro-electronic and computer to process data is very importance for secretaries and office managers.	3.69	.462	Agreed
3.	Manipulation and dissemination of information	3.47	.501	Agreed
4.	Telephone/video conferencing	3.41	.666	Agreed
5.	Surfing the net for information	3.69	.465	Agreed
6.	Sending and receiving e-mail	3.62	.503	Agreed
7.	On line ordering, invoicing and payment.	3.42	.594	Agreed
8.	Sending and receiving messages through computer network, local area network (LAN), computer Wide Area Network (WAN)	3.69	.497	Agreed
	Grand Mean		3.56	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data in Table 1 revealed that all items had mean rating of the respondents ranging from 3.41 to 3.69 which were the boundary limit for strongly agreed. This means that secretaries strongly agreed with these items as needed by secretarial/office manager. The standard deviation in information and

communication technologies training also ranged from .462-.594. This shows that the respondents were closed to one another in their responses.

Research Question Two: What are the human relation skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?

Table 2: Mean (\underline{X}) responses on human relation skills needed for in-servicetraining of the secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic,
Bauchi

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S/N	Human Relations Skills	X	SD	Decision			
9.	Building team work among colleagues.	3.87	.346	Agreed			
10.	Ability to employ fact and initiative in dealings with the public.	3.53	.571	Agreed			
11.	Friendly and helpful to others.	3.67	.547	Agreed			
12.	Respect the feelings of other colleagues and customers.	3.57	.504	Agreed			
13.	Attentiveness to the reaction of people and be sensitive to their problems and aspiration	3.57	.504	Agreed			
14.	Image making ability for the boss and the organization.	3.87	.346	Agreed			
15.	Strive to make his/her boss succeed by working hard and being loyal to his/her boss.	3.87	.346	Agreed			
16.	Offer professional advice when necessary	3.57	.504	Agreed			
17.	Promote harmony between people of different culture	3.67	.547	Agreed			
	Grand Mean		3.68	Agreed			

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data in Table 2 revealed that all items had mean rating of the respondents ranging from 3.53 to 3.87 this means that secretaries strongly agreed with these items as training needed by secretarial/office manager in an organization. The standard deviation on human relation skills needed ranged from .346-.571. This shows that the respondents were closed to one another in their response and their responses are not too far from the mean.

Research Question Three: What is the administrative/ managerial skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?

Table 3: Mean (X) responses on administrative/ managerial skills needed for inservice training of the secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

S/N	Administrative/managerial skills	X	SD	Decision
18.	Inspire and motivate employee.	3.87	.346	Agreed
19.	Work well with others	3.53	571	Agreed
20.	Instill in the subordinate the desire to act in the best interest of the organization	3.67	.547	Agreed
21.	Making decision effectively.	3.67	.547	Agreed
22.	Accepting the view-points of others.	3.10	.885	Agreed
23.	Exercise good judgment	3.10	.885	Agreed
24.	Ability to provide adequate leadership for subordinate	3.00	.643	Agreed
25.	Delegate responsibilities accurately	3.07	.583	Agreed
26.	Compiling and organizing information for reports and long memorandum	3.87	.346	Agreed
27.	Apply time management technique to office schedule.	3.57	.504	Agreed
28.	Set proprieties and develop more efficient procedure for work flow.	3.87	.346	Agreed
29.	Choose appropriate action in situation requiring application of business ethics.	3.10	.885	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.16		Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data in Table 3 revealed that all items had mean rating of the respondents ranging from 3.00 to 3.87 which were the boundary limit for strongly agreed. This means that secretaries and office managers strongly Agreed with these

items as training needed by secretaries and office managers in an organization. This shows that the respondents were closed to one another in their responses. **Research Question Four:** What is the reprographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers?

Table 4: Mean (X) responses on reprographic technology skills needed for inservice training of the secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

S/N	Reprographic Technology Skills	X	SD	Decision
30.	Perform basic maintenance on reprographic equipment.	3.77	.430	Agreed
31.	Use electronic scanning facilities.	3.73	.521	Agreed
32.	Program and operate reprographic equipment.	3.47	.507	Agreed
33.	Selecting appropriate production process for the right information.	3.73	.521	Agreed
34.	Collating and binding service for proper protection of record.	3.47	.507	Agreed
35.	Reproduce neat documents for office use	3.50	.509	Agreed
36.	Embolden text using reprographic machines	3.47	.507	Agreed
37.	Reduce test using reprographic machines	3.30	.466	Agreed
38.	Resolving customers complaints and concern.	3.50	.509	Agreed
39.	Keep record of customers' demands such as transcript, certificate using reprographic machine.	3.43	.504	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.54		Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data in Table 4 revealed that all items had mean rating of the respondents ranging from 3.30 to 3.77 which were the boundary limit for strongly agreed. This means that secretaries strongly agreed with these items as training needed by secretarial/office manager in an organization. The standard deviation of the on reprographic technology skills needed ranged from .430-.521, this implies that was no serious differences between the respondents' responses.

Research Question Five: What is the micrographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi?

Table 5: Mean (\underline{X}) responses on micrographic technology skills needed for inservice training of the secretaries and office managers at Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

S/N	Micrographic technology skills	X	SD	Decision
40.	Operating electronic filing.	3.73	.447	Agreed
41.	Indexing and cataloging information in an office.	3.59	.495	Agreed
42.	Creating file for record purpose in an office.	3.42	.698	Agreed
43.	File updating and data capture skills.	3.36	.689	Agreed
44.	File enquiry and data capture in an office.	3.68	.467	Agreed
45.	Ability to apply electronic referencing, accessing and transferring records	3.62	.503	Agreed
46.	Saving, coding, indexing, retrieving document on disks, microfilms and other organic media.	3.69	.462	Agreed
47.	Organizing files appropriately with the use of computers.	3.79	.407	Agreed
48.	Operating electronic filing.	3.73	.447	Agreed
49.	Indexing and cataloging information in an office.	3.59	.495	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.61		Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The table 5 further revealed that the respondent on micrographic technology skills ranged from 3.36 to 3.79 which was the boundary limit for strongly agreed. This means that secretaries and office managers strongly agreed with the items as training needed by secretaries and office managers in an organization. The standard deviation of the secretary training needed by secretary on micrographics technology skills ranged from .407 - .495. this indicate that the respondents' closeness to one another in their opinions.

Findings

- 1. The data in Table 1 revealed that secretaries and office managers agreed that ICT training is needed for effective performance in an organization.
- 2. Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that in-service training is needed in human relation skills.
- 3. Table 3 revealed that secretaries and office managers strongly agreed that inservice training in administrative/managerial skills needed in an organization,
- 4. The data in Table 4 revealed that secretaries and office managers agreed that in-service training on reprographic technology skills is needed for effective performance in an organization.
- 5. The table 5 further revealed that respondents also agreed that in service training is needed by secretaries and office managers on micrographics technology.

Discussion of Findings

Information Communication Technology needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

Research question 1 is in line with the findings of Obiorah in Adejumo (2004) who attested that the modern secretary is an information communication and human relations management experts". Obiorah in Adejumo (2004) stated that secretary of today performs a variety of functions which is centered on information technology. These functions include: handling confidential matters, answering telephone calls, making and scheduling appointment, making traveling arrangement, sending and receiving mails, assisting with meeting and conferences operating the computer, public relation office, instructions and drafting of mails, handling of communication and information and managing the office.

Human relation skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

Research question 2 also agreed with the findings of Sokyes, H. L. W., Priscilla, M. and Bewaran, Y. S. (2018) and Gocheka (2019) who emphasized the need for self-development and opined that training is needed to improve performance in the existing job whether or not there are promotion opportunities or not. Gocheka (2019) further that secretary needs to acquire knowledge and development further skills in order to function more effectively in her job. The

secretary must acquire knowledge on the use of these various packages which include word processing, electronic spread sheet, electronic communication and data base management system. The secretary must acquire knowledge in the operation of these packages.

Administrative/ managerial skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

Research question 3 is in line with the findings of Abdulazeez and Arikwandu (2017) who find out that secretaries and office managers have better perception on managerial/administrative skills needed for in-service training of secretaries and office managers in an organization as a way of reduce unemployment in the society.

Reprographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

Research question 4 agreed with the findings of Abdulazeez and Arikwandu (2017) who stated that training in business attribute in an organization contribute very high to the performance of secretaries and office managers in an organization.

Micrographic technology skills needed for in-service training of the secretaries and office managers

Research Question 5 is in line with the findings of Abdulazeez and Arikwandu (2017) who pointed out that technology has enriched secretarial job and this enrichment has resulted in job satisfaction for secretary in an organization.

Summary

The use of Information Technology in our office has enhanced efficiency and it also save time for the office manager in carrying out their work. It enhances the practice of the office technology and management professional and at the same time creates challenges to the practitioners as a result of frequent changes in form and shapes. In order to have an effective office manager with a high level of performance, the training in office procedure and operation needs to be provided in order to update their skills, attitude and knowledge this will enable them contribute to the realization of organizational goals and objectives. The office manager without the necessary training and skills required by these modern technologies will face great challenges, since he/she is at the centre of information management, to provide comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information to enable the executive arrive at effective management decision, hence the need for organization to provide adequate training facilities, organize seminars and workshops to sensitize the secretary in an organization.

Conclusion

The paper examined how effective skill acquisition can be obtained, maintained and sustained. The objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the Office Technology and Management curriculum are to be geared towards integrating graduates of Office Technology and Management programmes into the evolution of technology. Though the OTM programme is plagued with myriads of challenges, adherence to quality in its delivery will no doubt equip its recipients with functional and valuable skills, knowledge, culture and abilities which will enable them to be self-reliant and contribute their quota to sustainable development of Nigeria. However, these challenges could be overcome if the various strategies which include the provision of adequate training facilities/equipment and consistency in government policy are adopted. The curriculum of OTM could further be enriched with the inclusion of other relevant courses that will not only make the graduate to be m5arketable but also self-reliant. The writers are of the opinion that different useful skills are achievable through constant monitoring of the programme, programme evaluation, supervision, inspection, guality control and reporting, provision of adequate number of academically qualified lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities; use of functional instructional methods, fund provision and admission of only qualified candidates into the programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward to ensure effective skills acquisition:

- 1. Secretary should enroll themselves in tertiary institutions or any good computer institutions to package themselves fully for excellent information technology courses so that the sky become their limit in the labour market.
- 2. There is need for the formulation of policy guidelines for achieving uniformity in evaluation and assessment for OTM programmes, while making allowance for local adoption. Departments of OTM should equally provide for capacity building in evaluation and assessment for all teachers and effort should be directed towards developing teachers' capacity to assess students' learning and use of feedback for improvement. There is the need for continuous and effective supervision of the educational activities of OTM department by both internal and external supervisory bodies for efficient academic delivery.

The management should prepare short courses, workshops for their secretary in ICT related subject to make them fit well into automated office.

4. There is the need for constant retraining of lecturers and instructors in order to imbibe current knowledge and experience in ICT and other relevant fields which was recently introduced into the programme.

- 5. Alternative source of power generation should be provided to supply light where there is failure in the national grid.
- 6. Proprietors (in most cases government) should be committed towards improving funding for the Polytechnics. Management and Departments of OTM in particular should look beyond funding from government and engage in revenue generation through training, research and development, partnership with private organizations, alumni associations other stakeholders in OTM and public spirited individuals.

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