

THE ESSENTIAL

WEBSITE GUIDE



Quest

Introduction

Hello fellow digital marketers!

Welcome to your Website Development Guide.

This E-book provides insights on how to make a great website in order to successfully engage your audience. You'll find that the website development process includes a range of step-by-step strategies and tasks.

Here at Quest we are successfully developing custom websites for our valued clients, from WordPress to SilverStripe and e-commerce solutions. Quest is not only developing successful websites, but also helping clients with targeting defined audiences and delivering engaging content to drive growth.

Use this link to find out more - <https://www.quest.net.nz/website-design-development/>

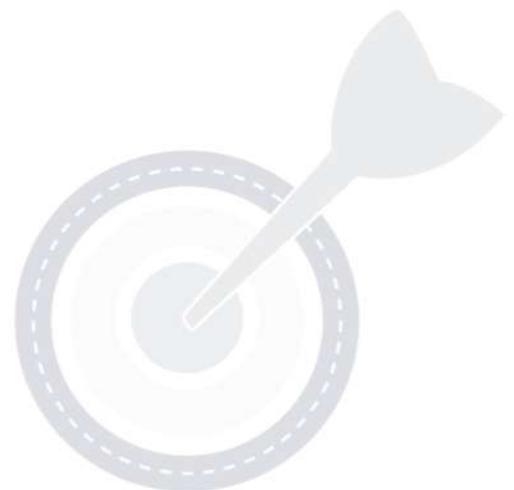
Understanding how to make a great website is critical to reach the people who matter most to your business. If you're looking for a guide on how to develop a website to help grow your business, this will set you up for success. Our thanks to Hubspot (source).

We hope you enjoy the guide.

Ngā mihi (thanks)



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Disclaimer:

We expect that information in this guide will change periodically, so please check online links for latest information.



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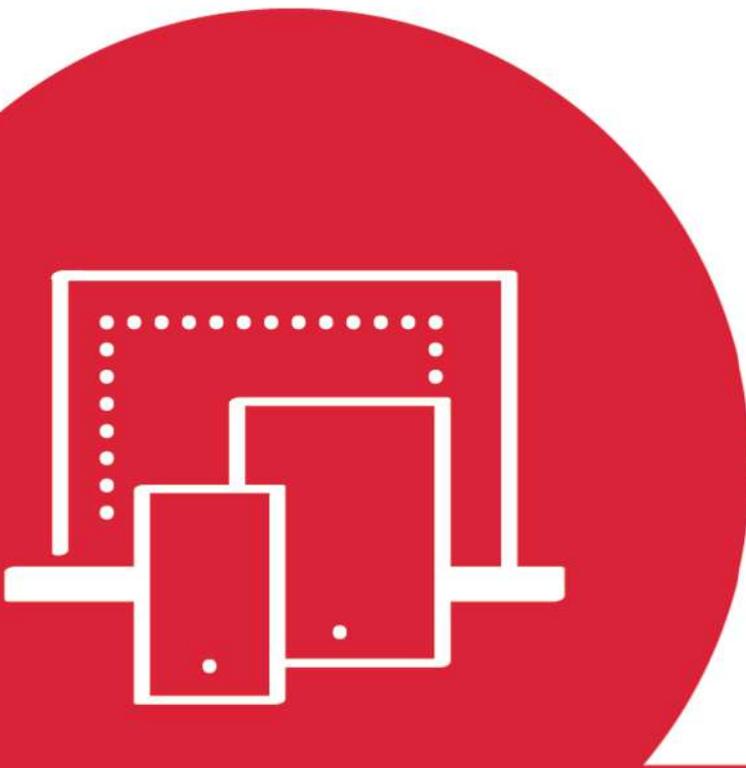
1. Introduction

We all know how important a website is to a business' online strategy. Almost every business, whether B2B, B2C, non-profit, local, or global needs an online presence to reach buyers in the internet age.

The reason for this shift is largely due to changing buyer behaviour. Today's buyer wishes to consume information when they want and how they want, and often-times without the involvement of a sales person. A company website can and should serve as an educational hub and virtual storefront, so operating with an ineffective one, or without one entirely, is just plain silly.

Whether you're looking to build your first website, or if your existing site just isn't getting the traffic or leads you were hoping for, this guide will teach you what it really takes to for a website to perform - to attract visitors, educate them, and convince them to buy.

So, without further ado, let's dive into a comprehensive checklist of the things your website must have or do so you can better generate traffic, leads and customers.



2. Must have's for getting found online

A great website isn't so great if no one visits it.

This is why the first chapter is dedicated to getting found online, in which we'll cover various search engine optimisation (SEO) must-haves that will help boost awareness of your site, and subsequently your products or services.

Inbound Links

Every website on the internet has the goal of reaching the #1 position in search engines, but because there is only one top spot per keyword phrase, not everyone can make it. So what gets a first place ranking? Off-page search engine optimisation (SEO) is the most important factor to increasing your ranking results.

Off-page SEO is about building inbound links, or getting other quality websites to link back to you. The more inbound links from other credible sites you have, the more authoritative your site must be, thus the higher you'll rank.

Link building, when done right, isn't easy since adding links to other websites is sometimes out of your control. That's why inbound links have to be earned.

Here are some tips to building inbound links:

- Create high-quality, educational or entertaining content. If people like your content, they will naturally want to link to it.
- Submit your website to online directories.
- Write guest posts for other blogs. This is a win-win. People will want extra (quality) content from others, and in exchange, you accumulate an inbound link.
- Research link building opportunities with other websites, but always check the authority of the websites that you are trying to get links from. There are many tools online that allow you to check domain or page authority.
- And don't borrow, beg, barter, bribe or buy links.



2. On Page Optimisation

While off-page SEO is hugely important, we can't forget about on-page SEO. This consists of placing your most important keywords within the content elements of your actual pages. These on-page elements include headlines, sub-headlines, body content, image tags, and links. It's very common that businesses will do too little on-page optimisation or too much (keyword stuffing). While it's important to include your keyword as many times as necessary within a page, you don't want to go overboard with it either.

- Pick a primary keyword for each page, and focus on optimizing that page for that word. If you oversaturate a page with too many keywords, the page will lose its importance and authority because search engines won't have a clear idea of what the page is about. This is very common on homepages in particular, where too many keywords are used.
- Place your primary keywords in your headline and sub-headline. These areas of content have greater weight to search engines.
- Include the keywords in the body content, but don't use them out of context. Make sure they are relevant with the rest of your content.
- Include keywords in the filename of images (e.g. mykeyword.jpg), or use them in the ALT tag.
- Include the keywords in the page URL and keep the URL clean.
- And lastly, write for humans first, search engines second. Always prepare your content for your audience, and then look to optimise it for search. Content written in the other order won't read naturally and your visitors will recognise it.

3. Meta Tags for page titles and descriptions

A meta tag is a line of code that is contained in the background of a web page that search engines read to learn more about what a page is about. Search engines also use meta tags (titles and descriptions) to populate their listings and communicate to searchers what your site is about.

While meta tags aren't the sexiest components of SEO, and while they may not carry the same level of SEO importance as they used to, they're still beneficial to have on every webpage from a search engine and users perspective.

Most website editors and content management systems enable you to easily edit meta tags without coding knowledge.



4. XML Site Maps

An XML sitemap is simply an .xml file containing a listing of all your pages and when they were updated, and it helps search engine crawlers (or “spiders”) find and index your webpages more efficiently.

Creating a sitemap is easy. You can find sitemap generators online that will create the .xml file for you. Once you get the .xml file, simply upload it to the root directory of your website (e.g. www.website.com/sitemap.xml).

If your website is updated regularly, make it a good practice to update your .xml file at least once a month so search engines have the freshest data.

Adding an XML sitemap is a component that is commonly overlooked, while it may not be the deciding factor in improving your search engine optimization, it will certainly help.

5. 301 Redirects

We’ve all encountered a “404” or “Page Not Found” message after clicking on a broken link. This often occurs when a page is moved to a new URL, and the old link hasn’t been directed to the new page.

If you move a page on your website, use a permanent 301 redirect to help search engines locate your most up- to-date pages, and to make sure you’re sending traffic to the new URL. If you don’t, you’ll lose any SEO status the old page once had.



6. Consistent layout and structure

It’s best to keep elements on your site fairly consistent from page-to-page. Elements include colours, sizes, layout, and placement of those elements. This means colours are primarily the same as well as fonts and layout structure. Navigation should remain in the same location of your layout throughout your website.

For layout structure, typically three page layouts exist for most websites: one for the homepage, one for content pages, and one for form pages. For example, your homepage will have a different layout than a landing page for a PPC campaign. Keep the elements in these layouts constant to prevent your visitors from feeling lost.



3. Website must haves for design and usability

Now that you know how to increase your online visibility to improve inbound traffic to your site, your next focus is getting that traffic to stay there. It depends on the industry, but most websites have a 30-60% bounce rate on average. This means a large majority of web traffic entering your website leaves without navigating to any other pages. And many times they may never come back. Yikes! Here are some tips you need to consider to improve user experience.

Creating a good first impression

Your website represents who you are and what you offer. When people see it for the first time they're thinking:

- Is this site credible?
- Is it trustworthy?
- Is this a professional company?
- Is this company stable?
- Does this site make me feel welcome?
- Am I in the right place?

You need to ask yourself all of these questions when designing your website. Now, design may not be the most important factor in a website overall, and often-times folks put too much emphasis on how a site looks instead of how it works, but it does play an important role in making a good first impression.



Tips for great website design:

Use of colours: Use colour to draw attention to select elements. Don't try to make everything jump out. The result will be just the opposite: Nothing will stand out. Pick two to four colours for your template and marketing materials.

Animations, gadgets and media: Using Flash animations because they look cool is the wrong strategy. In most cases it's best not to use animated background or background music. Only use media and animations to help support content and information.

Layout: Create a clear navigation structure (see the section on Navigation later on), and organise page elements in a grid fashion (as opposed to randomly scattered). Also, don't be afraid of white space!

Typography: Make sure your website is legible. Use fonts, font sizes and font colours that are easy to read. For easier page scanning, use bullet lists, section headers, and short paragraphs. If your site is English language-based, make sure information flows from left to right and top to bottom.

Clear Navigation

Perhaps one of the biggest factors to keep visitors on your website is having a good, solid navigation system that supports all search preferences. If people can't find what they are looking for, they will give up and leave.

Important factors in a site's navigation include:

- Keep the structure of your primary navigation simple (and near the top of your page). Include navigation in the footer of your site.
- Use breadcrumbs on every page (except for the homepage) so people are aware of their navigation trail.
- Include a search box near the top of your site so visitors can search by keywords.
- Don't offer too many navigation options on a page.
- Try to keep your navigation to no more than three levels deep.
- Include links to other pages on your site within your page copy, and optimise each link's anchor text.

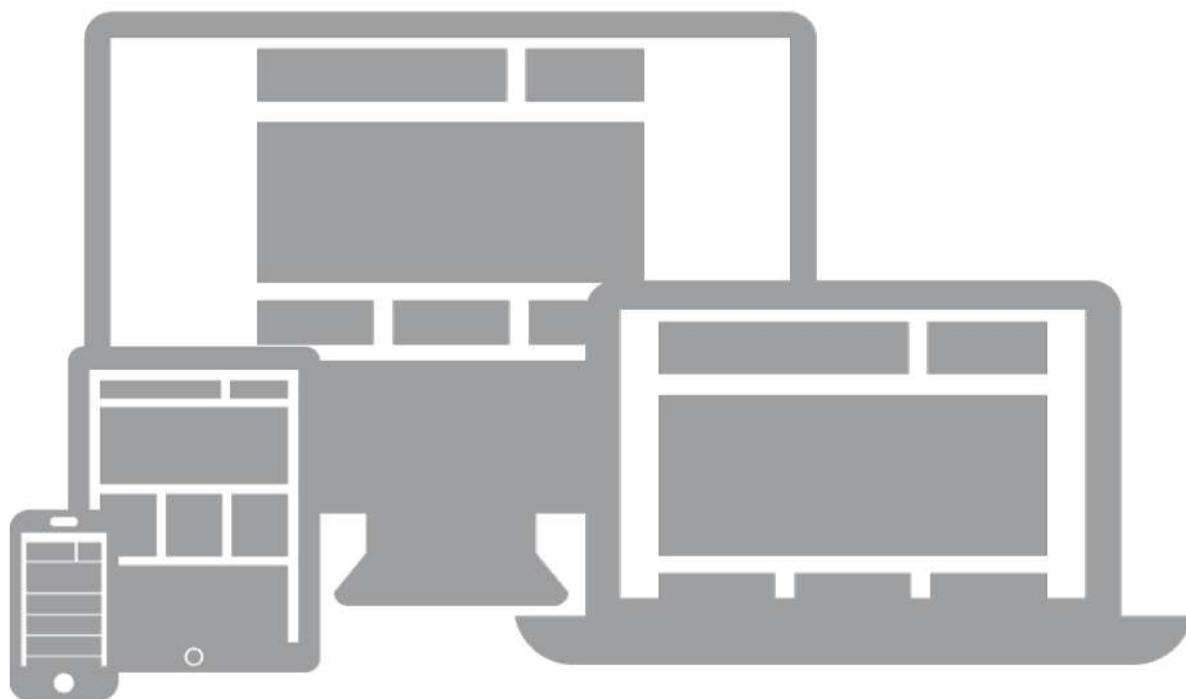
The overall rule for navigation is simple: don't require visitors to have to think too much.



Accessibility and Responsiveness

In order to gain significant traffic, your site needs to be responsive, meaning that it's compatible and viewable on multiple browsers and devices. People are surfing the internet from their phones and tablets more than ever before, so make sure to get some of those views by allowing everyone to view your site no matter what browser or device they are using.

A quick load time is another factor to consider. 40% of people will abandon a web page if it takes more than three seconds to load. Don't send visitors away before they've even had the chance to see what you offer!



4. Essential website content elements

Content is one of the most important aspects of any website. It is what search engines and people are looking for. It's what drives visitors to your site and turns prospects into leads.

Take a look at these killer websites - <https://www.quest.net.nz/website-design-development/>

Clear, concise headers and content

There are four basic questions you need to ask regarding the content of your website.

- Will people know what I do within seconds?
- Will they understand what page they're on and what it's about?
- Will they know what to do next?
- Why should they view site instead of from someone else?

Ideally, you want your visitors to know the answers to these questions. It should be readily apparent what your site is about, what they can do there and why they should take action. Consider the helpful tips on the next page for help delivering the right message.

- Create a few headlines and sub-headline ideas for your most important pages. To answer (why should I buy from you?) use a powerful value proposition and steer clear from generic clichés, gobbledygook terms, and corporate speak.
- Make sure to include clear calls-to-action and next steps. Include links in your body copy, next step links at the end of the copy, and calls-to-action wherever appropriate. Include a little direction and you'll be glad you did.
- Test your copy. For the most accurate indication of a winning headline, use A/B testing to determine which variation drives the most conversions. You can use tools services like Five Second Test.



Perceivable value

Not everyone is ready to buy when they first hit your site. And people don't come there just to get a virtual sales pitch. Remember, it's not all about you. What's in it for them?

Offer more than just product content. Provide eBooks, whitepapers, videos, and other forms of educational content. This will nurture prospects through your marketing and sales funnel until they are ready to buy.

- In product-specific content, write as if you are speaking directly to your audience. Use words like “you,” and “we.” Be transparent. Make yourself sound human. Speak their language.
- Write your product content as if you are helping them solve their problems. Avoid “we are the best” speak and instead use “this is how we help you....”

Blogging

Blogging is without a doubt one of the most important assets to any inbound marketing strategy, and it's a perfect complement to your website.

Here are some reasons why you really need a blog:

- It creates more, fresh content on your site, which is great for SEO.
- It helps establish you as an industry authority and thought leader.
- It helps drive more traffic and leads back to your website.
- It's a great channel to converse and engage with your audience and customers.
- It's a great way to get valuable inbound links!

If you still need proof blogging works, there's lots of research on the subject, specifically:

- Companies that blog have 55% more visitors.
- Companies that blog generate 126% more leads than those that don't.

Blogging isn't as difficult as you think. There are plenty of blogging tools you can use to get started. I recommend checking out 100 Stats, Charts, and Graphs to Get Inbound Marketing Buy-In for more awesome blogging stats, getting your colleagues or boss on board using this downloadable training presentation, and getting started with these blog post templates.



Social Sharing Buttons

If the option to “Like,” tweet, or share a page, product, or blog post exists on your site, people are more likely to share that content to their friends and connections on their preferred social networks. The more your site content gets shared, the more traffic you’re likely to get. Make it easy for people to share and socialize about your content and resources.

- Add a sharing widget or plugin to pages containing share-worthy content on your site. Tools like AddThis or ShareThis are easy to install and provide you with analytic tracking as well.
- If you’re on a blogging platform like WordPress, use a plugin to enable people to share your articles and auto-publish content to your social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

High engagement content

Content is more than just the written word. Video content and images are other excellent forms of content that can turn a text-heavy site into something that pleases the viewing preferences of multiple audiences. Content takes place in the form of:

- Video
- Photography
- Infographics
- Audio

Try using many different forms of content. It will help create a content-rich experience.

Customer testimonials and reviews

No matter what you’re selling, potential buyers like to see confirmation that you’ve made other customers happy. Testimonials, customer reviews, and case studies are powerful tools for moving prospects closer to the final buying stage.

- Provide authentic customer stories and don’t hide these behind a form!
- Place real, short, and powerful testimonials on your site.
- Include real names and titles and use pictures of the person along with their testimonial to add authenticity.
- The more proof you have, the better. Make it part of your strategy to collect case studies and testimonials when possible.



5. How to Increase Conversions

Now that you know what it takes to drive traffic and engage visitors with great content, the next step is to get your visitors to convert from a prospect into a lead. You don't want them leaving without providing some information or you'll lose the opportunity to nurture them until they are ready to buy. Here are some must-haves for increasing your website conversions.

An effective call-to-action (CTA) drives a visitor to take a desired action. CTAs are typically kept above the fold or in clear sight on a page so visitors know where to take the next step. CTAs are the key to lead generation, but need to be done right to convert traffic into leads.

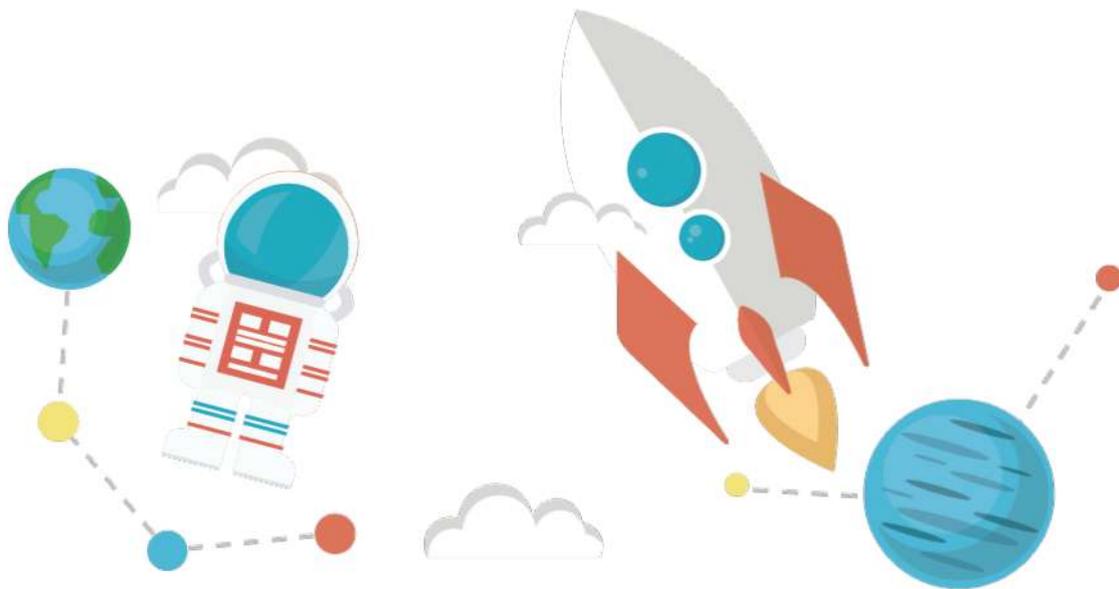
- Make them bigger and bolder than most other elements on the page, but don't overdo it.
- Consider colours of the CTA, whether it is a link, button or image. Make them look so good people will want to click on them.
- Offer CTAs that provide value, like guides, whitepapers, estimates, etc. "Contact Us" is the worst form of a CTA. Don't rely on that as your only option for conversion.
- Make the CTA look clickable. You can do this by making a button or adding a hover effect to an element.
- Be clear and use simple language about what is being offered. Less is more.
- Test when possible. Try testing different colours (e.g. red versus green buttons), language, and placement to see which CTAs get more clicks and drive more leads.



Landing pages

Your CTAs should ideally link to landing pages. Landing pages are used to convert visitors into leads by completing a transaction or by collecting contact information from them. Landing pages direct your visitors to one particular offer without the distractions of everything else on your website, and they consist of:

- A headline and (optional) sub-headline
- A brief description of the offer/CTA
- At least one supporting image
- (Optional) supporting elements such as testimonials or security badges
- And most importantly, a form to capture contact information
- Include only what is needed to minimise distractions.
- Remove main site navigation from the landing page so visitors can focus on completing the form and not continuing to search your site.
- Make it very clear what the offer is and make it irresistible.
- Makes sure that the content on your landing page matches your call-to-action. If there is a disconnect in your messaging visitors will hit the Back button.
- Reduce friction. Don't make visitors think too much or do too much work (i.e. reading).
- Use the right form and only collect the information you absolutely need (see the next section on Forms for more details).



Forms

A few recommendations for landing page forms:

- Only ask for the information you need for you or your sales team.
- Avoid asking for sensitive information that companies or consumers may not want to disclose.
- Consider the value of the offer. The more valuable an offer may be perceived, the more information you may be able to ask for in return. If it's a newsletter subscription, only ask for email address (and maybe first name, at most).
- Reduce anxiety. People are more resistant to give up their information these days, especially because of the increase in spam. Add a privacy message (or link to your privacy policy) that indicates their email will not be shared or sold. Don't use the word "SUBMIT" on your form buttons! No one wants to submit anything. Instead, try "Download Whitepaper," "Get Your Free eBook," or "Join Our Newsletter."
- If you're advertising a downloadable offer as your CTA, fulfill the request instantly. For example, if your form is for a whitepaper download, include a link to download that whitepaper on the very next thank-you page. Another option is to send an auto-responder email containing a link to the offer, but it's recommended it's given right away upon form submission so people don't have to dig in their email for your content.

Option to subscribe

Not all CTAs need to direct people to E-books, sales, or other substantial offers. You can drive people to subscribe to your content as well.

Whether you have an email newsletter or blog, ensure your website encourages visitors to subscribe to it. Newsletters or mailing lists are the perfect way to collect email addresses so you can nurture prospects over time to become leads. Just make sure it's easy for people to find your subscription form.



6. Conclusion

Your website is where education, engagement, and conversion take place. You need to be there when potential buyers come looking. A business website may be the most important factor in your inbound marketing strategy, but it's more than just having a website -- it's the integration of SEO, social media, blogging, content, CTAs, and landing pages that will drive traffic, leads and sales.

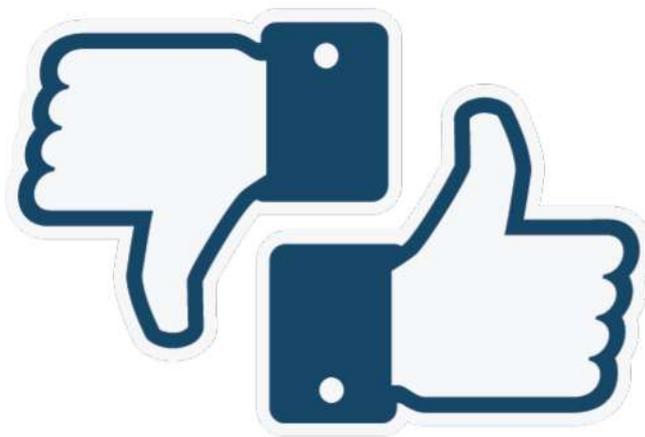
Follow these guidelines and you will soon have a great website that generate sales and revenue for your business. But don't stop there. A website never truly stops growing. Keep learning, testing, and tweaking. Thanks for reading.

Here at Quest we are actively developing and managing successful client websites. We not only target our own defined audiences, but also delivering website content strategies and campaigns for our valued clients.

[Contact the friendly team at Quest](#) to find out how we can help.



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