

Achieving organizational success with tech certifications

A Value of IT Certification analysis

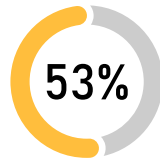


Introduction

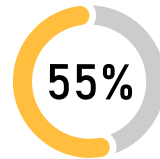
The 2023 Value of IT Certification Candidate Report found that employers are more willing than ever to fund employee certification — we wanted to find out why. So, we went straight to the source — IT hiring managers and people managers themselves. We interviewed managers across India and the US, two markets with a significant interest in tech credentials, to get their insights.



of employers
increased investments
in employee skilling



covered the cost
of certification
exam prep



paid for
certification exam
fees as well

Source: 2023 Value of IT Certification Candidate Report

The results of this analysis confirm what we've learned before: tech skills are in high demand, with the greatest need in emerging areas like cloud, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence (AI). As a result, certifications have become pivotal for both personal and organizational progress — failing to certify means failing to advance.

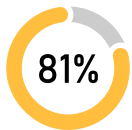
Let's explore how employers leverage certifications to achieve their organizational objectives.



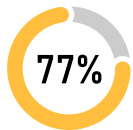
Investing in employee tech certifications benefits the entire organization.

Employee certifications provide substantial benefits beyond the individual level — they positively impact organizations as a whole. Certified staff can enhance overall workforce expertise and productivity, helping companies meet business and customer needs more efficiently and gain a competitive edge.

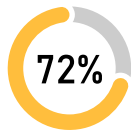
Certified individuals are high performers with the capacity to mentor and inspire non-certified employees, leading to a more highly skilled workforce.



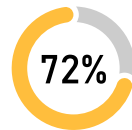
of candidates
produce higher
quality work.



are better able
to innovate after
earning certifications.



are more
productive.



are more
efficient.

Source: 2023 Value of IT Certification Candidate Report

Candidates have reported that technology certifications have helped them do higher quality work, mentor others, and be more innovative. Our conversations with employers bear this out.





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Overall, candidates have more of an advantage with IT certifications. And the biggest advantage is that they can upskill themselves and they can grow an organization. They can grow to a senior-most level. They can start mentoring people under them. They can lead teams; they can prove to be good team leaders once they acquire skills through certifications.

— Director, Manufacturing, India

Certification story:

Best practices in project management

Vertical: Finance

Hiring: Project management

Training and certification: Six-month Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] Certification class

Outcome: An employee showed immediate improvement in job performance and professionalism after becoming certified.

Antonio's colleague was inspired to pursue PMP certification after seeing the professionalism of certified project managers in her workplace. Antonio supported her by providing comprehensive preparation through a six-month training course rather than just having her take the exam. After completing the class and getting certified, the impact was clear.

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You could immediately see the difference, like night and day. She was covering things differently, making sure our project charters were done; she started using different terms. Her whole focus was different. That was awesome.

— IT Director, Finance, US

Certified employees demonstrate higher productivity. Employees can leverage their new skills to identify areas for improvement, solve problems innovatively, and streamline processes.



Certification story:

Time and cost savings

Vertical: Government

Hiring: Mobile app development

Training and certification: Salesforce architect, mobile development

Outcome: A new hire with the relevant certifications completed a project in half the time planned, saving the end customer significant costs.

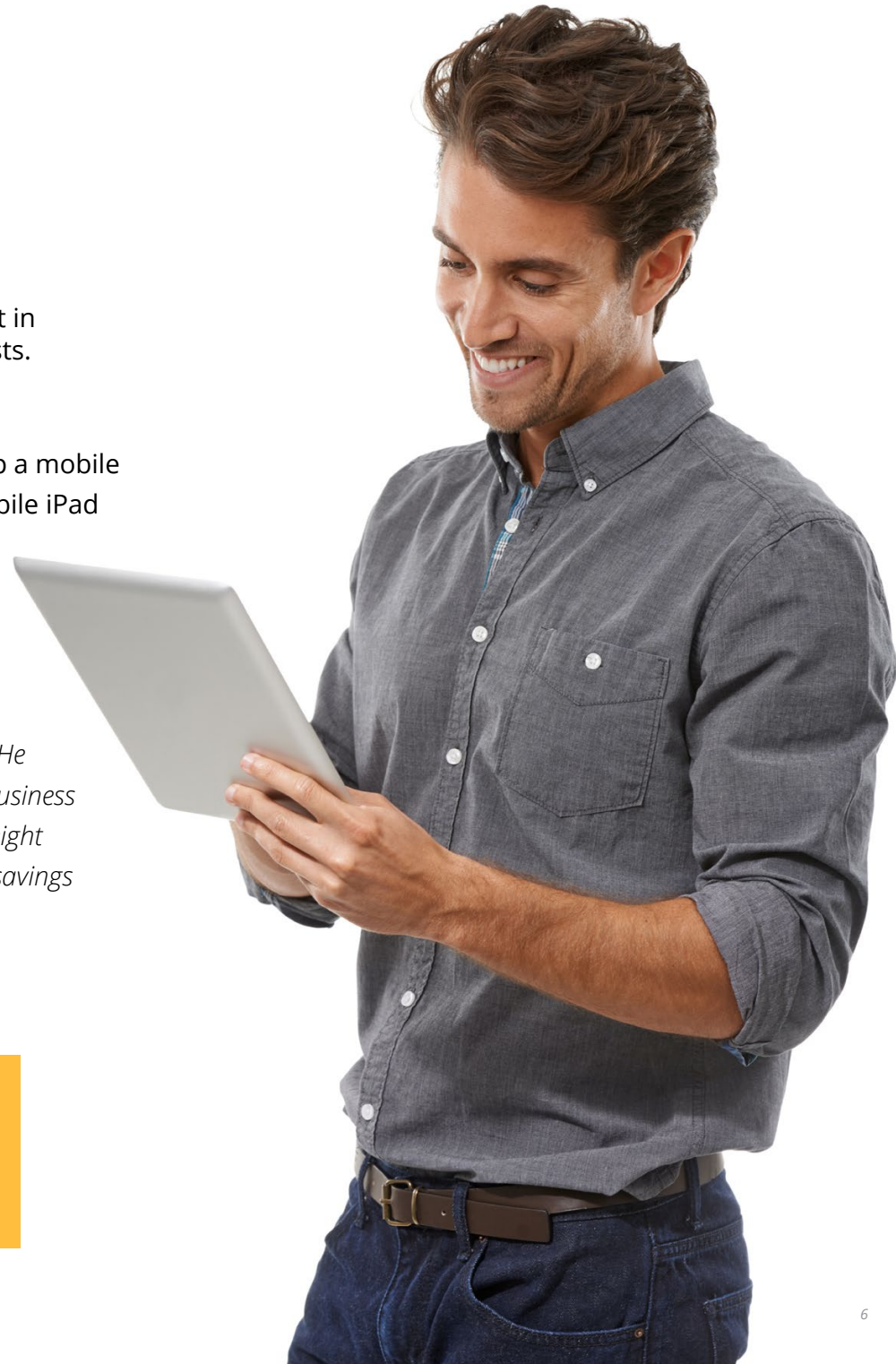
Iqbal's team won a contract with a major insurance company to develop a mobile dashboard. The project required specialized skills in Salesforce and mobile iPad development. After a thorough recruitment process, a certified Salesforce architect was hired to lead the project.

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He came on board and was certified in mobile iPad development on top of Salesforce. He made very quick architectural decisions and recommendations. He helped the team put in an architectural framework for this specific insurance business case, and we were able to get development done [ahead of schedule]. We had eight weeks, and we got it done in half the time. We were able to return some of the savings back to the customer. So, the customer was happy.

— IT Director, Finance, US

Certifications help firms win projects. For big consulting firms, clients often require certain certifications; certifications help companies win projects with clients.





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For cloud engineers or developers, we are big on certifications.

We want them to have the skillset for best practices; [cloud] is the newer technology. Our customers, who are in the cloud, pay for that expertise.

— IT Director, Finance, US

The overall benefits of certification are clear: a more proficient, inspired workforce that drives organizational success. Employee certification is a strategic investment, yielding returns beyond the individual to positively impact the entire organization.

Certification helps fill critical skills gaps.

The rapid pace of technological advancement has led to skills gaps in many organizations. As new technologies emerge, companies often struggle to find employees with the expertise needed to complete projects efficiently.

Certifications in cloud computing, cybersecurity, and AI are in high demand due to significant skills gaps in these areas.

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The challenge is emerging skillsets. [Cloud] has been around for ten years, but people have not spent time developing those skills. So, we don't have a ready pool of candidates to choose from.

— IT Manager, Healthcare, US

AI is also picking up pace, with clients asking for use cases specific to generative AI. But people with experience are hard to find.

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Because [AI] skills are so new, you can't find someone with say, five years of experience or even just six months' experience. Nowadays, companies hire conditional employees who take training and can be hired if they pass the certification.

— Chief Technology Officer, Government, US



Skills gaps create inefficiencies, delays, and extra costs. Certifications that close those gaps have broad benefits, while failing to address the gaps can result in detrimental outcomes.

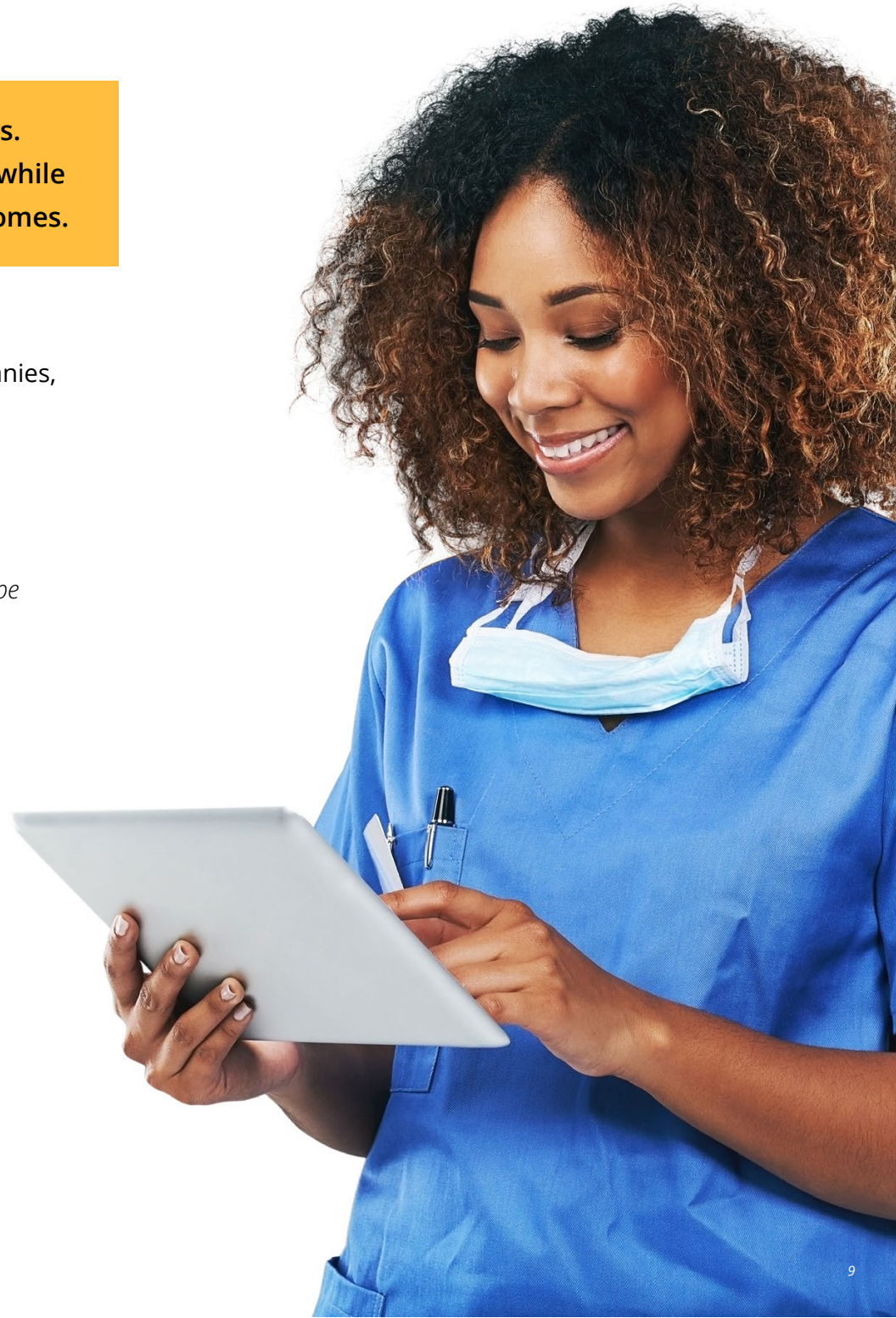
The ongoing tech talent shortage has severely impacted many companies, as an IT manager from a healthcare company in the US explained:

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Skills gaps cause a huge resource drain. We once estimated a project to be completed in six months, but we lacked critical skills in cloud migration, so the project took twice as long and double the resources to complete. Other projects and initiatives suffered as a result, and the result was catastrophic.

— IT Manager, Healthcare, US

While the lack of a tech-savvy candidate pool is challenging, the good news is that by clearly identifying their most critical needs and providing opportunities for staff to gain certifications, organizations can bridge the skills gap.



Certification simplifies and improves the hiring process — from screening to onboarding.

Certifications validate job-relevant skills and can demonstrate greater competency than formal education alone, allowing employers to identify candidates with specialized expertise. They also help set job seekers apart and provide employers with confidence they are selecting qualified personnel.

From initial screening of resumes through targeted interview questions, certification allows for shortlisting of prospective candidates resulting in a shorter overall hiring process.



Certification story:

Hiring for certification

Vertical: Shipping, import/export

Hiring: Entry-level developer

Certifications held by candidate: Java, Python, C++

Outcome: A certified job candidate demonstrated greater knowledge and problem-solving skills and was hired over a mid-level candidate with no certification.

In evaluating candidates for an entry-level developer position, Jugal, an HR manager in the shipping and import/export industry in India, found that certification made a big difference.

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The first [candidate] had certifications: Java, Python, C++, all those basic criteria that is required. When evaluated, when tested, the certified [candidate] had much more knowledge, much more experience, [a] much faster way to solve the problem, so we have to choose him at the entry level.

— HR Manager, Shipping/Import/Export, India

Jugal's experience shows that even at the entry level, certification in key programming languages can demonstrate greater knowledge, problem-solving ability, and readiness for the job.

While a college degree is an asset, professional certifications demonstrate real-world abilities and specializations.



Certification story:

Hiring for certification vs. education

Vertical: Healthcare

Hiring: Entry-level developer

Training and certification: Coding

Outcome: A high school graduate with certification takes an entry-level position and hits the ground running.

Rob hired a high school graduate who was educated at a coding academy and earned IT certifications instead of pursuing a traditional college education. This employee was able to contribute immediately, thanks to the skills and credentials from his technical training.

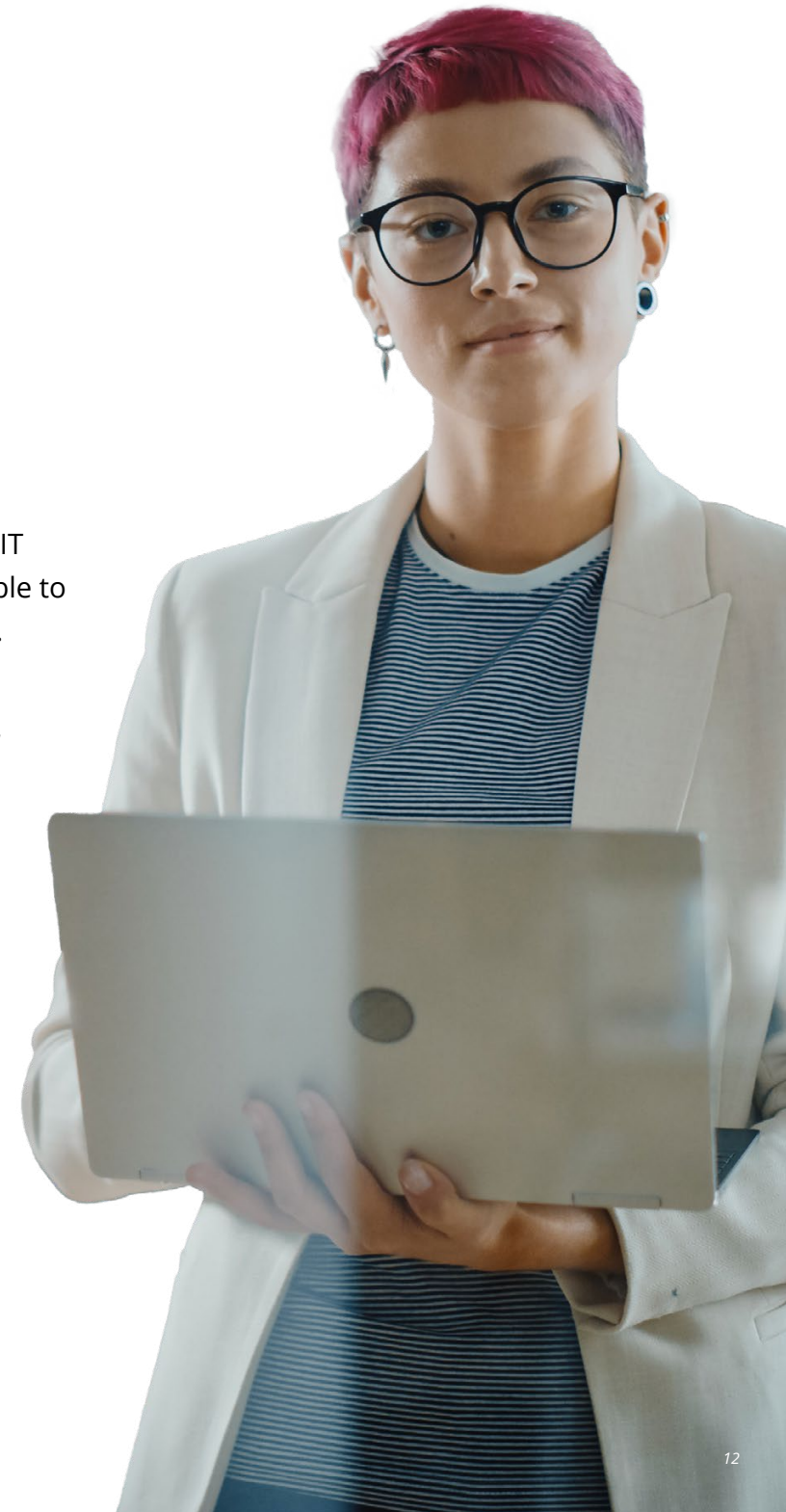
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A young man who came straight from a coding academy did a great job for us in an entry-level position. After working for us for two years, he moved on to another company and was able to double his salary. Not having a college degree didn't matter because he had the skill set.

— IT Manager, Healthcare, US

Through strategic partnerships, tech trade schools and companies can provide impactful training, certifications, and opportunities that set up employees for success. With IT certifications, an entry-level employee rapidly moves up in their field.

Obtaining certifications demonstrates an employee's initiative to grow, improve, and actively learn new skills. Employers stand to gain from these expanding skillsets if they retain qualified employees — or the opposite if they do not.



Certification story:

Retaining certified employees

Vertical: Finance

Hiring: Security position

Training and certification: Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)

Outcome: A company lost a driven, certified employee when it did not provide him sufficient career growth opportunities.

IT director Antonio believes in retaining talent through development, but learned what can happen when companies don't value new skills. Despite helping a colleague earn a CISSP to break into cybersecurity, that employee was continually rejected for internal roles, highlighting the need for organizations to align credentials with career growth.

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He was seeing things security-wise of how we were vulnerable to our network. He proved he was secure in the knowledge of security, as far as protecting our business, protecting our data – being mindful of attacks. Like how to handle malware attacks, he literally jumped in and helped us lead it. I would have hired him, but [the security department] told me that they wanted real-world experience.

— IT Director, Finance, US

Employee certifications can be a win-win for companies and staff, but only if organizations fully utilize the newly acquired skills. To benefit from certification initiatives, organizations need to give credentialed employees opportunities to use their expanded knowledge and abilities, while providing pathways for career advancement. Doing both can help boost retention and help businesses thrive.



Conclusion

The insights shared by IT hiring and people managers make a compelling case for the value of certification in organizations. As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, certifications provide a critical bridge for organizations seeking to close skills gaps. Organizations that use certification programs thoughtfully gain a powerful tool for empowering employees and spurring business success.



Methodology

The target audience for this study was mid or senior-level IT hiring decision-makers/ people managers at companies with 1000+ employees and 50+ IT staff across a variety of industries. These hiring managers, recruiters, or HR personnel must have been directly involved in candidate selection, interviewing, and/or hiring of IT roles in companies with a minimum of 10 IT personnel.

Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted by Edge Research — eight in the US and eight in India. The interviews were conducted virtually and were approximately 60 minutes in length.

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