

LEADERSHIP *THE EPL WAY*

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ABSTRACT

*Leadership has been the subject of much speculation and disagreement, leading to various diverse perspectives. From these diverse perspectives it is possible to identify two dominant paradigms on leadership – the **psychological perspective** and the **sociological perspective**. In this paper, an **alternative perspective** on leadership is presented, called *The “EPL Way”*. It is an integrative view of the dominant perspectives on leadership.*

BACKGROUND

Leadership has long excited interest among people. It is a universal phenomenon, because it manifests in one form or another across different organisational and national contexts (Allio, 2009, p. 4; Özaralli, 2003, p. 335; Tirmizi, 2002, p. 269). Writings on leadership can be found in old Latin, Greek, Roman and Chinese classics (Cowie, 2008; Pierce and Newstrom, 2003, p. 7). It seems that there is no end to the “*leaderbabble*”, as De Vries (2001, p. 212) puts it. Despite all the literature on leadership, in reality, we are still faced with a very real and very concerning leadership gap.

Corporate life seems to have a dispiriting effect on employees (Amar, 2005, p. 4; Howard & Welbourn, 2004, p. 119; Zohar & Marshall, 2005, p. 20). Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Conner and Edeburn (2005, p. 13) have found that 74 percent of US workers feel powerless and have become disengaged from their workplaces. The result is an annual estimated financial loss of \$300 billion. Locally, the average employee absence from work on any given day is almost five percent (Vaida, 2005). Hogan, Raskin, and Frazzini (1990, as cited in Blair et al., 2008, p. 255) maintain that nearly every working adult has reported that he or she has worked for an intolerable boss at one point in his or her lifetime.

Robert Kramer (2008, p. 27) believes that this lingering leadership crisis shows no signs of abating. Innumerable authorities have stepped in to offer solutions and counsel, but to no avail (Cowie, 2008; Kramer, 2008, p. 27). Piasecka (2000, p. 253) reports that more than 70 percent of change programmes fail because people cannot or do not know how to change. Carr, Hard and Trahant (as quoted by Smith, 2003, p. 249) refer

to a study which states that only ten percent of corporations that attempted to change management style were successful in institutionalising the new style. Weiss and Molinaro (2006, p. 3) also demonstrate in their research that organisations spend considerable time, money and energy building their leadership capacity to gain a competitive advantage, but that various approaches to building leadership capacity are failing to hit the mark.

In searching for answers to this leadership gap, it is suggested that we return to the basics and ask ourselves what we would need from our leaders to bridge this ever-increasing gap. We need to look at timeless aspects of leadership, those things that have endured the test of time and that have kept people talking about leadership for hundreds of years. The question then arises as to whether there is a leadership perspective that can address the timeless dimension of leadership. We are fortunate enough to have developed such a perspective on leadership.

ETHOS, PATHOS AND LOGOS

The *Greek Philosophy of Influence*, as expressed in *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, serves as an effective **ordering structure** for leadership. *It reiterates those qualities and traits that have been cited by numerous authors for a number of years.* It also offers a useful **framework** for grouping different qualities or traits in a sensible way. **It could therefore be argued that the principles of ethos, pathos and logos constitute leadership fundamentals as they point towards the essence of leadership.** However, the following specific key points need to be highlighted to ensure a rich understanding of what these fundamental principles of leadership entail:

- 1) ***Ethos*** as a leadership fundamental constitutes **two things**: the development of **character** or **principle-centred behaviour** and **self-mastery** or **personal leadership**. Authors like Aburdene (2005), Cashman (1998a), Covey (1994; 1995; 2006) and The Dalai Lama and Van den Muyzenberg (2009) have suggested a ***sequential process to leadership*** that **starts with self-mastery**. **Great leadership has to stem from one's character.** This is what Cashman (1998a; 1998b) calls ***authentic self-expression***. **Character constitutes the foundation upon which all other leadership qualities are built.** This is the reason why Covey argues that ***Private Victories should precede Public Victories***.

- 2) **Pathos** as a leadership fundamental focuses on **interpersonal competence** and **building and maintaining effective relationships**. It is how the leader **aligns himself/herself with the emotional thrust of another person** and how he/she **stands in the service of others**. Leaders cannot increase their influence if they are unable to build and maintain lasting relationships with others. It is also important to take note of the pathology side of pathos which implies that **uncaring leaders can cause suffering**. **Leaders can either uplift or break down their followers**.
- 3) **Logos** as a leadership fundamental comprises two major components: **meaning** and **logic**. **Human beings have a fundamental anthropological need for meaning**. If leaders are to be effective, they **need to understand their own purpose and create meaning for their followers in whichever context they find themselves**. Meaning suggests that there is **purpose behind our actions**. It suggests that the leader has a **compelling vision** and a **drive and determination** to do what needs to be done to achieve greatness. It suggests that leaders need to be able to comprehend the meaning of different situations and communicate that meaning to their followers through the development of **shared values**. Logic refers to **wisdom** and **conceptual ability**. It emphasises the need to make the **right decisions aligned with the shared values of the organisation**. It implies that leaders develop the **necessary and relevant contextual competencies** they would need **to create a sustainable competitive advantage for their organisations**. It also implies that a **leader's credibility is increased through his/her competence and expertise**.

THE EPL WAY LEADERSHIP MODEL

The EPL Leadership Model was developed by Professor David Smith at the Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg) during the 1990's. It is practised within the academic discipline or field of study called Personal, Interpersonal and Professional Leadership in the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg. A leader, from the EPL perspective, should subscribe to and endeavour to live according to three root pillars or building blocks: **ethos, pathos and logos** (Smith, 2008a, p. 10). **Ethos** refers to ethical or moral leadership and incorporates the leader's *character, integrity* and *moral values*. A key concept is *leadership by example* or through modelling. It is through *example* that one

demonstrates *credibility* and builds *trust* (Smith, 2008a, p. 12). **Pathos** is the human relationship side of leadership and encompasses *empathy, compassion, caring, empowering, emotional intelligence and service* (Smith, 2008a, p. 13). **Logos** denotes experiencing a deeper sense of *meaning* or purpose in life; also having *competence, knowledge and skill*. It encompasses big picture thinking, strategic thinking, leading change, leading performance, and maintaining perspective and balance (Smith, 2008a, p. 15).

It is clear that *The EPL Way* Leadership Model refers to the same root principles of *ethos, pathos* and *logos* that have been identified as leadership fundamentals. This should not lead to confusion. The fact that the model is based on the same fundamental root principles is not a coincidence, but rather demonstrates that the model is based on a sound theoretical foundation. **One could therefore argue that this model has already passed the first test since it is theoretically sound. However, the value of the model does not merely lie in the fact that it is based on the root principles of *ethos, pathos* and *logos*, but rather on how meaning and expression are given to these root principles, in other words, how these principles are applied in practice to develop leadership potential.** Leadership development through the EPL Leadership Model takes on a whole new dimension, since it is not sufficient for the leader to merely *take note of* the principles of *ethos, pathos* and *logos*. Rather leaders are required to *live ethos, pathos* and *logos* every day. Thus it becomes **leading “The EPL Way”**.

SEQUENTIAL LOGIC OF LEADERSHIP THE EPL WAY

Perhaps the most fundamental contribution of the EPL Leadership Model, is the fact that it provides a **leadership-directed structure** for the three root principles of *ethos, pathos* and *logos*. The three root principles are placed in a pyramid, termed the ***EPL Pyramid of Leadership and Credibility*** (Smith, 2008a, p. 10).

The reason why so many leadership development programmes fail is because they focus on developing professional competencies, before they have developed **intrapersonal** and **interpersonal awareness** within the individual. One cannot focus on developing one’s strengths at work and improving group or team effectiveness before people feel understood. It is also futile to try to create understanding and build effective relationships where there is no faith in one’s character. Therefore, *ethos* is placed at the base of the pyramid, because

leadership starts with personal effectiveness or self-mastery. However, **relationship mastery also precedes professional effectiveness** in the workplace. For this reason, pathos is placed on the second level of the pyramid. *Pathos* refers to how the leader *relates* to others and focuses on *connection*. The second level of the pyramid represents a bridge between personal effectiveness and professional effectiveness. This, maybe, is not coincidence, since *pathos* relates to the “*heart’s code*”, a phrase coined by Pearsall (1999, p. 5) for the subtle life or “L” energy cardio-cryptogram. The heart is acknowledged as the *bridge or point of integration* between the lower three and the upper three energy centres or spinning vortices in the human body (Karagulla and Van Gelder, 1989, p. 42; Pearsall, 1999, p. 4). *Logos*, at the top level, is a culmination of the first two levels of the pyramid, which entails giving *contextual expression* to self-mastery and relationship mastery.

Smith (2008c, p. 2) views human beings holistically from eight different life engagements – four internal (spiritual, physical, mental and emotional) and four external (social, vocational, financial and ecological). Another article on this website explains these eight life orientations in more detail. Leadership development *The EPL Way* firstly focuses on the internal life dimensions of the individual and on **finding balance between these life dimensions**. This is what Smith calls **Personal Leadership**. He believes *you firstly have to work with the heart of the individual. Organisational change depends on firstly shifting the individual’s mindset*. An individual, who has achieved personal mastery, can then focus on building and maintaining effective relationships. This is called **Interpersonal Leadership** and takes place mostly in the **social life dimension**. The external life dimensions provide the platform for practising personal and interpersonal leadership and developing our competencies and skills. This then culminates into **Professional Leadership**. Smith’s (2006) *Professional Leadership interventions* focus, in the work context, on both **generic and/or contextually relevant professional leadership competencies**. Such competencies, however, dealt with on the **logos** or **Professional Leadership** level, address leadership development themes and challenges at all three levels, i.e. *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. In his *Practical Supervision Course for the Mining Industry*, Smith (2009c) addresses the well-known **four management competencies of planning, organising, leading and controlling (POLC)**.

Based on feedback from his clients, Smith (2009c) has identified **leading** as the management function demanding the most attention. As part of *leading* under the management functions of POLC he addresses

professional competencies relating to *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* such as the following:

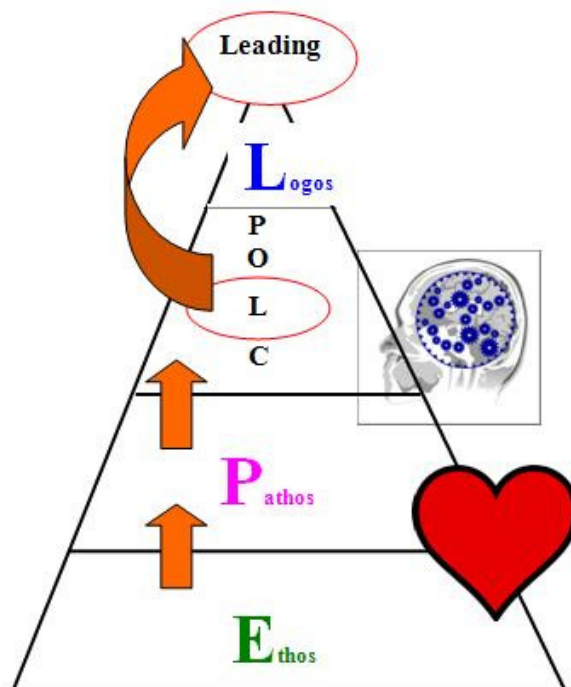
Ethos: principle-centred leadership, leadership and management styles, and value-centred leadership

Pathos: team spirit, encouraging leadership, motivating your team, effective communication and assertiveness, dealing with work related relationships, managing conflict, leading by empowerment

Logos: competencies in managerial and supervisory context including work roles and responsibilities of the supervisor, goals and objectives, competent control, decision-making and problem-solving, the supervisor as coach, and courageous leadership for zero harm.

Thus, *ethos* and *pathos* relate to changing the **heart** of the individual, and *logos* relates to changing the **head** of the person. Or, as Smith puts it: *we have to move from heart to head to hand*. We first have to become authentic within ourselves, then we can reach out to others and add value to those around us, or to the contexts in which we find ourselves. [See Figure 1 below]

Figure 1: Sequential logic of the EPL Leadership Model



ETHOS AS FOUNDATION OF THE LEADERSHIP PYRAMID

Leadership can be defined as “*showing the way or giving direction*”. Smith (2008a, p. 9) enriches this definition by stating that leadership could also be interpreted as a ***journey of continuous growth and self-renewal***. He claims that it is firstly about finding one’s *own meaning and direction*. For this reason, one of the aims of EPL leadership development is helping an individual reconnect with his/her authentic self, or, as Smith calls it, one’s “***True North***”. Our *True North* is who we really are and what we value in life. As Cashman (1998b, pp. 42-43) has pointed out, leadership should stem from character, i.e. from who we really are. This is the only route to authentic self-expression. Finding our *True North* in life and authentically giving expression to what we value, requires that we align our personal values with universal moral principles. **Thus, Smith also supports Covey’s (1994, p. 42) *principle-centred, character-based, inside-out approach* to life. A person is therefore encouraged to discover his/her deepest personal values, but at the same time he/she is reminded that for him/her to be truly effective, he/she needs to align these values with reality. This means that he/she cannot ignore universal moral principles in executing his/her choices and that each individual should take *personal responsibility* for his/her life.**

The process of discovering one’s *True North* is a *journey of self-discovery*. To discover who we really are, requires that we **first assess our current life situation**. This entails gaining insight into our dominant ***temperament type*** as well as our ***conditioned mindset***. Through genetic imprint and everyday experiences we develop programmed subroutines called ***mindsets*** – *clusters of mental patterns for perceiving (seeing) and thinking about the world and other people*. It is literally the filter through which we interpret the world around us. Mindset includes our temperament, core beliefs and values, deepest needs, education, culture, background and life experiences. Mindset finds expression in our thoughts, feelings, actions and our attitude towards life (Smith, 2008e, p. 22). Personal leadership development “The EPL Way” therefore requires the development of three important awarenesses (Smith, 2008c, p. 7):

- *Reality Awareness*, i.e. awareness of the challenges of one’s existence, one’s existing mindset, the impact of conditioning and one’s existing attitude towards life.
- *Self Awareness*, i.e. knowing oneself, one’s purpose in life and one’s potential in terms of inner strengths that would enable one to optimise one’s potential.

- *Other (People) Awareness*, i.e. awareness of one's external resources, in terms of pivotal people in one's life and the opportunities available for optimising one's potential.

Trustworthiness and the Three C's

Smith (2008d, p. 4:1) believes that **trust** is the foundation of leadership and that to build trust, a leader must exemplify the three C's: **Character**, **Connection** and **Competence**. Displaying these three qualities increases a person's *credibility* as a leader. People will forgive occasional mistakes based on ability, if they see you are still growing as a leader. However, they will not trust someone who lacks character. **Character makes trust possible. And trust makes leadership possible** (Smith, 2008d, p. 4:2). This, according to Maxwell (1998, p. 55), is the law of *Solid Ground*. **Trust is often based on reputation. To maintain a trustworthy reputation requires integrity.** Smith (2008a, p. 13) defines *integrity* as the value to be placed upon yourself and your name. When you have integrity, your words and your actions match up, i.e. you walk your talk. To walk your talk, you must have absolute clarity about your governing values (i.e. the things that are most important to you in life). This will enable you to make tough decisions when faced with right versus right moral dilemmas.

PATHOS AS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN ETHOS AND LOGOS

Pathos requires demonstrating **care for others**. As a personal leader, one develops an awareness of the pivotal people in one's life. To become an *interdependent* member of society requires that one relates effectively with others. In building effective relationships with others, one should first be aware of how one relates and how others relate. This is where an understanding of different **temperament types** can be helpful, as it allows for insight into the thinking of people, based on whether they are more **brain directed** (i.e. rational and logical) or **heart directed** (i.e. emotional, sensitive and gentle). Smith (2008d, p. 10:9) provides three important principles for **building fulfilling relationships** with others. He calls them the three A's. The three A's are: *authenticity*, *acceptance* and *adding value*.

The first principle of *authenticity* confirms the importance of **first achieving self-mastery** before attempting to build more effective relationships with others, because it requires that one is **genuine**, **sincere** and **bona fide** in all one's interactions with others. The second principle of *acceptance* asks of us to **allow others to be themselves**

just as we would like the opportunity to be ourselves. Acceptance breeds *authenticity*. When a person feels accepted they can afford to open up, blossom and become who they really are. Thus leaders should create an environment that is conducive to authentic self-expression, by accepting the people around them. The last principle of *adding value* is based on the assumption that a relationship is only worthy of pursuing if it **adds value to the parties involved**. Effective leadership means leaving a mark, a footprint, a trail or contribution. This is also called ***legacy*** (Smith, 2008d, p. 2:3). **Our legacy as leaders starts with the people we choose to lead.**

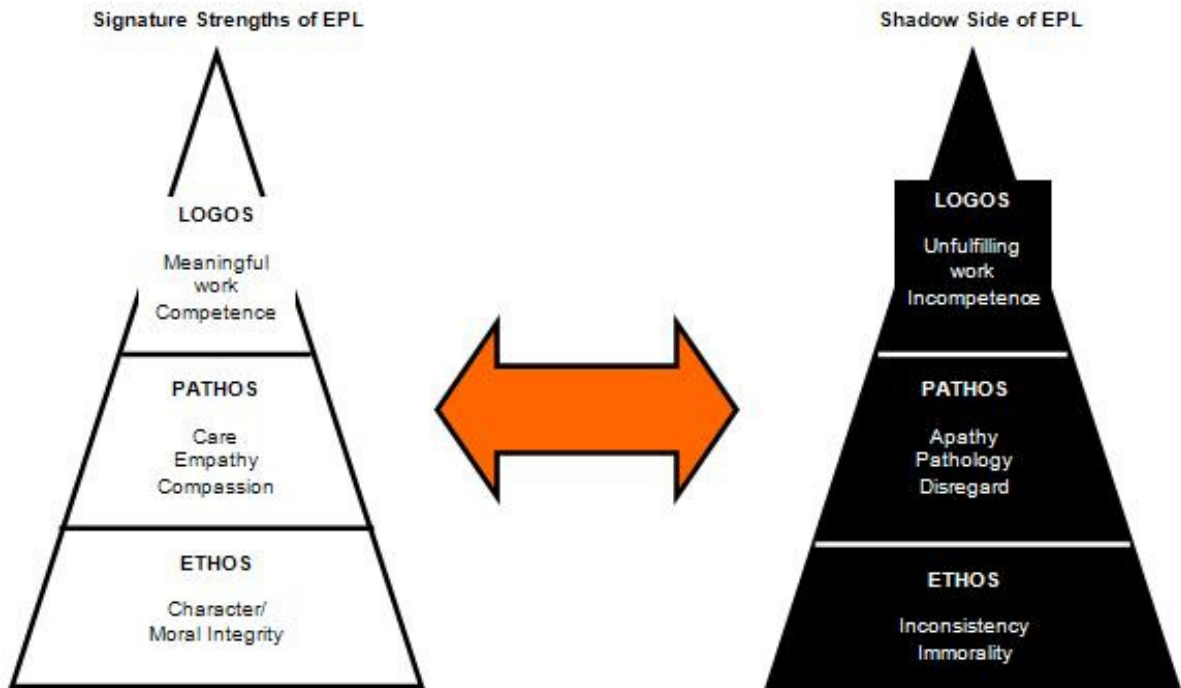
The opposite or shadow side of pathos is “*apathy*”. Apathy refers to pathology in relationships. It emphasises the fact that leaders can either **uplift** or **break down** the people around them. It is important to note that the EPL Leadership Model also has a ***shadow side***. The shadow side of the pyramid suggests that leaders can also live and practise the opposite qualities implied by *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. The shadow side of the EPL Leadership Model is illustrated in **Figure 2** below.

LOGOS AS THE APEX OF THE LEADERSHIP PYRAMID

In essence the embodiment of *logos* in any leadership context stems from the expression of self-mastery (*ethos*) and relationship mastery (*pathos*) in the specific context in which the leader finds him/herself. *Legacy* is also about the *meaning* of that which the leader creates or leaves behind. **To leave a lasting legacy, requires that the leader first needs clarity about his/her own purpose in life, and then needs to align his/her purpose with what he/she would like to achieve and leave behind for others.** In an organisational context this means that **leaders are responsible for establishing, shaping and maintaining the corporate culture.**

It also becomes the leader’s responsibility to create a **meaningful work environment** for followers. Barrett (1999, p. 31) reports that, when employees find their work personally fulfilling, their level of productivity is twice as high. In a study involving fourteen organisations and 25 000 employees, the Wilson Learning Company found that approximately 39 percent of variability in corporate performance was attributed to the personal fulfilment of the employees and 69 percent variability in personal satisfaction was attributable to the quality of the employees’ relationship with their manager and their manager’s empowerment skills (Barrett, 1999, p. 31).

Figure 2: Signature Strengths of EPL vs. Shadow Side of EPL

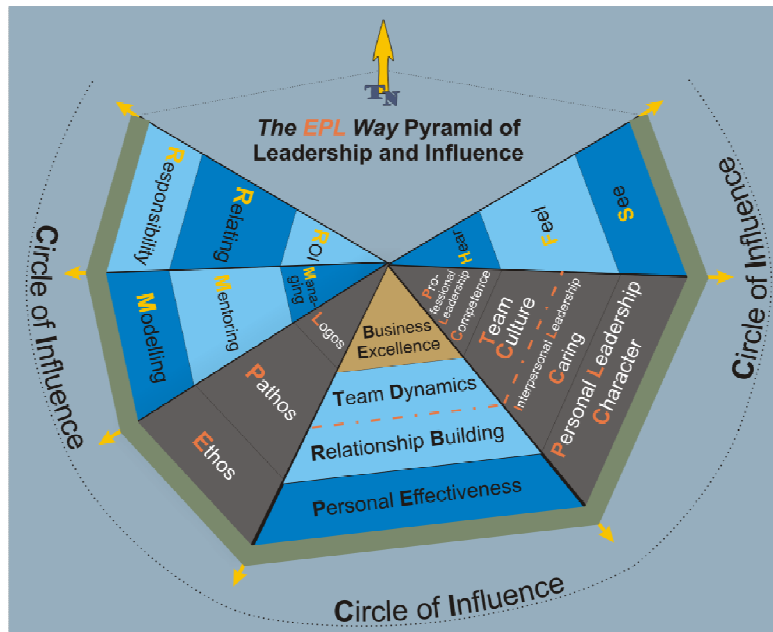


Competence

Logos also refers to reason and logic. As mentioned on page 19, Smith argues that to build trust, a leader must exemplify three qualities: *character*, *connection* and **competence**. Also, as mentioned in the discussion of what *logos* entails on page 13 of this article, competence is **contextual** in the sense that different leaders need different skills or competencies, depending on the contexts in which they lead. Smith recognises the contextuality of competence and skill and therefore caters his approach to the needs of the client. Yet professional leadership development “The EPL Way” focuses on the **leading** component of management and aims to teach the individual how to practise personal and interpersonal leadership effectively at work.

The EPL Pyramid of Leadership and Credibility has also evolved over time to incorporate more aspects of the different competencies that a leader needs. The most recent version of the Pyramid indicates in much more detail what each level of the Pyramid entails, and is presented in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: The EPL Pyramid of Leadership and Credibility



Source: Smith (2009b)

Smith summarises the crux of this model through what he calls the **three C's**, the **three R's** and the **three M's**. Leadership starts with the development of **character**. The individual firstly needs to take personal **responsibility** for his/her actions. People also firstly need to **see** the leader as a role **model**. He explains that **you do not teach values, you live values**. The leader firstly needs to live the values that he/she wants others to integrate into their daily behaviours. He/she should **model** the behaviour he/she wants from others. Secondly, the leader should **relate** to his/her followers by demonstrating **care, understanding, empathy and compassion**. **Care** means the **intention to truly add value to others and to help them develop their potential**. People want to **feel** that their leader really cares about them. For this reason, the leader serves as a **mentor** for others. Lastly, the leader should demonstrate **competence** and **vision** if he/she is to encourage others to really **listen** to him/her. Leaders are able to **manage** the situations in which they find themselves, when they are competent and skilled. This is the **return on investment (ROI)** obtained from effectively practising personal and interpersonal leadership in the different contexts within which the leader operates and interacts with others. The leader's **voice** is only **heard** and his/her **influence** therefore *increased* when people have **seen** the example set by the leader and they **feel** that the leader truly cares.

It may be noteworthy that all our courses are based on Leadership *The EPL Way*.

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