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# Supply Chain Today, CEO Tomorrow

Five secrets to cement your supply chain legacy — then rise through the ranks.



## Introduction

Chief supply chain officers (CSCOs) consider themselves effective leaders, with three-quarters giving themselves a score of at least 75 out of 100 when asked how effective they were in their position.<sup>1</sup>

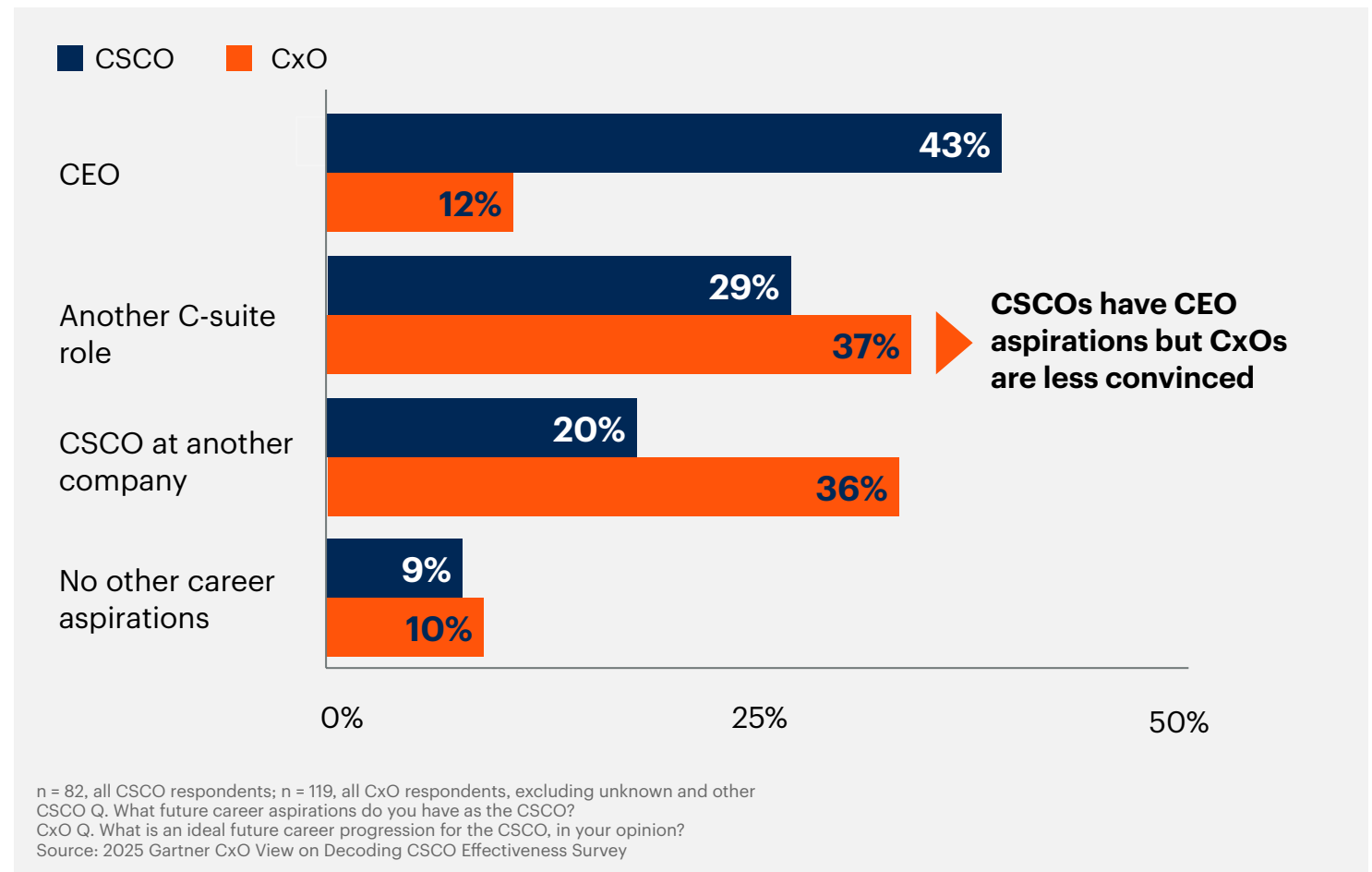
On the other hand, only 1% of C-suite peers (CxOs) and CEOs see the CSCO as influential in terms of securing resources, garnering support for ideas and shaping group opinions.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, more than 40% of CSCOs think they could become a future CEO, but only 12% of the C-suite agrees (see Figure 1).

What's getting in the way of CSCOs getting the respect they deserve? The top challenges CSCOs identified are:

- **Inability** to drive recognizable value — or more specifically the inability of CSCOs to keep disruptions from distracting their focus on strategy, planning and the other activities that matter most to the C-suite. The consequence is that CSCOs are perceived as the least collaborative CxO and the one that the CEO is least likely to listen to.<sup>2</sup>

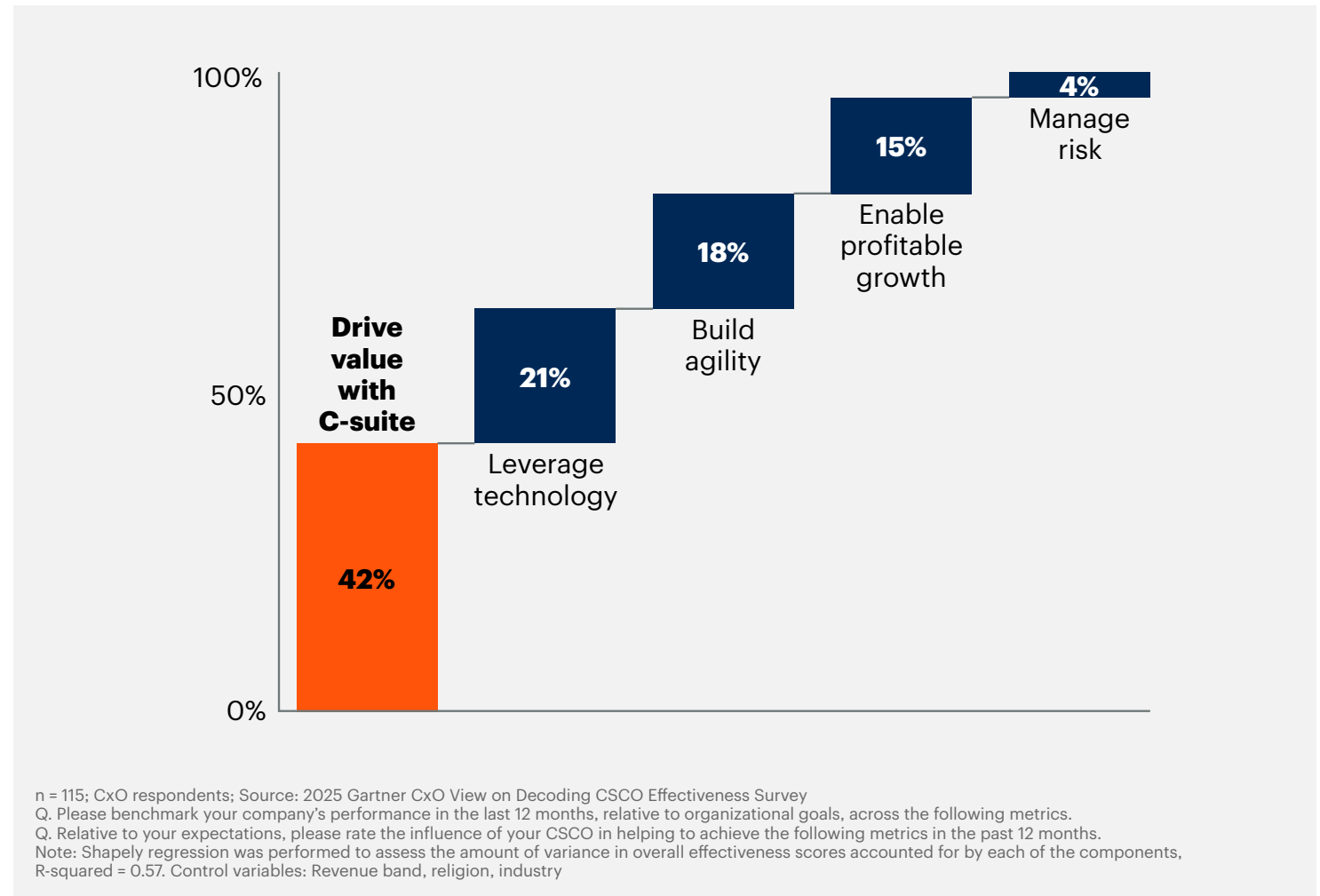
Figure 1: Few CxOs see CEO potential in CSCOs



- **Falling** behind the pace of technology change. It's so bad that supply chain is listed among the functions as most lagging AI savviness (along with sales, procurement, HR and legal).<sup>3</sup>
- **Unclear** expectations of the supply chain. Thirty-six percent more CxOs than CSCOs think that functional execution should still be a top priority for CSCOs, highlighting the perception that CSCOs are still seen as primarily operational.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, CSCOs and their C-suite peers agree on the five key traits of effective CSCOs: driving value with the C-suite, leveraging technology, building agility, enabling profitable growth and managing risk (see Figure 2). Here we explore strategies for improving your CSCO effectiveness score in order to influence key business outcomes — and eventually be promoted to the CEO position.

Figure 2: Five traits of CSCO effectiveness



## Effective CSCOs drive value with the C-suite

Driving value with the C-suite accounts for 42% of CSCO effectiveness, making it the most critical trait.<sup>1</sup> It's not just about tweaking things inside the supply chain organization: It's important to work across departments toward enterprise goals and clearly demonstrate supply chain's contribution. Gartner recommends the following tactics:

### Devoting time to areas the C-suite values most.

Currently, CSCOs spend time in areas that aren't recognized for leading to effectiveness, and the C-suite doesn't fully understand where CSCOs prioritize their time, nor recognize outcomes and value of time spent. To prioritize their time in areas that have the most impact, CSCOs must first understand C-suite expectations (see Table 1). Then CSCOs must evolve how their priorities are determined, getting out of the daily operations and focusing more on longer-term strategies (see Figure 3).

Table 1: Perceptions of where CSCOs should prioritize their time

Activity	% of CSCOs	% of CxOs
Strategy and planning	77%	79%
Driving financial goals	61%	73%
Innovation	63%	56%
Functional execution	43%	62%
Managing risk	44%	66%
Managing and developing talent	59%	50%
Stakeholder relationships	46%	34%
External partner management	28%	36%

n = 82, all CSCO respondents; n = 119, all CxO respondents, excluding don't know

Q. Rank the top 5 areas where you believe you/the CSCO should be allocating time to contribute to overall business success.

Source: 2025 Gartner CxO View on Decoding CSCO Effectiveness Survey

**Collaborating for impact, rather than effort.** More than half of CxOs say they engage with CSCOs broadly on key decisions, cost optimization, strategy and revenue, but just 37% engage in discussions on emerging technology and even fewer (36%) on topics tied to transformation and long-term value. Still, CxOs have favorable perceptions of CSCOs' abilities to align strategic plans and proactively raise risks to the executive team.<sup>1</sup> The key for CSCOs then is to present potential solutions to said risks and articulate the value the supply chain delivers to manage against those risks.

**Showcasing supply chain capabilities and value.** Nearly four in 10 CxOs indicate CSCOs don't do a good enough job helping the executive team understand how supply chain supports the organization.<sup>1</sup> Savvy CSCOs combat this by guiding — not assuming — the C-suite's perception of value-driving capabilities. They define how the supply chain strategy is aligned to and supports the overall business strategy; when supply chain implications need to be brought into strategic plans; what supply chain capabilities are enabling organizational outcomes; and why investments in the supply chain will yield profitable growth.

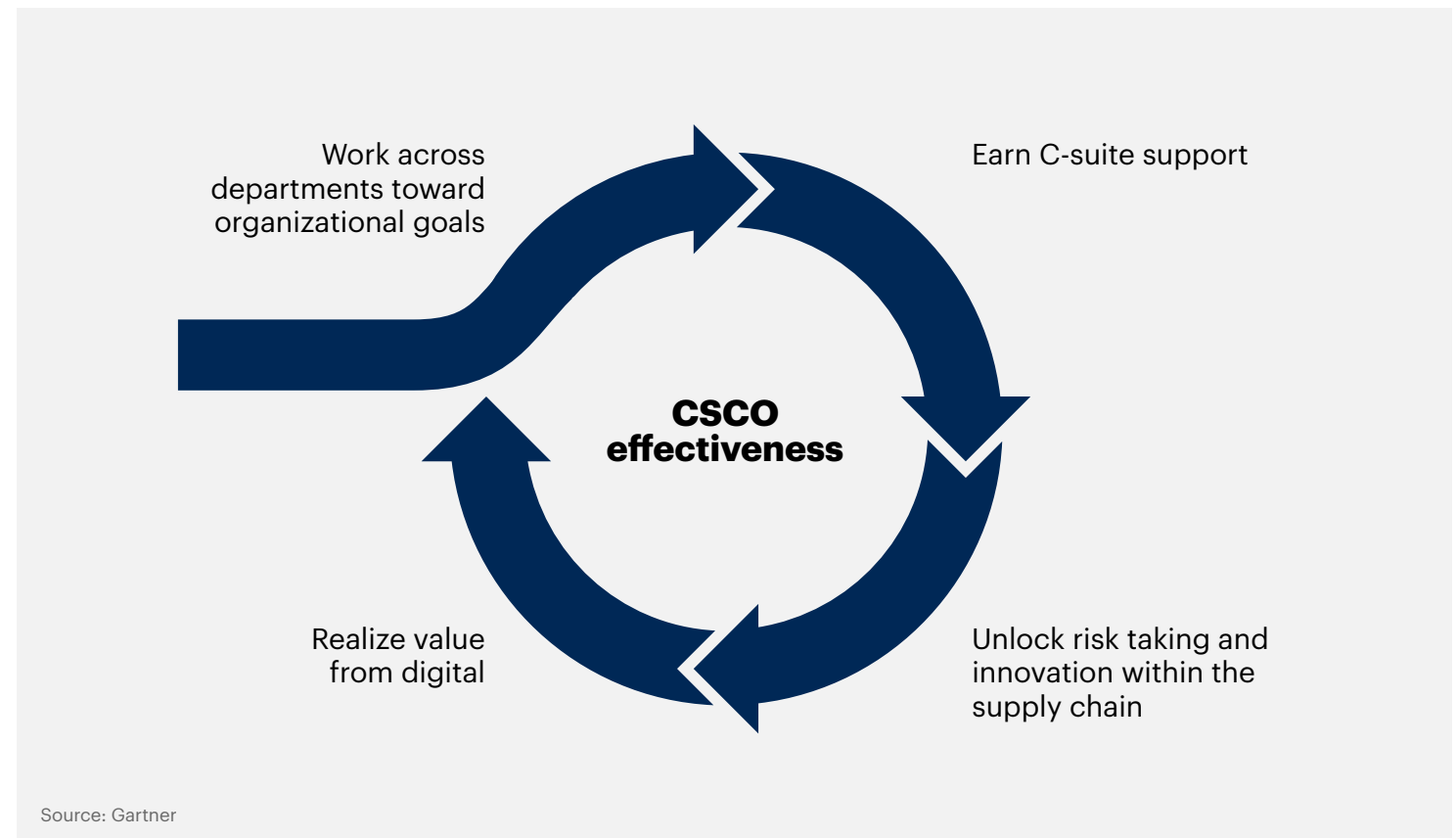
Figure 3: CSCO actions to increase value



## Effective CSCOs leverage technology

Realizing value from digital investments contributes to 21% of the CSCO effectiveness score.<sup>1</sup> It's little surprise then that 82% of CSCOs plan to increase spend on technology.<sup>4</sup> But in the background, CFOs report that 67% of current investment underperforms expectations.<sup>5</sup> To be perceived as a digital leader, a CSCO must: 'be accountable for supply chain and ecosystem digital value realization; partner with the CIO and others directly; and showcase wins and champion change management success. This collaboration across the C-suite creates a "flywheel" that not only enables the supply chain organization to experiment with technology, learn and take risks, but also increases overall CSCO effectiveness (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: CSCO digital value flywheel



## Effective CSCOs build agility

Increasing agile capabilities contributes to 18% of the CSCO effectiveness score.<sup>1</sup> Agility is achieved when supply chains can maintain continuous operations by withstanding and recovering from disruptions quickly and with minimal business impact. But they can't do this if the business is stuck using manual processes and rigid corporate structures. Effective CSCOs recognize that agility is achieved through synchronization of priorities, trade-offs and the ability to execute them with speed and efficiency. CSCOs seeking to increase agility should:

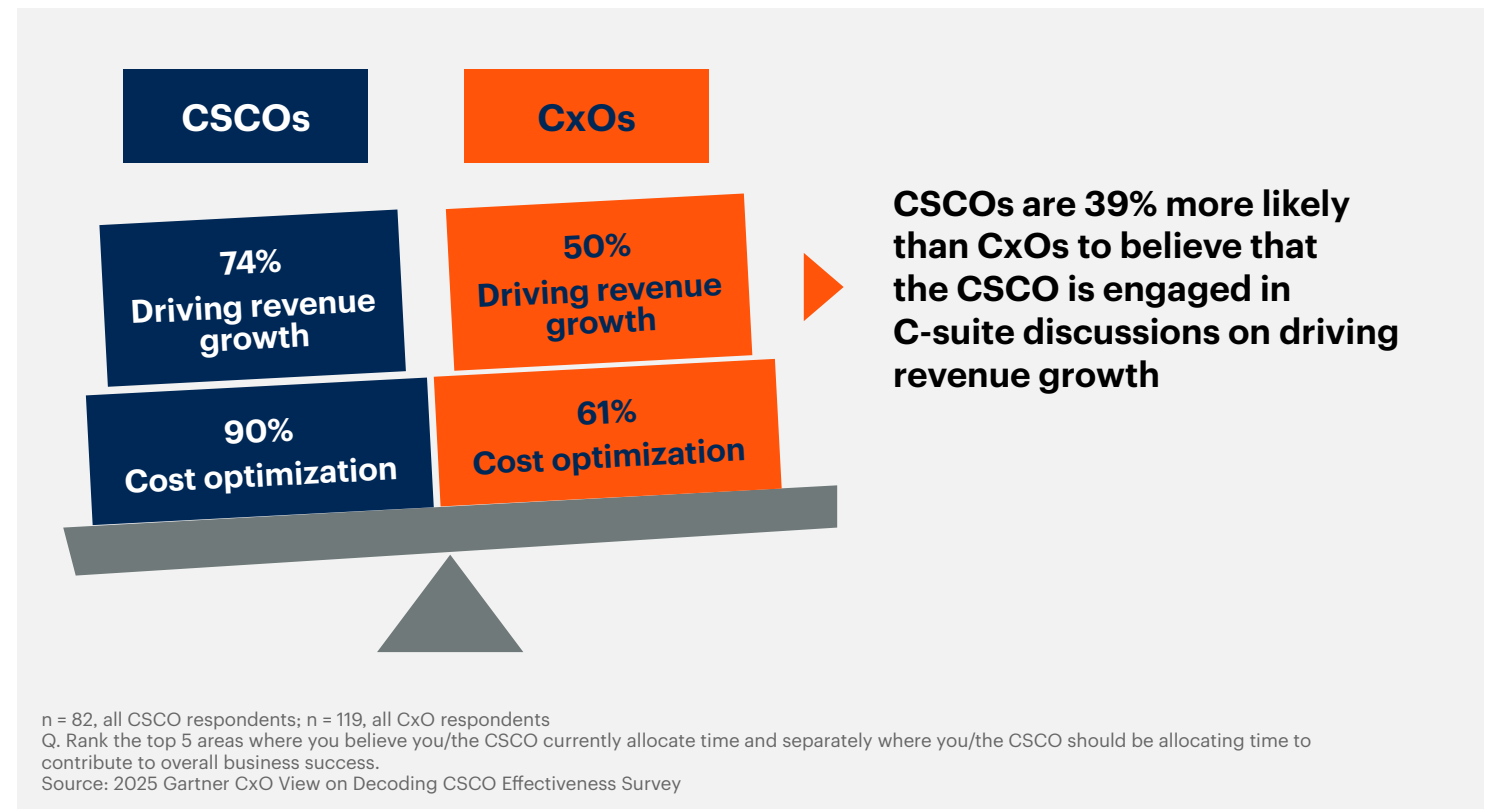
- **Involve** the C-suite in the assessment process to ensure a holistic view of enterprise needs.
- **Assess** the current state of the supply chain in terms of speed, reliability, quality and cost-effectiveness.
- **Design** processes for simplicity and interoperability, along with decision guidance to empower fast execution.



## Effective CSCOs enable profitable growth

Supply chain-led growth accounts for 15% of CSCO effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Both CSCOs and CxOs see driving financial goals as one of the top three priorities for CSCO time. But because the C-suite perceives the primary value of the supply chain to be rooted in cost management and not revenue generation (see Figure 5), it's important that CSCOs engage CxOs more deeply and specifically on revenue growth. Break away from solely measuring supply-chain-specific metrics like delivery and inventory and include metrics related to customer experience and retention. Prioritize timespend on innovation, ensuring that transformations are envisioned and successfully implemented. Transformation is not just about keeping pace; it's about transforming the supply chain to be more competitive and relevant.

Figure 5: CSCO and CxO perceptions of financial discussions differ



## Effective CSCOs manage risks

Risk management accounts for 4% of CSCO effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Because volatility has a direct impact on profitable growth, CEOs demand a more integrated view of the risks they face. This is a big part of why CxOs expect CSCOs to spend more time assessing and mitigating risk than they actually do (see Figure 6). Effective CSCOs are strengthening supply chain risk governance to ensure effective management of supply chain risk and accurate reporting, including using a risk register focused on protecting strategic enterprise goals and objectives.

Figure 6: CSCOs don't prioritize time on risk like CxOs expect



<sup>1</sup> 2025 Gartner CxO View on Decoding CSCO Effectiveness Survey.

<sup>2</sup> 2024 Gartner C-Suite Dynamics Survey.

<sup>3</sup> 2025 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey.





<sup>4</sup> 2023 Gartner Supply Chain Technology User Wants and Needs Survey.

<sup>5</sup> 2023 Gartner Strengthening CxO Digital Leadership Survey.

This document is based on the Supply Chain Executive Report, Decoding CSCO Effectiveness. Clients may access the full Supply Chain Executive Report on the client portal; [Click Here](#).

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