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ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

ADAPTING & MITIGATING EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: CONTRASTING ADKAR AND KURT LEWIN'S THREE STEPS CHANGE MODEL

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ABSTRACT

In the era of organizational change, it is crucial to comprehend how employees react to change and how to overcome individual resistance to change. The article is a narrative scrutiny of the body of work that offers valuable insights into employee behavior during organizational transformation. The paper details the fundamental reasons for employee resistance and provides some solutions by contrasting the ADKAR model and Kurt Lewin's threestep change model. The research finds that resistance to change is unavoidable in the contemporary business world. The continued existence and progress of the organization may be harmed by resistance. However, not everyone opposes change; some people welcome it. The research offers strategies for change agents who want to create practical approaches to handle employee resistance to change.

Keywords- ADKAR, Organization, Change, Employee, Lewin's, Manager, and Resistance

JEL classification: 015, 033

INTRODUCTION

In today's ever-evolving global economy, organizational change is normal for all businesses [23]. Change occurs in response to an organization's requirements, with consideration for its employees, and according to a predetermined schedule [20]. Adapting to the dynamic changes in the business environment necessitates the improvement of organizational performance [44]. Organizational change may involve the adoption of new technologies, the implementation of new policies, the modification of structures and work procedures, etc. Such change is not merely a function of the passage of time; instead, it is essential to market performance and

survival [15]. Typically, an organization changes as a result of the impact of dynamic environmental factors. Rather, organizations implement new changes because they may have novel ideas for enhancing their performance or staying abreast of market conditions [31] [7].

Organizational change involves different people in the organization, like workers or supervisors. These participants play a vital part in managing change because they are the individuals who execute the change and are most impacted by it. Thus, the organization must evaluate its perspective on the proposed change [58]. A positive attitude is displayed when employees accept the change and feel inspired to implement it. But if they are dissatisfied with the transformation, their attitudes become negative [5]. Organizations can successfully implement any change if employees are motivated and receptive to the change process [25]. In contrast, resistance occurs when members of an organization reject a change [16]. Resistance significantly impacts the change process; it can result in unanticipated delays, costs, or even the collapse of the change initiative. Employees resist change for a variety of reasons, including fear of the unknown and unintended consequences of the change, personal interest, mistrust or lack of confidence in the organization and its leaders, loss of comfort, increased pressure, poor communication, low tolerance, lack of knowledge about change, etc [46]. According to [26], resistance increases due to employees' worry about job security or growth and refusal to learn and develop new skills.

Employees who do not want to change are one of the most difficult and stubborn problems that business leaders have to deal with. This kind of pushback can show up in many ways, like a steady drop in output, a rise in the number of quits and demands for transfers, ongoing fights, hostile attitudes, slowdown strikes, or a lot of irrational reasons why the change will not work [42]. Employee resistance to change in an organization negatively influences its

long-term viability because resistance can hinder organizational performance. According to [21], altering staff attitudes and habits is significantly more complex than altering a process or system. However, people's reactions to change depend on the benefits that they think will result from it. If they believe they will profit from change, they will support it; if they feel they will lose status, prestige, earning power, or the job itself because of change, they will fight it [50]. Managers frequently find it difficult to determine the root cause of subordinates' resistance [43]. They may believe the subordinates are impatient or self-centred when the real cause may be entirely different.

In order to remain competitive in the market, businesses must endure adjustments constantly. Organizational change must be implemented systematically to realize its long-term advantages for every organization member. On the other hand, employee resistance is one of HR's most prevalent challenges when implementing organizational change. Most employees become restless with new business activities and start resisting the change. They become more dissatisfied if the new practices are significantly different from the old ones, as such practices disrupt their sense of familiarity. Any change could prompt employees to re-educate their working norms and modify their behavior. Employee resistance is a critical challenge for every business organization [18]. For the successful implementation of any change initiative, all members of an organization must agree on the change, accept it, and work together to accomplish it. Suppose the management is committed to adapting to a change [9]. In that case, implementation of the new initiative might proceed faster, and the difficulty of achieving consistency among the workers is also mitigated. An organization can overcome most of the causes of employee resistance if its members know how the change will affect the entire organization and how things will eventually improve. Unfortunately, some managers are still unable to manage employee resistance effectively due to a lack of

knowledge about the strategies to deal with and the inappropriate use of change models [14], [17]. However, there needs to be more literature concentrating on the human element of organizational change. This gap prompted the researcher to carry out the current study. When a manager or agent of change can comprehend human resistance to change, they will be better equipped to address and manage it. The article also examines the root causes of employee resistance to change. After analyzing several change management models that address the human aspect of organizational change, the authors discovered that all processes for change begin with the development of consciousness among participants and conclude with the reinforcing process. The study then tries to contrast two well-known change management frameworks (the ADKAR Model and Kurt Lewin's Three Steps Model) to comprehend the effective management of employee resistance. In addition, it provides some recommendations for successfully mitigating and employee resistance to change. Thus, the paper offers significant implications for change leaders and practitioners.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Dealing with employee resistance can be studied through various change models. This study is based on the two famous change management models, Prosci's ADKAR model and Kurt Lewin's three-step change model.

ADKAR MODEL

The ADKAR model is an established and well-recognized approach that seeks to reduce organizational resistance to change. It was developed by Prosci's founder, Jeffrey Hiatt, and is regarded as Prosci's change management methodology. Prosci [45] said handling individual resistance to change well means keeping track of the five key goals (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and

Reinforcement) that comprise the ADKAR model. Each of these terms indicates a phase in the change process that helps to deal with the individual resistance to change. According to Hiatt, managers must first establish an atmosphere of awareness about the approaching change and its significance to every employee. There must be more than creating such an environment to encourage people to embrace change. Managers must persuade staff to embrace change by highlighting the advantages of adopting the change or stating the damage that might result if the intended change is not implemented. Secondly, when individuals understand the change process and its implications, another critical challenge is to assist them in developing the motivation to support the change. Resistance can only be reduced by creating a desire among the workers to welcome the change [33]. Hiatt [34] stated that many executives make the common mistake of believing that by raising awareness of the significance of change, they have also raised desire. Thirdly, managers must continue providing staff with the essential knowledge to ensure the change proceeds smoothly. Individuals must be provided with the information they need to implement the change, such as details about the new procedures, processes, or behaviors that will be put in place. Furthermore, managers should improve employees' knowledge by initiating the necessary training programs that allow employees to use their new knowledge in the corporate environment. This is the stage at which employees develop the ability, the fourth component of the ADKAR model that helps them to put the knowledge into action. Finally, managers must reinforce the change process by implementing a comprehensive control and evaluation system that can identify employee challenges and ways by which they can cope with the new situation. Recognizing employee efforts and progress in the change process will encourage them to continue and engage in the change process [34].

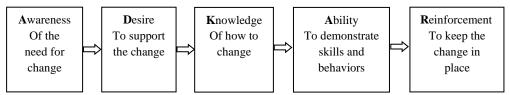


Figure-1: ADKAR Model of Change

Source: Authors created

This model, Figure 1, focuses on principles of change that are effective on an individual level. These same principles are designed to be applied to a large group of people or even an entire organization or community. The primary reason for this change management model is its focus on individual change and ensuring that each person makes the transition. This is more than a 'soft' approach; it has practical applications. The model directs change management activities. It is focused on outcomes, not tasks to be performed. Many change models describe what needs to be done this model describes the outcomes (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement). Managers have a tool they can use. Each part of the model gives managers a specific role. For example, an individual struggling with change may need knowledge on how to change or may lack the ability to implement necessary skills or behaviors. The manager can discern between the two and can provide training (knowledge and information) or work closely with the individual, coaching them to give them the confidence (and ability) to perform effectively.

Kurt Lewin's Three Steps Model

Kurt Lewin, a social scientist, developed his three-stage (Unfreezing, changing, and refreezing) model (Figure 2) of how changes happen in an organization in 1947. Lewin's model

demonstrates the change process in one of the simplest forms possible. This paradigm implies that organizational change is a planned process, and no matter what type of change is being implemented in an organization, people are always at the center of it. This approach also emphasizes mitigating the employee resistance to change by indicating two significant factors in an organization: the driving forces that inspire workers to adapt to the change and the restraining forces that make the employees hesitant to welcome any change. 'Unfreezing,' the initial phase of Lewin's change model, entails increasing people's readiness and willingness to change by fostering an awareness of the need to move from their comfort zone to a transformed situation. This phase is treated as the most crucial phase of the whole process of change management as it involves getting people conscious of the urgency of change and increasing their motivation to embrace the new working methods [12]. Much resistance, such as fear of the unknown or changing old habits, must be overcome to get to this point. A few standard techniques may be used in this scenario to lessen resistance, such as proper communication- keeping individuals up-to-date about the state of the change, training-giving people the knowledge and skills required to meet goals, employee involvement-including employees in decision and enable them to express their thoughts, managing stress- taking worker worries into attention, negotiation- exchange employees something they desire to adapt to the change and finally, coercion- warning workers to accept change or losing power [37].

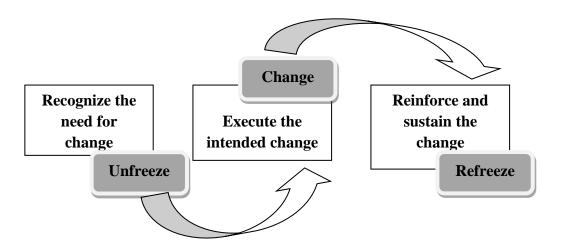


Figure-2: Kurt Lewin's Three Steps Change Model

Source: Authors created

The second phase of Kurt Lewin's model, 'changing,' is the transition stage from a familiar to an unfamiliar situation. This is the stage at which the actual change is implemented. The shift from 'unfreeze' to 'change' does not happen simultaneously. It takes time for people to accept the new direction and take an active role in the change [22]. During this stage, thorough planning, effective interaction, a strong sense of connection, and promoting the enthusiasm of individuals for embracing the change are required [40]. Lastly, the individuals progress from the transition stage to the far more consistent state of normalization. 'Refreezing' is the final stage in which individuals embrace the novel functioning methods, incorporate them into their lives, and form new connections. Employees ought to be acknowledged, valued, and provided with positive feedback to strengthen and reinforce the new behavior in the way of working. Policies or structures that support the newly adopted ways of working can aid in reinforcing the change.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used an archival study method to get information from books that were both historical and not historical [55]. The information for this study came from scholarly journals, websites, blogs, and other written, visual, and numerical sources. Archival research gathers data or information from existing sources, such as public records, business records, history papers, websites, and blogs [56]. Archival data can give us much useful information about ADKAR and Kurt Lewin's Three Steps Change Model, which includes how to deal with and adapt to employees' resistance to change and strategically integrate them. According to the Research Guides of the McMaster University Library (2023), the people who worked on this review used several historical research methods. Figure 1 shows that the authors have clearly explained how they did the study.

Narrow the research topic

ADKAR and Kurt Lewin's Three Steps Change Model, including adapting & mitigating Employee Resistance to Change

Formulate research questions

What are the underlying causes of employee resistance, and how may the ADKAR model be contrasted with Kurt Lewin's three-step change model to provide some solutions?

Searching sources

Google scholar, SCOPUS and different websites

Searching archive

ADKAR, Organization, Change, Employee, Lewin's, Manager, and Resistance

Read archival data

Based on the reading of archival data, we conducted a "synthesis introductory literature review"

Figure-3: Research process

Source: Authors created

The collected data was analyzed, and their findings were presented using an "Introductory Literature Review." There are many literature reviews, such as bibliometric, SLR, and meta-analysis. Providing a convincing argument for the significant use of an introductory literature review is difficult. However, many have set restrictions because of the introduction of meta-analysis and other systematic reviews. The study reports included in a literature review

must be as rigorous, reliable, and objective as any other assessment of research findings, according to the consensus of different individuals. In the present scenario, an introduction review is considered suitable only for exploratory research that is limited in scope or when there are just a few published publications that address the subject matter being considered [56]. After carefully considering the characteristics and objectives of this review chapter, the researchers utilized specific keywords to search through a wide variety of databases for academic publications pertinent to the topic. For this investigation, the databases utilized included Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, DOAJ, and JSTOR, as well as additional websites and online resources pertinent to the topic. Types of vocabulary that are frequently utilized include ADKAR, organization, change, employee, Lewin's, manager, and resistance.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

According to the psychological and systems models, employee resistance to change might derive from essential human traits such as personalities, perceptions, and desires or from the apprehension that the change might bring about [10]. According to [8], resistance can be caused by a combination of individual, group, and organizational variables. However, the following are some particular causes of employee resistance to change.

Change causes uncertainty among employees due to its unknowable effects. Employees still determine whether the change will improve their career prospects [29]. They fear the obsolescence of their talents, reduced pay, and the possibility of losing their jobs [54]. Transforming the current norm is difficult for workers [52]. Change necessitates that employees perform tasks differently or with a different group of people than their current teammates [48]. Occasionally, employees are so immersed in the existing culture that they view new changes as "unnecessary." To implement

organizational change, employees must acquire new skills or working methods [3]. Many employees need help to expand their expertise, embrace new behaviors, or acquire new skill sets. Many employees doubt their ability to execute new responsibilities and fear not adapting to new requirements [53]. They also believe that supporting any change initiative will occasionally accelerate organizational change. Due to a lack of tolerance for continuous change, individuals may become resistant [48]. Workers worry that a reorganization or new supervisor could strip them of their authority or power, such as making decisions or directing a team, assigning them undesirable tasks, or relocating them to a less suitable location [47][19]. This risk of losing current benefits compels workers to oppose the change [27]. Any implementation of a change necessitates the completion of additional duties. People have a natural aversion to taking on additional responsibilities, and when they perceive that a change will require additional work or extra effort, they are likely to resent it [38]. Employees must understand the necessity of change initiative, its implementation process, and the possible advantages of the change [32]. If management communicates this information effectively to the workers, they may be able to understand and react positively to the change [2]. If there is a lack of trust between the worker and the company or its management, then resistance is likely [5]. Misunderstandings result from a lack of faith, and people anticipate that the organization will no longer be fair to them after the change. [28]. In addition, those with a negative view of the organization, the position, or the superior tend to mistrust and resist them. Employees demand every information linked to a change and endeavor to make helpful recommendations in introducing or executing the change. Individuals resist change if they have not been consulted about it or asked for their input on a new initiative [53]. Some individuals or groups resist change due to organizational politics to demonstrate that the other party's decision is incorrect. If the change necessitates

the modification of a system that they support, they may use an excessive amount of power to criticize others and also interpret the criticism as personal. Before instituting a change, organizations must modify their existing incentive systems. If the system for rewarding workers is inadequate, employees will lack motivation to support the change initiative [48]. Financial and non-financial rewards are necessary for maintaining employee motivation [4]. Employees must be given sufficient time to comprehend, embrace, and prepare to implement change. If the administration fails to balance generating a sense of urgency and providing time for the transition, the employee may resist the change [52].

Research shows that resistance to change is the most common reason for the failure of a new initiative [35]. Therefore, making employees influential sponsors of change is considered the most critical success factor for organizational change. Any change succeeds only when individuals are motivated to adapt to the change. As every employee responds to change differently, models like ADKAR or Lewin's Three-step model provide the building blocks for successfully dealing with employee reactions [6]. Following the ADKAR model, to make a change happen, an organization needs to create awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement among every individual. The model shows that organizational change starts with creating awareness among employees. After creating awareness through several communication means, the desire to participate in the change is developed in employees if they find that the change taking place is beneficial for them. This desire helps employees to gather more knowledge about how to change. Employees then acquire the skills and the knowledge needed to change through training. Therefore, they develop the required skills if they do not have them. After that, the knowledge is turned into actions. Thus, ability implies performing a task to implement the change. After successful implementation, the manager and employees must sustain the

change in their organization for a long time. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is required to sustain the change. While intrinsic motivators denote positive psychological states of the workers, extrinsic motivators may include increased pay, bonuses, job security, promotions, etc. If the change is not reinforced correctly, employees may return to the old ways of doing things, leading to the failure of the change process. Therefore, by focusing on employees, the ADKAR method limits resistance and speeds up the success of organizational change [34]. On the other hand, Lewin argued that change starts first in unfreezing the status quo, where employees will recognize the new conditions in their work. Managers in this stage should attract their employees' attention to the necessity of change through announcements, meetings, and other communication channels. In the second stage, managers should effectively engage employees in the change process so that they feel themselves part of the change and enhance the change process. In the final stage, Lewin suggested that managers sustain the change through recognition, reward, and a positive attitude [37].

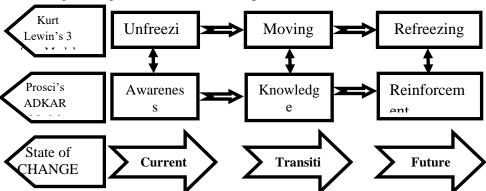


Figure-4: Contrasting Kurt Lewins' change model with Prosci's ADKAR model

Source: Authors created.

Therefore, the research found that the five stages of the ADKAR model are interconnected with the three stages of Lewin's model. Figure 4 depicts that awareness and desire are met by unfreeze,

knowledge and ability are met by change, and reinforcement is met by refreeze.

Although Lewin's change management model is simple, it needs to provide a detailed plan managers can adopt to deal with individual resistance to change. At the same time, ADKAR focuses intensively on human resources, especially employee participation in the change process [13]. The study found that the steps in the ADKAR model can be linked with Lewin's Lewin's model when the resistance reduction tactics are included. For example, awareness is included in the communication, one of Lewin's Lewin's resistancereducing tactics, and knowledge is included in the training, another. Furthermore, Lewin focuses more on involving employees and giving them the needed knowledge to change rather than creating a desire to change, as emphasized in the ADKAR model. Lewin also focuses more on overcoming resistance and does not only expand a little on the other aspects of change. On the contrary, Hiatt pointed out the importance of enhancing employees' engagement in the change process. Indeed, this is an essential advantage of the ADKAR model.

Suggested Strategies for Mitigating Employee Resistance to Change

Changes in the modern business environment proved that human resources are the most essential asset in all organizations. Not every worker in a company opposes change, whereas not everyone welcomes change. The sort of change, accompanying circumstances, and individual views all affect how well a change is received. As a result, resistance to change cannot be eliminated but may be controlled [11]. Organizations must ensure employee compliance to avoid or reduce the likelihood of resistance. The following actions can be taken to address employee resistance to change.

Before making any decisions, managers must comprehend the root causes of employee resistance. Since many factors contribute to increased employee resistance, figuring out the root of the problem can assist management or the change leader in taking the appropriate action [2]. It is essential to provide workers with the knowledge they need to understand the nature, necessity, timing, purpose, possible advantages, and consequences of a change program. The employees' animosity towards the change will be lessened since it will help them comprehend the importance and necessity of the change [52]. Everyone in an organization wishes to know about the possibilities and where they stand after the change. Lack of communication makes employees feel deprived of the organization. Therefore, proper communication is essential for everyone in the organization understand the adjustments fully. When employees are communicated and informed about possible changes, they can easily accept the change. The difficulties in the workers' minds should be patiently listened to and appropriately handled. At the beginning of a transition, management and employees should be in constant contact. The lines of communication should remain open at all levels [32]. Ensuring employee involvement and participation means including them in the transformation strategy. Their ideas for the desired change should be regarded seriously because they will be the ones to implement it [41]. The employees will develop a sense of ownership and believe their opinions count due to participation. Making the transition to anything new is challenging for everyone. As a result, employees should receive complete assistance to help them get over their anxiety. Employee fears and anxieties can be reduced with the help of counseling and mentorship [36]. Change agents must consider employee concerns, and they should consider providing ongoing assistance. According to Self [51], some people may be unable to execute new or extra activities. Management is responsible for making sure that the workforce is well-resourced and knowledgeable. They must determine where the workers' skills

could be improved and give them the training they need to learn or apply the appropriate information. To get around opposition, an organization could bargain with its front-line staff members regarding the timetable and broader strategy for implementing a change. Management and union members can work out a compromise if the change significantly upsets the existing system [1]. To promote change readiness, one must first change one's thinking and instill a feeling of urgency in oneself [25]. Managers must develop a comprehensive strategy for everyone impacted by the change, either directly or indirectly, by evaluating the broader landscape and potential implications of a change. To make employees more receptive to change, managers must establish trust with their employees through collaboration, assistance, and care [36]. Additionally, it is crucial to maintain open communication during the transition process so that staff members may learn to trust that management will make the best choice [31][30]. Employees who believe the change would improve their prospects will work hard to make it happen [58]. According to [19], the amount of attempt an individual will exert to embrace a change depends on his or her expectations of the outcome the change could bring and the perceived worth of that outcome. Therefore, employees may tolerate or embrace a change if they perceive an identifiable advantage. This may include tangible factors such as remuneration, power and accountability, working conditions, and intangible aspects such as status, recognition, and welfare. This will maintain their drive to embrace and promote change.

Summary of the findings

Though resistance is considered as a negative factor in the effectiveness of change management, its good aspects must not be neglected [38]. Resistance may assist change leaders in identifying unfit elements of a proposed change, which is a critical component

for change implementation. Consequently, the response serves as a warning signal to change managers to rethink their strategy. Therefore, managers must recognize that resistance can significantly impact the results of a change, both favorably and adversely. According to [19], employee resistance to change may be better handled if the adversity is addressed.

Causes of Employee Resistance to Change

Strategies for Mitigating Employee Resistance to Change

- Fear of unknown
- Connection with familiarity
- Reluctance to develop new skills
- Insufficient tolerance
- Lack of Involvement and selfinterest
- Broader responsibilities
- Lack of Communication and timing
- Poor trustworthiness and mindset
- Organizational politics or critique
- *Inadequate incentive structures*

- Address the basis of resistance
- Employee education
- Effective communication
- Employee participation and engagement
- Facilitation and assistance
- Identifying skill gaps and offering training
- Agreement and negotiation
- Promote change readiness
- Ensuring transparency & build trust
- Enhancing personal gain

Figure-5: Causes and strategies of employees' resistance to change Source: Authors created.

IMPLICATIONS

The study draws the attention of change practitioners to handle the human element softly and more sensibly during a change process. The study suggested specific employee resistance reducer tactics to facilitate the least resistant and least stressful change process. Organizations must value employee input and support. Managers or change leaders should communicate with workers to make them aware of the need for change so that they will be convinced of the change. This will foster their desire to participate in the implementation. The employee must be given enough information

about the change process, and the organization should provide them with the necessary skills to improve their confidence to complete the transformation. Organizations can use the findings of this research to overcome individual resistance and foster a culture of change acceptance. Additionally, contrasting the ADKAR and Lewin's model enriches the existing body of knowledge, indicating the significant theoretical contributions of the study.

Limitations and way to future research

This study tried to identify some common reasons behind employee resistance to organizational change. Future studies could be done with more data to explore other causes of individual resistance to change. Additionally, many established change management models exist, but the current study tried to contrast only two models (the ADKAR change management model and Lewin's change management model). Further study could use other change models such as McKinsey 7-S model, Kotter's change management theory, Lippit's change theory, Nudge theory, Bridges transition model, Kübler-Ross change management framework, etc. Again, future research could compare or contrast these models to provide a more precise and deeper understanding of adapting to organizational change. More information could lead future researchers to provide more recommendations for mitigating employee resistance to change.

CONCLUSION

Change is the only thing that stays the same in business today [39]. Organizations must continually evolve to thrive in a competitive market [49]. Resistance to change is a natural phenomenon. Organizations may pay a high cost for resistance as it has the potential to undermine organizational effectiveness and lead to the failure of a change project [57]. In every organization, some

employees will embrace the change, while others will oppose it and remain indifferent. Understanding the origins and complexities of employee resistance will thus assist managers in selecting the best technique for dealing with them. Both models used in this study indicate some standard measures for employee resistance to change. Depending on the situation, management should prioritize employee needs, communicate regularly, involve them in change planning, welcome feedback, ensure teamwork, provide support, or seek alternative techniques to persuade their employees. Change leaders must create a climate where workers can accept the change. This article attempted explain employee attitudes towards to organizational transformation thoroughly. The researchers' identification of prevalent reasons for employee resistance and proposed techniques to overcome resistance would undoubtedly assist change managers in making suitable decisions when executing any change initiative in their organization.

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