



**Techie BABY**

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## Introduction: The Questions Techie Wannabes Ask The Most

I used to be an advertising executive, known for being technologically ignorant. When I told my family and friends I had landed a job in a tech role, their jaws hit the ground.

People ask me how I got into tech work without a relevant degree or prior experience. They ask questions like:

- How do I know working in tech is really for me?
- Do I need to simply pick something, learn all about it, and hope the passion for it will follow as I improve?
- What is the right balance of dabbling vs. committing when it comes to learning a wide range of tech topics?

Some of the people I talked with doubted their ability to make the transition. They'd say:

- My skills don't meet the minimum qualifications that the job listing asks for!
- I can't get the job without the experience, but I can't get the experience without the job!
- I don't have time to learn tech skills on the side! I have a full time job.
- How can I convince an employer to hire me for a tech role?

I also asked myself, "How realistic is the idea of a career change into tech?"

The following guide will provide the answers to these questions.

### Why This Guide Is for You

This is a step-by-step guide that has been tested and proven by a group of techie babies who were once techie wannabes, including me. It will walk you through the fear, the anxiety, and the ambiguity in making a career change into tech:

- The fear of uncertainty
- The audacity of starting over from scratch
- The imposter syndrome
- The slow progress of self-learning tech skills

I'm still experiencing all of them today; but I know how to manage them better now. I'm just a student in tech, like you; but I've been through so much of this that I can help you succeed.

Career transition into tech is possible. And it can be fun, as long as you take the right approach.

## The Inconvertible Truth: Transition into Tech Is Feasible

### Any advice for career changes with non-tech backgrounds who want to jump into the tech world?

I have wide array of social problem solving and team building skills and would like to get into product management. What are some first steps in making the transition?

[Re-Ask](#)

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5

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...

Does this sound familiar to you? You consider yourself a top performer in your industry, but for some reason you feel the need for a change. Something about the technology field appeals to you. I hear this all the time. That was once me!

[Meet the lawyer](#) who quits to join a tech company.



**Jonathan Lau**

January 20 · Hong Kong · 點

Thanks Tech in Asia and Alex for the write up! Really happy to be able to share my story and experience.



**Meet the lawyer who quit to join a tech startup**

Is it time for a career change?

TECHINASIA.COM

[Meet the Investment banker](#) who quits to join a tech company.



**Allen Yang**, From banking to startup to bschool

607 Views

(Repost of a blog post)

Having made a transition from finance to a tech startup, I get asked for tips on making the same transition. I always find this a bit humbling, because it reminds me of how *unprepared* I was in making this jump.

Meet the [Musician](#) who quits to join a tech company.

## Curious about switching to a career in tech? Here's how I did it!



Melissa Travers MSFT 27 Apr 2015 8:59 AM



"I still knew literally almost nothing, but in my late twenties I had started my path toward a career in technology, despite having no credentials and no training." - Melissa Travers.

Meet the [waiter who turned to tech](#).



After a three-month course in computer programming and data analysis, Paul Minton, a former math major, moved up from waiting tables to a job as a data scientist, earning more than \$100,000 a year. Matt Edge for The New York Times

Reading articles like these gives you more confidence, and inspires you to pursue this dream. But you don't know if it is feasible for you.

## Is it Possible to Transition to a Career in Tech?

By Catherine Conlan | March 02, 2015



Even though you think you have a calling in technology, you don't have the resources - time and money - to become a techie.



# How To Make A Career Change Into Tech

By Janet Scarborough Civitelli, Ph.D. Last updated: Saturday, December 5, 2015

Dear Dr. Civitelli:

Can you advise me about how to make a career change into tech? I think I would working in something related to technology but I don't have any professional experience or education that is very relevant, and I don't have the money or time to go back to school full-time. I hate my current job so I would also like to make a career change sooner rather than later. I have always been attracted to technology and it is the only industry that sustains my interest. If I want to make a living doing something in tech, how do I make a career change without going broke or taking 10 years to land a job?

Thank you,  
Future Techie

Even though you have the courage to make the move, you don't know how.

Career Transitions

Investment Banking

Finance

Technology

Investing

+1



## What is the best way to transition from investment banking to tech?

Answer

Re-Ask

Follow

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Who am I to tell you all of this?

I had been doing project management for an advertising agency for 3 years. My expertise was client retention, copywriting, marketing, team building, and presentation. The most difficult tech thing I had learned then was how to set up a Facebook page and buy advertisements for clients, something anyone from my generation could do.

If you put in the time and effort, you can transition into tech without a relevant degree or prior experience. The transition takes between 3 months and 18 months. I spent 12 months to make the career change.

Instead of focusing on what limits you, focus on how to get hired.

Brad Heidemann, who got a job at Microsoft overseeing sales and guiding the technological buying process for customers, began his career path in the shoe department of Nordstrom's, where he started working on the displays, and quickly rose through the ranks. In his post, [\*Why Making a Career Change isn't as Hard as You Think\*](#), he gives several tips on career transition:

- Understand what makes you tick at your current job.
- Determine your strengths, weaknesses and goals.
- Gather all the information you can, and get to know jargon of your desired industry.
- Reach out to old colleagues who might know more about this field.
- Leverage knowledge from your current industry to use in your desired new industry.

Takeaway #1: Take a look at your current role and identify what most interests and excites you. Get out of your comfort zone and learn all you can about technology. Meet techies to tap their brains!

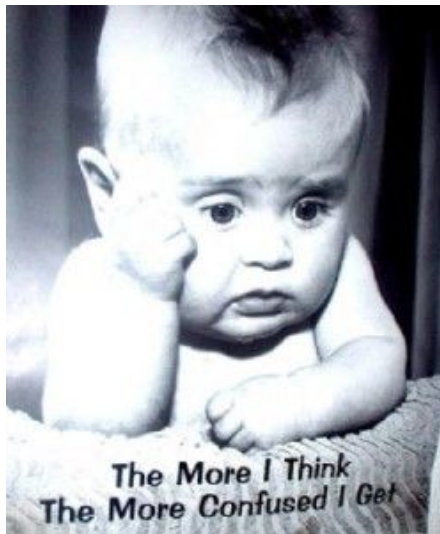
## How to Choose a Tech Role that Connects with Your Passion

Mashable lists [15 tech career categories](#). Two years ago, MakeUseOf listed only [7 tech job categories](#).

When you're trying to enter a new industry, especially one as complicated as the growing tech industry, it can be tough to know if a specific role or category is your *calling*, with all of the unfamiliar job titles.

"Will I find something that obsesses me?" – Natalie C.

"Do I need to just pick something and force myself into it and the passion will follow as I improve?" – Benjamin L.



People over-analyze the big picture before making a commitment to anything specific. They bog themselves down in details and endless research. The ever-changing industry doesn't conspire against new applicants, but it doesn't line up all the pins, either.

One of the best articles regarding this topic is [How to Stop Analysis by Paralysis and Make \(Great\) Decisions Quickly](#) by Celestine Chau.

Chau talks about breaking down the decision-making process, from prioritization to differentiation of big and small decisions. She explores making choices and letting go.

But understanding the state you're in is not enough. You need to take specific steps toward your career change.

Ramit Sethi, the creator of the [Find Your Dream Job](#) program, and a *New York Times* bestselling author, wrote [How to choose a career that you'll love](#), which lays down a simple process:





In addition to using Sethi's process, I built detailed worksheets and email templates specific to my situation. After researching and discussing potential tech careers with several top performers, I adapted the flowchart, the worksheets, and the email templates to fit any techie wannabe's situation.



Download the Worksheet - The Proven Method to  
Choosing a Tech Role that Connects with Your Passion  
- [Here](#)

Takeaway #2: Don't force yourself to choose something you have no knowledge of. Instead, research. Reach out to experienced techies. Explore and test to see if you're really a techie wannabe.

## How to Narrow Down Learning Resources

In an ocean of tech topics, where it may take years to learn and practice each skill;, where does one start?

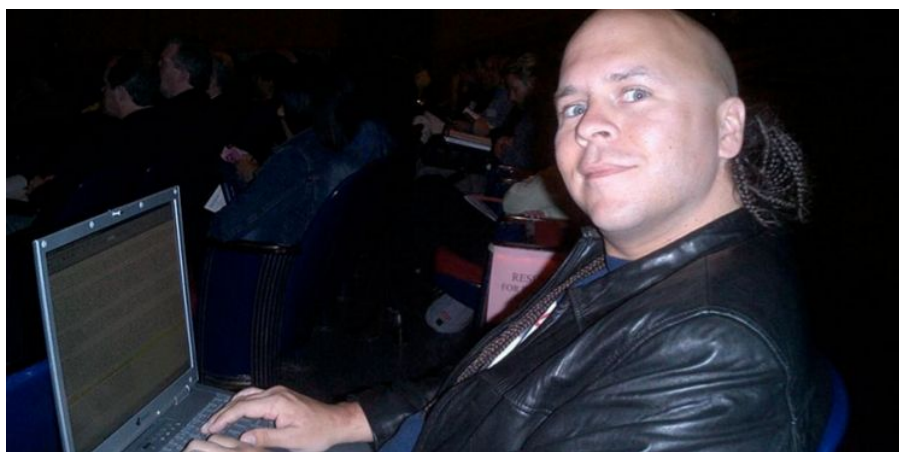
And for each category and subcategory of tech jobs, there may be scads of resources for self-learning. It's easy to be excited about the many resources easily accessible, but it's also easy to get overwhelmed.

There is really no single answer to fit everyone, but one good way to develop skills is to learn by doing.

*Nyan Fax* is a Tom Scott project that lets you print a faxed version of Nyan Cat. Check out the YouTube video [here](#). Tom had to learn about processing to handle graphic displays, and Python to work with a 3D printer.



"Most of the skills I've learned have come from the things I've made: rather than learning for the sake of it, I learn because I need to." - Tom Scott



TED speaker [Derek Sivers](#) used to be a musician, with no relevant degree or prior tech experience. He learned programming by building CDBaby, which he later sold for \$22 million, donating the entire amount to a charitable trust for music education.

“If I had taken programming classes in school, I would not have done very well, but when you have to learn something out of necessity it is a great teacher.” - Derek Sivers

So pick any idea and start small: Learn by doing.

But you might say, “I don’t have any good ideas.” In his [blog](#), Seth Godin writes: “That’s a common mantra among those that say that they want to leap, but haven’t, and aren’t, and won’t.”

Here are some resources might help you get started:

- Mark Ammay surveyed 300+ people and came up with [100 Creative Ideas for a Website](#) that the average person could make.
- [1000+ Beginner Programming Projects](#) was created by the author of *Ebook Programmer’s Motivation for Beginners*, Rajaraman Raghuraman.
- [IdeaMachine](#) is a live crowd-sourced collection of ideas for new apps and businesses that have been requested by people on the internet.
- Jennifer Dewalt made [180 easy websites in 180 days](#).

Any of these project ideas might be the next million-dollar business. But, remember - you’re not making the next Facebook or Google. Your goal is to build an easy project so that you can learn the needed skills.

Once you decide what idea to work on, roll up your sleeves and start to learn. I recommend checking out these three LifeHacker articles by Adam Dachis and Gina Trapani:

- [How to Take Your First Coding Project from Start to Finish](#)
- [Learn to Code: The Full Beginner’s Guide](#)
- [Programmer 101: Teach Yourself How to Code](#)

Then go through [The Most Epic Guide to Online Coding Bootcamps](#), in which Laurence Bradford researched popular coding bootcamps and gathered feedback from graduates.

Finally, if you want to invest 6-24 weeks in an immersive programming environment, check out [Bootcamps.in](#), which offers the most comprehensive reviews and side-by-side comparisons of coding bootcamps and programming schools.

Takeaway #3: Skills and knowledge acquisition are important. The project you select is only a means to an end. It’s okay to have an unfinished project, as long as you’re learning valuable skills.

## How to Find Learning Time with a 60-Hour Workweek and a Busy Life

Learning Learning to Program Software Engineering +1

### What's the best way to learn how to code while working full-time?

Career Transitions Learning Work Self-Improvement Career Advice

### How can I learn something and change careers while working full time?

I was working 12-hour days when I started learning to code, and I'd get to bed after midnight. I felt like I'd never have enough time to keep up with my job and learn this new skill.

We can't make time, but we can improve the quality of our time. In his bestselling book, [\*The 4 Hour Work Week\*](#), [Tim Ferris](#) says that 80% of your productivity comes from 20% of your efforts, and 80% of your wasted time comes from 20% of the possible causes. So eliminate the 20% time wasters, and spend as much energy as possible on the productive 20%.


Here are some additional time management tools:

- [RescueTime](#): A free software productivity tracking tool. Install it once, and it sits in the background, measuring your productivity. Then, you can see how many minutes you've spent productively and unproductively.
- [The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal](#), written by Jim Loehr and [Tony Schwartz](#).
- Cal Newport, the author of [Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World](#), put together [Deep Habits: The Importance of Planning Every Minute of Your Work Day](#)
- Hack your productivity one step with these [10 Zen Habits](#) by [Leo Babauta](#), which help you create a new set of daily routines.

Takeaway #4: Forget about traditional time management. Apply the 80/20 rule to your time. Eliminate time-wasters. Understand the concept of effective learning. Use time blocking to increase the quality of your time. Build zen habits around your life.

## How to Know when Your Skills are Ready for Transition

Do you have this kind of anxiety?

 542

**Self-taught programmers... how did you get a job?** (self.learnprogramming)  
submitted 8 months ago by PointyDeity

I'm a self-taught wannabe programmer, and I'm currently psyching myself out... I'm having trouble understanding how and why someone who doesn't have a CS degree would be hired for any programming position when there's a horde of fresh grads with credentials clamoring for the same gig. However, I know they're out there, and plenty of them read this forum. So if you're one of these people and you wouldn't mind answering...

### What do employers look for in self-taught applicants? [closed]



21



I'm a self-taught programmer about to enter the job market. What I want to know is what is the best way to show my experience to employers?

What do employers want to know about my programming experience? Do employers want to look at code I wrote or could they want to see the software in action? Or do they only care how much my software is being used/how much it has created revenue? Should I write about my design and programming style?

When you were a college student, did you ever come across a question you couldn't figure out, even after hours of trying? What did you do?

There are 3 possible solutions to this dilemma:

- Give up.
- Ask the classmates who already figured out the solution.
- Ask the instructor.

If you want to see if you have the qualifications your targeted employers seek, you can either ask the employees who've had or currently have the job you want, or the employers themselves.

You're going to understand the dream companies and your tech job from the outside in.



Download the Worksheet - The Proven Method to Check if Your Skill Set Matches the Employer's Expectations - [Here](#)

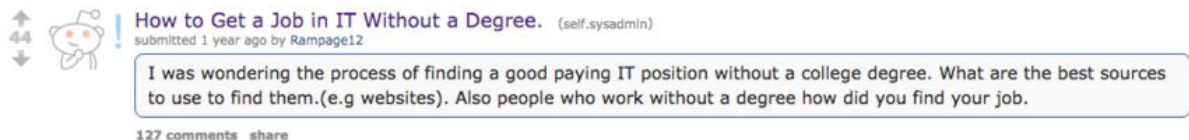
Takeaway #5: Understand that you don't know what you don't know. Treat the tech industry and your target employers like you would colleges. Take the job qualification questions to the teachers and students and ask for the answers.



## How to Outperform Job Applicants with Relevant Degrees and Experience

You have the skills. You have the relationship with the potential employers. You pave the way to prove you're qualified to be a techie baby.

But you might still ask a question like this:



Welcome to the world of *Impostor Syndrome* - the mental killer of top performers.

Impostor Syndrome is a term coined in 1978 by clinical psychologists Dr. Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes, referring to high-achieving individuals marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments, and a persistent fear of being exposed as frauds. Despite external evidence of their competence, those exhibiting the syndrome remain convinced that they do not deserve the success they have achieved.

You're swimming in a pool of top performers. You can't help compare yourself to them.



Even, Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, is an [impostor syndrome sufferer](#).

If you feel like your accomplishments are not good enough to take the next steps in your career, please look at these resources:

- [Feel Like a Fraud? You're Not Alone](#), written by Rhea Wessel
- [17 Ways to Overcome Impostor Syndrome](#), by Kyle Eschenroeder in LifeHacker

Here are ten things to say to yourself to help you overcome this syndrome :

- Come off it!
- Accept that you have had some role in your success.
- Focus on the value that you provide.
- Keep a file of people saying nice things about you.
- Expose yourself totally.
- Being wrong doesn't make you a fake.
- Realize that when you hold back, you're robbing the world!
- Nobody knows what they're doing.
- See credentials for what they are.
- Fake it until you make it actually does work.

Once you win the inner mind game, and realize that you deserve better, you'll begin to master your actions. You're winning in your head and getting job-ready with the skill sets you have developed for months.



But to the outside world, you're just one of them.



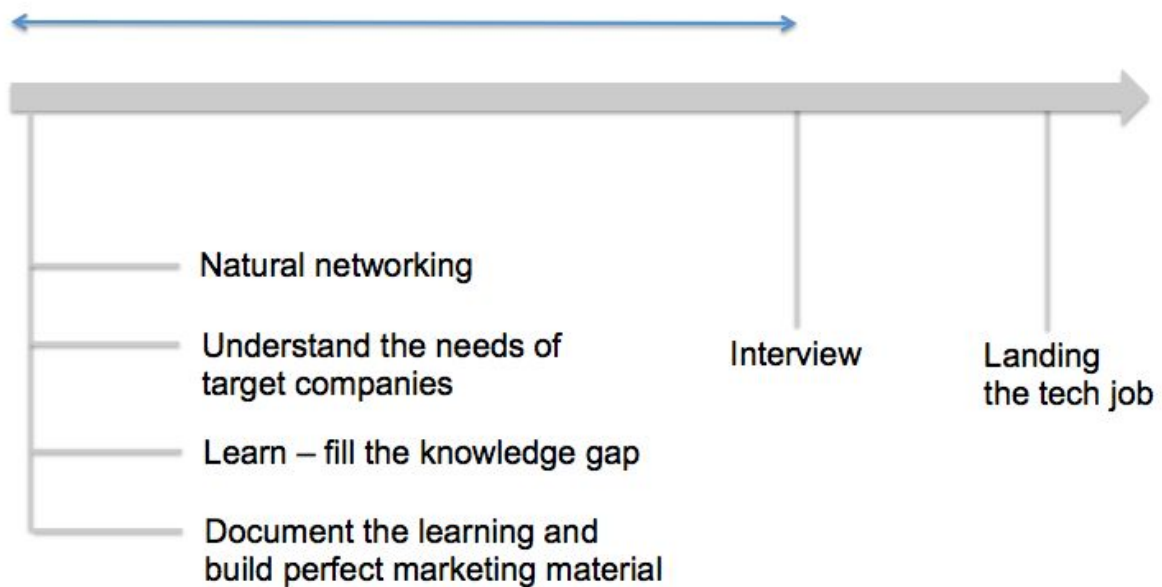
You're just one of thousand of the commodities in the job market.

To set yourself apart from the job-applicant crowd, you need to face the market and show your work.



You need to create your perfect marketing material.

80% of the work



Potential employers want to see your learning process. When a potential employer says, “Show me what you got,” you need to be able to say, “Let me walk you through what I’ve learned lately. The reason I learned this is that you mentioned to me last time that you want to hire new talent with this skill.”

So, start building your perfect marketing material *online*. A good place to start is with a LinkedIn profile; then create a website.

Why online?

Potential employers like clicking through a URL for examples of your work more than opening a PDF in an email.

You're a techie-wannabe and they're techies! They want to see that you are tech savvy.

See Grace Smith's Mashable article: [20 Tools to Showcase Your Portfolio](#). And here are five important elements you need in your portfolio, from Randle Browning's Skillcrush article, [How to Build an Impressive Portfolio when You're New to Tech](#):

- Who you are
- What kind of work you do
- How you do that work
- Where you want to go next
- Who you want to work with

It's crucial to understand how your desired industry works the behind-the-scenes. Your marketing material needs to be perfect for what potential employers want. You ask what they want. You go out and learn that. Then you come back and apply again, this time with a better understanding of what they want, and the skills they are requiring. And now you demonstrate them with your portfolio.

Without a relevant degree or prior experience, I had outperformed seasoned techies for a job supposedly requiring a university degree in Computer Science, and a minimum of three years of experience.

Takeaway #6: Overcome the impostor syndrome. Build an online portfolio into your perfect marketing material.

## Takeaways

Takeaway #1: Take a look at your current role and identify what most interests you and excites you. Get out of your comfort zone and learn all you can about technology. Meet techies to tap their brains!

Takeaway #2: Don't force yourself to choose something you have no knowledge of. Instead, research. Reach out to experienced techies. Explore and test to see if you're really a techie wannabe.

Takeaway #3: Skills and knowledge acquisition are important. The project you select is only a means to an end. It's okay to have an unfinished project, as long as you're learning valuable skills.

Takeaway #4: Forget about traditional time management. Apply the 80/20 rule to your time. Eliminate time-wasters. Understand the concept of effective learning. Use time blocking to increase the quality of your time. Build zen habits around your life.

Takeaway #5: Understand that you don't know what you don't know. Treat the tech industry and dream companies like colleges. Take the job qualification questions to the teachers and students and ask for the answers.

Takeaway #6: Overcome the impostor syndrome. Build an online portfolio as your perfect marketing material.

## Your First Step: Burn the Invisible Script

I had always labeled myself as a non-techie. I considered myself a people person. I used to delegate all the tech work to my brother, who graduated with a computer science degree. The first time I touched a computer was when I needed Excel for an assignment. I had to learn how Windows 97 worked. Back then, I hated technology and computer science grads. Every time I asked my brother a question, he would use his knowledge to manipulate and laugh at me.

I created an invisible script, which said that I didn't have technology talent. Today, I work in the technology department of one of the oldest journals in Asia. I feel like I can do anything in the world now!

How was I able to overcome this invisible script? I applied a skill I learned from watching an interview with bestselling tech author James Altucher. After watching the interview, I burned my invisible script into ashes.

Literally.

Altucher said that if we are afraid of something, we should write it down on a piece of paper and then burn it. The fear of that written thing would then be released.

So I did that!

I had let myself get stuck in a corporate job. I enjoyed the work, but felt limited. I felt the calling from tech. But I didn't dare make a change for a long time.

Throughout my youth, I was a sports enthusiast. I liked to win and hated to lose. If I gained only the silver medal, I would beat myself up for a year until I practiced until I could gain the gold medal in the next competition.



I was afraid of failure – my biggest invisible script.

So, one day, I skipped lunch and avoided my colleagues. I borrowed a lighter from a colleague's desk. Went to a harbour, looking over the ocean, and I took out a notecard and a pen. I wrote down four words – the fear of failure.

I fished the lighter out of my pocket and set fire to the corner of the notecard. My failure on the notecard was slowly burned away, then fear. I released the paper as the fire was about to burn my hand. I saw my fear of failure burning into ashes, flying to the ocean, becoming smaller and smaller until it totally disappeared.

I recall this scene whenever I face setback. Whenever I feel afraid of failure. I already burned it. So it was nothing.

Takeaway #7: Before looking at your life through the windshield, look at the rear-view mirror. What is holding you back? What do you need to write on a piece of paper and burn? Then you can look forward, and let nothing get in your way.

## Appendix A - Influencers on Twitter

[https://twitter.com/brad\\_heidemann](https://twitter.com/brad_heidemann)

<https://twitter.com/mtravers>

<https://twitter.com/paulsef11>

<https://twitter.com/ramit>

<https://twitter.com/tomscott>

<https://twitter.com/sivers>

<https://twitter.com/ThisIsSethsBlog>

<https://twitter.com/markammay>

<https://twitter.com/raja4tech>

<https://twitter.com/JenniferDewalt>

<https://twitter.com/Adachis>

<https://twitter.com/tferriss>

<https://twitter.com/tonyschwartz>

<https://twitter.com/sherylsandberg>

<https://twitter.com/joyceakiko>

<https://twitter.com/randlebrowning>

[https://twitter.com/zen\\_habits](https://twitter.com/zen_habits)

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## Appendix B - Resources

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