

DMT Business Services Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51572

Name of lead inspector: Maria Barker HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 December 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. DMT Business Services is the largest Cornwall-based independent training provider. The head office is in Truro; DMT also has training centres in Bodmin, Truro, Redruth and Penzance.
2. DMT provides a range of programmes funded by Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council, including apprenticeships, Train to Gain, and ESF-funded programmes.
3. Programmes are offered in health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; construction planning and the built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); retail and commercial enterprise; and business administration and law. The provision in health, public services and care and construction, planning and the built environment was inspected and graded, and provision in the other subject areas was also included during the inspection. DMT has a subcontract with Cornwall Council to provide Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes; as only six learners were on programme at the time of inspection this provision was not included in the inspection.
4. DMT works in partnership with Cornwall College, Cornwall Council, Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change and The Learning Partnership for Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. In addition, DMT offers bespoke and individually tailored training programmes. Over 70% of DMT's provision is government funded.
5. DMT has undergone several structural changes over the past four years driven by significant changes in contracts and funding streams. It has maintained and developed its range of provision and programmes and its work-based training centre network to meet the needs of a range of employers and learners, with a focus on engaging and helping those at a disadvantage.
6. Cornwall is the only area in the United Kingdom still attracting convergence funding from European Social Funds (ESF) because of poor economic productivity. Unemployment in Cornwall has risen sharply over the last year and the unemployment rate is above the average for the South West.
7. DMT provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Cornwall College
 - Cornwall Council
 - Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change
 - The Learning Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
 - Working Links.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Entry to Employment	7 learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	293 learners 271 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Health, public services and care	3
Construction, planning and the built environment	3

Overall effectiveness

8. The overall effectiveness of DMT's provision is satisfactory. Directors and senior managers are providing good leadership through a period of major change and uncertainty. However, DMT has developed an over-reliance on informal management. It does not implement fully its processes to evaluate and improve the quality of provision. DMT has identified this at self-assessment; the organisation has satisfactory capacity to improve. Outcomes for learners are good and these have continued to improve. Learners achieve qualifications well, especially given their low starting points. However, progress is often slow and not enough learners achieve within the agreed time. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners develop good practical skills. DMT offers a good range of programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and are good in practical sessions in engineering and construction. Assessment practice is satisfactory, although it does not include learners sufficiently in planning their progress. Reviews of progress do not always include clear and specific targets for learners. Monitoring of learner progress is under-developed. DMT promotes equality and diversity well. Learners have equal opportunities to achieve their potential.

Learners benefit from good additional support. DMT has good arrangements to safeguard learners. Learners feel safe and free from bullying and harassment.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good and are steadily improving. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is good. Many learners come from disadvantaged groups with low starting points. The number of learners who achieve their qualification within the agreed timescale is too low, but improving.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners develop good vocational skills. They develop good personal and social skills and gain confidence. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety in the workplace, which they apply well.
- DMT has good arrangements for safeguarding learners. These include appropriate Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks on staff and clear and up-to-date policies and procedures. Learners feel safe and protected from harassment and bullying.
- DMT has a strong focus on recruiting learners from under-represented groups and on ensuring that all groups of learners achieve their potential. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are good overall. However, not all staff reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity at progress reviews effectively.
- The strategic leadership of DMT is good. Clear actions have been taken to lead the company through a period of significant change and uncertainty regarding funding.
- Partnership working is good. DMT uses partnerships well to increase the level of support for learners and to increase the range of work experience available to learners not in employment.
- DMT offers a good range of programmes which meet learners' and employers' interests and needs. It has increased the range of courses and ensures that learners are working towards qualifications relevant to employment opportunities in the area.
- Additional support for learners is good. Learners receive good pastoral support from staff, who refer them to specialist support if appropriate. Support to develop literacy and numeracy skills is well established and effective.
- Teaching and learning of practical skills in the training centres are good on engineering and construction programmes. Teaching and learning in the workplace are generally satisfactory.
- Assessment of learners' performance is satisfactory. However, learners are not sufficiently involved in planning their assessment activities. Some learners do not receive assessment visits in the workplace frequently enough to ensure that they complete their programmes as quickly as possible.
- DMT's arrangements to plan and monitor learner progress are under-developed. Not all learners have clear and specific targets. DMT does not have an overview

of learners' progress and does not monitor whether learners make appropriate progress.

- Some learners make slow progress through their qualification. Many learners do not know how well they are progressing through their course. Employers are often insufficiently involved in the programmes. Reviews of progress do not include employers.
- DMT has developed an over-reliance on informal management processes. Although it has appropriate policies and procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, DMT does not currently implement these effectively. However, the self-assessment process is thorough and self-critical and identifies the key areas for future development.

What does DMT need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement comprehensive formal arrangements to monitor and evaluate the provision so that the quality of provision continues to improve.
- Ensure comprehensive planning and monitoring of learners' progress to ensure that all learners have specific, measurable and timebound targets agreed at progress reviews so that they make appropriate progress and complete their programmes within agreed timescales.
- Improve assessment practice so that learners are involved in the planning of assessment opportunities and they progress at a faster rate.
- Ensure that reinforcement of equality and diversity is applied consistently at reviews so that learners' understanding and awareness of equality matters continue to improve.

Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- feeling safe and not at risk
- the culture of mutual respect and trust at DMT
- the relaxed atmosphere, without pressure, in the training centres
- friendly staff that do not make them feel stupid, who help and answer questions
- approachable and helpful assessors
- learning skills while working at their own pace and applying them
- gaining a better understanding of customers' needs
- enhancing their knowledge, and the possibility of promotion at work as a result.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the slow response to requests for consumable resources for ICT
- better tools and equipment in the DMT garages

- better access to assessors and more frequent visits
- more challenging targets from assessors
- more training sessions.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the friendly and approachable staff at DMT
- the availability of training staff
- the positive attitude to solving problems by DMT staff
- good communication
- being able to trust the assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the inclusion of electronics in motor vehicle training
- the opportunity to network with other similar employers who have learners with DMT
- quicker progress by learners.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. DMT has satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvement. It successfully addressed key areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection of 2005. However, it has been unable to maintain all these improvements in recent months. A period of significant change and uncertainty has led to a recent reliance on informal mechanisms for managing the provision. DMT has not used its quality assurance arrangements systematically in recent months. For example, observations of teaching and learning are not used consistently to ensure improvement in staff performance. DMT has identified the need to review its quality improvement processes and is determined to implement them fully.
10. DMT's commitment to improving provision is demonstrated through a strong focus on self-assessment. The current draft self-assessment report is very thorough, detailed and self-critical. The report contains an accurate analysis of DMT's current strengths and areas for improvement. Inspectors agreed with its main findings. DMT has clear plans to address the identified areas for improvement in the near future.
11. Despite its recent difficulties, DMT has successfully maintained a consistent improvement in learners' outcomes. Managers and staff are highly motivated and focus on enabling learners to complete their programmes successfully.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are good overall, with a trend of steady improvement. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory at 76% for 2008/09. In health, public services and care, Train to Gain success rates are good rising from 76% in 2007/08 to 85% in 2008/9. In construction, they are satisfactory at 65% in 2008/09. Overall success rates on apprenticeships have increased steadily and are 72% in 2008/09. Timely success rates for apprentices are too low at 46% in 2008/09. Some learners make slow progress, with some apprentices making insufficient progress in their key skills.
13. The majority of DMT's learners are recruited from disadvantaged groups. Success rates for learners identified with learning difficulties and/or disadvantages, however, are in line with those of other groups of learners. Learners from minority ethnic groups achieve equally as well as their peers.
14. Learners develop good skills and safe working practices. Learners overcome a range of barriers to learning and employment and develop good skills and knowledge and gain significantly in confidence. Learners enjoy learning and using their new knowledge. Learners gain social skills, communicate better with training staff, employers and customers and are able to challenge poor practice.

They develop better understanding of their job roles and responsibilities and have a good knowledge of their rights.

15. Learners feel safe and welcome in their workplace and the training centres and readily share their problems and concerns with staff. Learners demonstrate good safe-working practices. They have a good understanding of the health and safety procedures at work and at the training centres, where good health and safety practice is reinforced frequently.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

16. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In construction and engineering, the teaching and learning of practical skills are good. These lessons are planned well and challenge learners effectively. Good use is made of questioning to check and reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding. In most other subject areas, learners receive adequate one-to-one support in the workplace. Good use is made of real work problems to challenge and motivate ICT learners.
17. Assessment is satisfactory. DMT uses an appropriate range of methods of assessment of learners' progress, including observation of workplace performance, professional discussion and personal statements. Learners understand why assessment takes place, but assessors lead the process and learners have insufficient involvement in, and responsibility for, the planning of assessment opportunities. Assessors provide written feedback to learners following assessment, but this is often too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.
18. DMT has under-developed arrangements for planning and monitoring learners' progress. Targets set by assessors to promote learners' progress are often too general. Individual assessors are aware of the progress made by learners they assess, but DMT does not have a central system to monitor learners' progress. Managers are not able to identify slow progress and take appropriate actions. Employers are not routinely involved in setting targets, and most are unaware of the targets agreed with learners. DMT does not have a discrete progress review process providing regular opportunities for employers to meet formally with the assessor and learner to monitor and review progress.
19. The range of programmes is good. It meets the needs and interests of learners and employers effectively. Some employers have offered work placements to DMT learners over a number of years, sometimes leading to learners gaining employment with them. Many learners have recently enrolled on Train to Gain programmes, although these numbers are now declining. DMT offers learners the opportunity to progress to higher qualification levels, and to build upon existing qualifications in response to changing job roles.
20. DMT has good partnerships working with a wide range of colleges, schools, other providers and agencies at local and regional levels. DMT has a well-

established local reputation for recruiting disadvantaged learners. Good collaborative working secures additional funding through Cornwall's ESF. This funding directly benefits learners with specific needs.

21. Guidance and support are satisfactory. However, DMT provides good additional support for learners. All learners complete a satisfactory induction to their training. This includes information on equality and diversity, health and safety and procedures relating to grievances and complaints. All learners complete a satisfactory initial assessment of numeracy and literacy skills. Learners identified as having additional learning needs receive good support from well-qualified staff. Training staff work closely with learners and develop a good awareness and understanding of individual issues likely to affect progress. However, individual learning plans do not always record these support needs in sufficient detail. DMT has good links with external support agencies, and prompt referrals for support, for example, housing and financial problems, help to retain learners on programme.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

22. DMT has satisfactory leadership and management. Good strategic leadership has steered the company through a difficult period effectively. DMT has succeeded in maintaining its commitment to supporting disadvantaged learners despite uncertainty about contracts and decreasing income. DMT has managed well a reduction of staff and has restructured the responsibilities of the senior management team to ensure effective day-to-day operation of the company. DMT plans further restructuring to improve the implementation of formal mechanisms of quality improvement.
23. The current day-to-day management of DMT has an over-reliance on informal processes. Good communication with staff in the subject areas has maintained an appropriate focus on learners' achievement. Through this process staff morale has remained high, with a good commitment to learners' achievement.
24. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. The designated senior manager has appropriate training in safeguarding and has regular contact with the local safeguarding boards for children, young people and vulnerable adults. A central list of CRB checks is maintained and updated regularly. DMT has clear policies and procedures regarding safeguarding which are updated regularly. Appropriate training for staff on safeguarding is followed up with one-to-one meetings with the designated manager. DMT ensures that staff have a thorough understanding of their role in implementing the procedures and they are confident that they know what actions to take should they have any concerns.
25. DMT has a strong focus on ensuring equality of opportunity for all learners, regardless of their prior achievements. It has an open policy of recruitment and often recruits learners who do not meet the entry criteria of other providers. The majority of learners come from a disadvantaged background and many have few, if any, qualifications when they start their programmes. Initial

assessment effectively identifies whether they have additional learning needs and well-qualified staff provide regular support for those with identified literacy or numeracy support needs.

26. DMT ensures that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds receive good support throughout their programme, regardless of the length of time they require to achieve their qualification. DMT monitors the achievement of different groups of learners effectively, and does not have any achievement gaps between different groups of learners. In line with the local community, the number of learners of minority ethnic heritage is low. DMT has a clear ethos of promoting equality and diversity which permeates the organisation. Learners receive a good induction into equality and diversity matters at the beginning of their programmes. Learners' understanding is reinforced well by materials promoting equality and diversity at all the training centres. Learners feel respected and free from bullying or harassment. The reinforcement of equality and diversity is included in all progress reviews; however, not all staff ensure that learners' understanding of equality matters is reinforced effectively.
27. DMT makes satisfactory use of learners' and employers' feedback to support and promote improvement. It follows up all concerns raised and addresses them effectively. DMT is taking appropriate action to improve response rates to issues raised in learner and employer questionnaires.
28. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The current draft self-assessment report is very thorough and includes evidence from a variety of sources. Staff are involved well in the self-assessment process. Good use is made of learners' and employers' views and management information to inform the identification of strengths and areas for improvement.
29. DMT provides satisfactory value for money. Resources at the training centres are adequate, though some learners would like more tools and equipment.

Subject areas

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Context

30. Currently, DMT has 283 learners working towards qualifications, including 120 apprentices mostly on care programmes, with 11 on childcare programmes. DMT has 163 Train to Gain learners working at level 2 or level 3, 13 of which are on childcare programmes. All care learners are employed, as are most childcare learners, with the remainder on non-employed placements with employers.

Key findings

- Learners develop good skills, knowledge and confidence. They enjoy learning and use new knowledge to support their practice, for example, communicating with clients more effectively. Learners' work is of a good standard. A number of learners have progressed from level 2 to level 3 programmes and some have achieved more senior positions or higher levels of responsibility.
- Overall success rates are good. The success rate on Train to Gain programmes at level 2 is good at 92% in 2008/09. The overall success rate on apprenticeship programmes is good and timely success rates are satisfactory and improving.
- Some learners make slow progress. Assessors' workloads are high. Arranged visits do not always take place. Learners are not clear about the length of their programme or their expected completion dates. For some learners the assessment arrangements do not challenge them sufficiently, and many could do more work or progress more quickly.
- The planning and monitoring of programmes is insufficient. Individual learning plans are not effective. Reviews do not always agree specific, measurable and time-bound targets. DMT has insufficient awareness of learners' progress. The frequency of visits by assessors is insufficient to maintain appropriate progress by all learners. Learners are insufficiently involved in the planning of their learning and assessment.
- Assessment is satisfactory, with a model of developing learners' knowledge through assignments and one-to-one coaching followed by assessment of their performance. Staff use an appropriate range of assessment methods and plan and record learner progress effectively. However, at NVQ level 3 this relies on large quantities of written work and insufficient use of observation.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Little formal training takes place, although most learners receive good one-to-one support from assessors which is clearly recorded. However, training is not standardised to ensure that all learners have a similar experience.

- Key skills and technical certificate provision are satisfactory. In care apprenticeships, these are completed early in the programme. In childcare apprenticeships, the technical certificate is introduced later. For some learners, the start of their key skills training is delayed. Initial assessment is satisfactory and staff provide appropriate training in literacy and numeracy skills.
- DMT meets the needs of employers effectively. DMT has responded well to employer requests for programmes to meet the needs of ancillary workers by offering an NVQ in support services.
- Relationships between assessors and employers are particularly good. Assessors work in a sensitive way with learners in workplaces without appropriate facilities for one-to-one sessions. However, some employers have insufficient understanding of their responsibilities in supporting learners to achieve their learning goals.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity in relation to their own rights. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of these issues in relation to their work and discuss them with their assessors. Learners feel safe and adopt safe working practices.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessors work together effectively to coordinate the provision. The self-assessment report for the subject area reflects a high degree of self-regulation in terms of quality assurance and sharing of good practice. However, arrangements for monitoring learners' progress and the performance of assessors are inadequate.
- Internal verification is satisfactory. A clear strategy and appropriate sampling plans cover all aspects of assessment. Assessors receive useful and clear feedback from internal verifiers and attend monthly standardisation meetings. However, much verification takes place towards the end of the learners' programmes, with little formative sampling.

What does DMT need to do to improve further?

- Introduce more effective monitoring of learners' progress to ensure that learners make appropriate progress throughout their programmes.
- Introduce more flexibility in the frequency of assessors' visits to meet learners' needs and enable them to progress at their own pace.
- Develop the use of individual learning plans and reviews to involve learners in the planning of their programmes and to engage employers more effectively.
- Monitor assessor activities more closely to improve consistency of practice, especially in teaching and learning activities.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 3

Context

31. DMT has 122 learners in construction, planning and the built environment. Of these, 26 are apprentices in wood occupations, 22 in trowel trades and 16 in decorative occupations, of whom three are female. DMT has five advanced apprentices in trowel trades. Fifty-three learners are on Train to Gain programmes at level 2. Of these, nine learners are in wood occupations, 11 in trowel trades and 33 in decorative occupations.

Key findings

- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and meets industry standards. Learners on programme-led apprenticeships develop good employability skills. Apprentices already in employment use their experiences well to further develop knowledge and skills. Learners enjoy their training and demonstrate improved confidence in the workplace.
- Learners feel safe and welcome in their workplace and the training centres. They readily share their problems and concerns with staff. They demonstrate a clear understanding of health and safety in the workplace and adopt safe working practices.
- Programme-led apprentices are involved well in local community projects. These include decorating a primary school and constructing a new village playground. Many learners have barriers to learning; however, they develop new skills, gain experience in a real working environment and improve their social skills to help them become good citizens and employees.
- Learners receive good practical training at DMT's training centres and at work. Teaching staff have appropriate expertise. Learners benefit from their knowledge and their ability to refer to vocational and professional examples. Teaching staff plan lessons sufficiently well and use resources effectively to support lessons.
- Assessment of learners' performance is satisfactory. However, learners and employers are insufficiently involved in planning assessment. Assessment feedback is of variable quality, often being too descriptive and lacking evaluative judgements on learners' performance. Portfolios contain a narrow range of evidence and this is not always referenced systematically.
- Action planning within learners' reviews and assessment activity is weak. Target setting is not sufficiently specific and lacks employers' involvement. Monitoring of learners' progress and achievement is under-developed. Individual learning plans are not used as working documents in planning and reviewing training.
- DMT provides a satisfactory range of programmes which effectively supports learners' progression opportunities. DMT works closely with employers and

community partners to ensure that programmes prepare learners effectively for the workplace and offer qualifications that meet current industry requirements.

- Support for learners is satisfactory. DMT provides individual support for any learner needing additional help or guidance with literacy and numeracy. Many learners lack confidence, have low self-esteem about their abilities and find it difficult to interact with peer groups. Learners receive support and encouragement in engaging in projects to improve teamwork and social skills.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a clear focus on improving success rates, progress reviews and recording information. Communication and teamwork are satisfactory. Staff meetings are held regularly, but they are not well structured nor items discussed well recorded.
- Arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough. The process for the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. DMT makes good and effective use of learners' evaluations following each practical teaching session to improve the quality of provision. However, the sharing of good practice is insufficient.
- Learners work in an atmosphere of professional respect, free from harassment and discrimination. DMT ensures that all learners have equal opportunity to achieve their potential. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities and know who to contact if they have any problems. Reinforcement of learners' awareness of equality of opportunity matters at progress reviews is insufficiently challenging and poorly recorded.
- The self-assessment process involves staff, employers and learners satisfactorily. The current draft self-assessment report is constructive, useful and generally accurate.

What does DMT need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates through more focused use of specific, measurable targets and increased involvement of employers.
- Ensure that assessment and tracking systems are developed and applied consistently across the provision so that learners' progress is monitored effectively.
- Increase the range of assessment methods and develop ways of enabling learners to take more responsibility for the collection and referencing of evidence for their portfolios.
- Improve the planning and recording of internal verification to ensure all aspects of assessment are covered.
- Ensure that reinforcement of equality and diversity is recorded consistently at reviews so that learners' awareness of equality matters continues to improve.

Information about the inspection

32. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's executive director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

DMT Business Services Ltd

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners			6		595
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	3				3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	2				2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a				
Quality of provision	3				3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	3				3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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