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Images of the strategy function *reimagined*

Eight prototypes and 16 inspirational cases

How to read

This booklet provides inspiration for the **strategy function reimagined**.

It explores **eight different images** – some quite radical – of the future strategy function and its role, each with two cases.

The cases are deliberately selected with the purpose of providing inspiration from a **broad selection of industries and contexts**.

The different images are by design not mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive. **They are merely inspirational** and our humble attempt to reimagine the strategy function.

Images of the strategy function reimagined

Eight prototypes

1 Moonshot vanguard

The strategy function is a moonshot engine, spotting, prototyping and validating new business opportunities based on groundbreaking insights.

2 Opportunity scout

The strategy function is an opportunity radar, constantly converting data to insight, stress-testing critical assumptions of current strategy and scanning the periphery for weak signals of change.

3 Capability builder

The strategy function is a centre of knowledge, qualifying leaders across the organisation to make great strategic choices and deliver impact fuelled by a best practice methodology.

4 Ecosystem orchestrator

The strategy function is an integration hub, facilitating cross-functional collaboration as well as building and participating in open ecosystems and global knowledge platforms.

5 Infrastructure architect

The strategy function is an operating system, running the operating model for developing, implementing and adjusting strategy across the organisation in an agile fashion.

6 Strategy activist

The strategy function is a platform for activism, inviting everybody to join the problem-solving efforts to enable crowd-solving of big issues and scaling insights across the business.

7 MWB insurer

The strategy function is an insurance for successful strategy implementation, co-ordinating and coaching must-win battle initiatives for impact and ensuring engagement in times of change.

8 Customer guardian

The strategy function is the voice of the customer, championing market needs within the business to deliver world-class and memorable customer experiences.

What if we were the ...

Moonshot vanguard

The strategy function is the centre of excellence for new **business innovation**, designed to deal with uncertainty and a rapidly changing business landscape. It helps spot, create and validate new opportunities based on groundbreaking insights. The strategy function becomes the first to act out the missing moonshot function in the organisation.

Three potential hacks

- Build a **moonshot accelerator** that increases the quantity of new business ideas tested through a structured process.

- Put together a **rapid prototyping team** that can validate fast to improve the velocity of business innovation and de-risk strategic investments.

- Develop a **one-billion people design principle** to business innovation to frame big and bold issues where the answer creates impact at scale.

Inspirational cases

Moonshot factory

Described as the "Moonshot Factory", Google X consists of a diverse group of inventors and entrepreneurs that aim to find and build impactful solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. The innovation process starts with finding the billion-people problem – the issue to which the right solution could potentially affect a billion people. New ideas are tested by the "Rapid Evaluation Team" that emphasises rejecting ideas much more than affirming them. The team vets ideas primarily by doing everything possible to make them fall apart.

Y Combinator

Seed fund for scaling ideas

Y Combinator is a seed fund dedicated to helping founders scale their start-ups. Y Combinator runs a programme for each batch of investments that runs for three months. In this period, founders are expected to 1) talk to users and 2) build a product based on the insights generated. Employing a hacking methodology, founders are expected to iterate this loop continuously and swiftly throughout the short period in order to accelerate growth. Founders are granted access to vast resources, including mentoring, access to experts and investors, office space and much more.

What if we were the …

Opportunity scout

The strategy function is the **future radar of the business**, integrating and utilising various data sources to generate new insights and scan the surroundings for weak signals of change. Besides, the job is to constantly pressure test and diagnose key strategic issues, choices and assumptions of current strategies to align them with reality now and in the future.

Three potential hacks

- Develop **clear methodology** for harnessing, cleaning and utilising relevant customer and market data from various sources.

- Build a cadence and a **framework for stress-testing** key choices and assumptions on an ongoing basis.

- Develop **an "issue log"** to monitor, diagnose and track progress on business-critical matters and turn it into an ongoing conversation.

Inspirational cases

Johnson & Johnson

Analytics for new insights

International healthcare giant Johnson & Johnson (J&J) has developed a digital strategy with data and analytics capabilities as the core foundation. J&J integrates data analysis from internal platforms with external data sources in order to tailor its products and services to specific customer segments. For example, J&J triangulates consumer data gathered from a panel of consumers with visitors to its websites to get a 360 degree view of their customers, which they can leverage for differentiated offerings.

BERLINGSKE MEDIA

Issue log for agility

The strategy team of the Danish media house Berlingske Media is experimenting with a structured "Strategy issue log" that is used as a tool to continuously keep an eye on and diagnose important strategic challenges and opportunities and turn them into projects. The log consists only of ten issues at any time, and once resolved or moved to Operations the issue is taken off the log. Any management member can add an item to the issue log, after which the issue is defined, options are generated, tests are executed – and eventually a choice is made on how to proceed.

What if we were the …

Capability builder

The strategy function is the **centre of knowledge**, developing a best practice toolbox and process for problem-solving and dispersing these in the organisation. The strategy function improves the odds of success by institutionalising a battle-tested skillset and by being available as the primary inspiration and internal consultant for leaders making strategic choices.

Three potential hacks

- Employ **change agents** to showcase how to change the business and strategic leadership practice as well as preparing the organisation for change.

- Create a **strategy playbook** with standard approaches, methodologies and guides to choice-making and make it the go-to tool for strategising in the organisation.

- Establish a **training programme** in strategic choice-making that provides the business with expertise and experience.

Inspirational cases

Perfecting strategic foresight

Unilever's food competence centre in Thayngen's "Knorri Park" was established as an innovation hub to promote strategic foresight through research into new food products and innovative nutrition concepts. Employees from startups, food companies, universities, investors, and innovation facilitators collaborate to apply its unique methodologies, enhancing their ability to anticipate and address future trends likely to influence Unilever's customers. The centre fosters collaboration and advances agri-food and future food technologies. Starting in 2025, partners will use the 12,000 m² site to further strengthen Switzerland's position as a leading FoodTech and innovation centre.

Global capability building

When Maersk Line wished to increase the strategic capabilities of the global commercial organisation, a capability-building programme was developed. More than 1,500 employees and leaders were involved in the programme, which consisted of intense trainings, e-learning and local implementation, leading to new global ways of working. Key areas were agile solution design, strategy development and implementation based on the Playing to Win framework. Maersk Line has since scaled key elements to other parts of the organisation and continues to add capabilities to the stack.

What if we were the …

Ecosystem orchestrator

The strategy function is the **integration hub**, connecting and facilitating internal and external collaboration. It has an open ecosystem approach to strategy and innovation, leveraging talent both inside and outside of the organisation as the best way to respond to a competitive, ever-changing environment. By creating the right conditions for the best ideas to get picked up, it becomes the sustainable growth engine.

Three potential hacks

- Launch an **internal marketplace** for the exchange of insights, opportunities and methods that flow across business areas and silos.

- Develop an **open platform** on which partners, suppliers, start-ups, experts and internal business areas can transfer knowledge, co-develop and test new opportunities with customers.

- Build an **incentive scheme** that encourages people to spend 20% of their time helping other teams on business innovation.

Inspirational cases

Innovation ecosystem

International industrial conglomerate Bosch has developed an internal innovation ecosystem by launching the Bosch Accelerator Program in 2017. The programme provides a structured way for internal innovation teams to systematically validate the viability of their business ideas. 25-30 internal innovation teams are picked and funded with an initial €120,000, after which the teams must work to validate their ideas. More than 150 teams have tested their ideas, and so far 14 teams have succeeded in scaling their ideas.

Connecting micro-units

Haier's more than 75,000 employees are divided into more than 4,000 micro-enterprises (MEs), i.e. small autonomous units. These MEs are grouped into platforms which brings together MEs operating in a similar category while others focus on building new capabilities. It is the job of the platform owner to get MEs together and help them identify opportunities for collaboration. MEs use market forces to guide internal contracting, cross-unit co-ordination, hiring processes and partnerships, both internal and external.

What if we were the …

Infrastructure architect

The strategy function is the **designer of the operating model** for developing, implementing and adjusting strategy across the organisation so that strategies of different business units and functions are cascaded and play together in perfect harmony – and that agile strategy practices are used consistently across the organisation.

Three potential hacks

- Develop an end-to-end **operating system** for strategy development and implementation that includes corporate strategy, business unit strategy and functional strategy.

- Develop a **systematic and agile model** for measuring the impact of strategy and pivot whenever it is necessary.

- Create a **strategy blueprint** to provide the organisation with a comprehensive overview of connected and cascaded strategies.

Inspirational cases

Strategy operating system

Novozymes wanted to create a new way of making better strategic choices across the business – with a strong focus on improved decision-making and fast prototyping. This goal was achieved through a number of initiatives, including designing new ways of strategising based on leading strategy methods and an end-to-end operating system for strategising at all levels of the organisation. The goal was to establish a shared language and ways of working for strategy as well as to establish a new leadership mindset for making better strategic choices.

Holistic business system

Danaher is a US-based listed global diversified conglomerate with more than 60,000 employees. Danaher has developed the Danaher Playbook, which is a framework used to standardise strategy and operational improvements of all of Danaher's portfolio companies. The playbook is based on an intense focus on growth from the core and operational optimisation. Each business unit of the portfolio companies is assessed every month on eight standard performance metrics.

What if we were the …

Strategy activist

The strategy function is the platform for **crowd-solving big strategic issues**, continuously inviting everybody to join the problem-solving efforts. By activating a large number of people in strategic choice-making, the strategy function can leverage vast volumes of insights coming from people across the organisation and their touchpoints with the surrounding environment.

Three potential hacks

- Initiate a **strategy movement** that enables bottom-up choice-making through company-wide strategy hackathons.

- Set up **sounding boards** with stakeholders from different business units to give input and feedback when making new strategic choices.

- Design a **knowledge-based decision-making process** in place of hierarchy where formal managers are replaced by strategic coaches to eliminate corporate theatre.

Inspirational cases

Unified platform

When Novo Nordisk wanted to develop its new environmental strategy, Circular for Zero, a key part of the winning aspiration was to embed a circular mindset across the organisation. This was achieved through creating a unified platform for engaging both internal and external stakeholders while getting invaluable input from them. Activities included large-scale workshops, design lab sessions, global webinars, interviews with key stakeholders and an external "challenger group" consisting of senior executives from other organisations.

Always-on strategy engine

Spar Nord has initiated a perpetual strategy movement where all employees are engaged in strategising on a continuous basis. Nationwide events, local events, design thinking elements and engaging video material all play a role in engaging and urging all employees to participate, give input, share ideas and solutions to strategic themes and issues. A dedicated strategy team guides the process in collaboration with the management team, and the strategic direction and related strategic initiatives are updated continuously.

What if we were the …

MWB insurer

The strategy function is the insurance provider, making sure that all **strategies are implemented with the intended impact**. Strategy implementation capabilities second to none are built and infused in every strategy implementation project. Through a dedicated focus on reaching milestones and winning MWBs, the strategy function closes the gap between strategy and implementation.

Three potential hacks

- Set up a visual MWB room when implementing strategies run by an **MWB Sprint Team** armed with battle-tested processes, methods and tools.

- Develop and implement a tried-and-tested project methodology to become an **agile project factory** – experts in strategy implementation.

- Develop **shared KPIs and aligned personal incentives** that are linked to strategy implementation.

Inspirational cases

Results through autonomy

Spotify is known for its organisational design and world-class execution engine. Having experimented with optimal team designs for rapidly innovating and quickly engineering state-of-the-art solutions to drive business value, Spotify is now organised in Squads with a very high degree of autonomy and end-to-end ownership of project management. Leaders' primary task is to set out the issues to solve. Squads, which are part of larger Tribes, co-ordinate independently and are thus loosely coupled but tightly aligned through the overall task and purpose.

Agile project factory

GE has developed a framework called FastWorks with The Lean Startup author and international thought leader Eric Ries. FastWorks is a set of tools, principles and behaviours that allows GE's diverse business units to get closer to customers, increase speed to market and increase the chance of success –especially in innovation projects. A key component of FastWorks is having dedicated teams on projects and focusing on rapid innovation iterations, starting out with very simple minimum viable products (MVPs).

What if we were the …

Customer guardian

The strategy function is the **customer's voice**, making customer centricity a clear and omnipresent priority throughout the business. The strategy function infuses an insistence on keeping a **customer-first mindset** in everyday conversation, enabling an excellent and truly memorable experience at every single customer touchpoint.

Three potential hacks

- Perform a **desirability test** for every strategic choice to build and nurture customer centricity as a key cultural pillar in the business.

- Actively collect and act on **customer satisfaction data** and introduce satisfaction scores as KPIs.

- Introduce **shared KPIs** to build shared customer accountability for all teams working on customer-facing initiatives.

Inspirational cases

NORDSTROM

Innovate with customers

Since its inception more than 115 years ago, upscale fashion retailer Nordstrom has been dedicated to creating the finest retail shopping experience in the world. Nordstrom has created a unique formula to customer service, even a book called "The Nordstrom Way to Customer Service Excellence". More recently, Nordstrom has developed an approach to innovating with customers, setting up an innovation lab called Flash Build in its retail stores to work on developing prototypes rapidly and testing them directly on customers in-store.

USAA

The cx function

Financial services company USAA has had the best NPS score in the financial industry in the US for more than eight years. A large part of USAA's success is to be found in its customer experience excellence. USAA has a customer-oriented organisation and mission, but what truly stands out is the business architecture: All customer-facing decisions must go through USAA's "Member Experience" unit, which is responsible for creating a seamless integrated experience to members across products and channels.
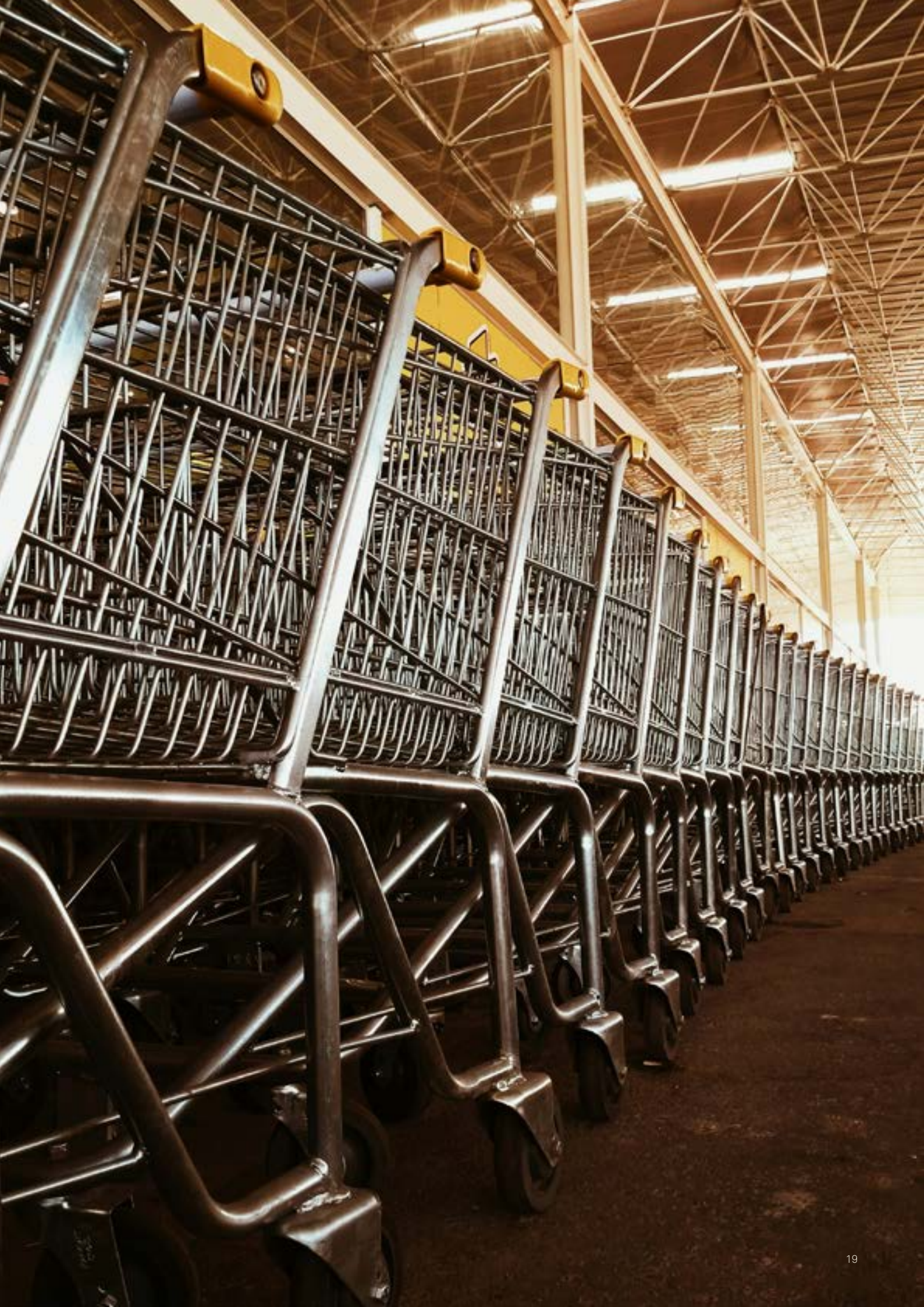
My notes

My notes

Want to prototype your strategy function reimagined with us?

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