

February / March 2024
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MEMBERSHIP



DON'T MISS:

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President's Column

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Meet the ALAMN Board
Nominees for 2024-2025

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Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor of *the Verdict* are welcome and can be e-mailed to Gretchen Luessenheide at gluessenheide@bgs.com. In your letter, please include your name, firm name, mailing address, daytime phone number, and e-mail address. Letters that do not contain full contact information cannot be published. Letters typically run 150 words or less and may be edited. Your letter may be on any topic. You will be contacted before your letter is published. Thank you.

2023 - 2024 ALAMN OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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ALAMN Has Adopted ALA's Mission Statement

ALA is the premier professional association connecting leaders and managers within the legal industry. We provide extensive professional development, collaborative peer communities, strategic operational solutions, and business partner connections empowering our members to lead the business of law.

ALAMN TEAMS & SIGs

ALAMN Teams serve as liaisons between membership and the respective director, representing the **ALAMN** Board of Directors.

BUSINESS PARTNER RELATIONS & CONFERENCE

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ALAMN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs) are educational forums specific to functional specialty.

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If you are interested in serving as a co-chair for a Team or SIG, please contact Deb O'Connor (deboconnor12@outlook.com, 651.332.8315).



ALA's Career Center is a place to find a variety of articles and resources to help you develop your skills and enhance your career. Check out the featured article from Robert Half, "2022 Forecast: In Demand Practice Areas and Jobs," found [HERE](#).

ALAMN ORGANIZATIONAL TABLE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Deb O'Connor

President Elect	Past President	Communications Director	Membership Director	Education Director	Administrative Director	Finance Director
Vanessa Kahn	Chong Lee	Samantha Tschida	Kim Motzko	Pat Stender	Bernie Theis	Suzette Allaire

SERVICE TEAMS

(ALAMN Membership is required to participate; Regular ALAMN Membership is required to Chair; Service Teams work serves entire chapter)

Business Partner Relations & Conference	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access	Communications	Membership Development	General Education Meetings		Compensation & Benefits Survey
Catherine Gorr Kelly Thaemert	Kathy Hubbard	Melissa Johnson	Joey Monson	Lisa Hellum Pete Tass		Laurie Greenberg Laurie Percy
	Community Service					
	Pat Stender					

SECTION TEAMS (ALAMN Membership is required to participate;

Regular ALAMN Membership is required to Chair; Section Teams work serves sub-section of chapter membership)

			Large Firm Chief Officers	Small and Medium Firm	Human Resources	
			Abby Rooney	Jeff Downes Tracy Smith	Gayle Hildahl	

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (ALAMN Membership is required to participate)

		Branch Manager			Facilities Management	Financial Management
		Jessica Johnson Samantha Tschida			Kim Mozko	Rebecca Doyle
Greater MN (formerly St. Cloud)					Intellectual Property (IP)	
Ann Entenmann					Val Studer	

ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEERS (Regular or Associate ALAMN Membership is required)

Also serves as:	Also serves as:	Newsletter Editor	Emerging Leaders Group	CLM Education Coordinator	Staff & Member Placement Coordinator (HR)	
LPACC Liaison	Past President Liaison	Gretchen Luessenheide	Nick Manty	Tracy Overson	Tracy Smith	
	Nominating Committee (chair)	Social Media				
		Jessica Johnson Jaffe Management				

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Deb O'Connor, ALAMN President



As I still have a few months left to my term, it seems odd to be writing my last column for *The Verdict*, since our newspaper is only published on a bi-monthly basis. You see, this is one of my least favorite tasks in filling the role of President for ALAMN, and one I was dreading. The next column will be drafted by our new President, Vanessa Kahn. So while it may seem premature, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of ALAMN for your support in my role as President. Over the years, the benefits of membership have far surpassed my time commitment, so I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in this position again and give back to the organization.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the current Board of Directors for your contributions of time and talent. So a big shout out and thanks to Chong Lee, Vanessa Kahn, Pat Stender, Samantha Tschida, Suzette Allaire, Bernie Theis, and Kimberly Motzko. You have each added a unique perspective to your position on the Board. Sadly, Chong Lee, Pat Stender, and Samantha Tschida will be leaving the Board at the end of their terms. These three individuals will be sorely missed, as they have many years' experience in the legal field, and their tenure was greatly appreciated on the Board. We will miss you! We are fortunate to have current Board members Vanessa Kahn, Suzette Allaire, Bernie Theis, and Kim Motzko remaining on the Board and assuming new positions. They will be joined by Rebecca Doyle, Gayle Hildahl, and Jessica Johnson. Thank you to all members for electing these individuals to fill roles on the Board.

In addition to thanking our current Board, I would also like to thank our ALAMN volunteers. Our chapter is dependent on volunteers who have stepped up to chair or co-chair a team, and historically we have been blessed with a core group of committed members who

have given tirelessly of their time. So a huge thank you to everyone currently filling a volunteer leader role!

To continue providing services to our organization, we desperately need to expand the number of committed volunteer leaders willing to carry a share of the load. Our leadership is made stronger by the inclusion of members with diverse perspectives and ideas, members new to the organization, as well as those who have been members for many years. Please consider joining one of our service teams that support ALAMN: the Education Team, Membership Team, Community Service Team, DEIA, Communications and the Business Partner Relations and Conference Team, in addition to attending special interest and role-specific meetings. Having more people involved in team leadership will only make our Chapter stronger for all members. We could use your help. If you would like to hear more about any team or special interest group, please reach out to me. I would love to hear from you.

ALA's Annual Conference will be held in Aurora, Colorado at the Gaylord Rockies Resort from May 19 – 22, 2024. ALA provides exceptional educational sessions, great speakers, networking with members, and a venue to meet business partners and discover the latest, greatest new trends in the legal industry. Make plans now to join fellow members for a great conference. We anticipate that many Minnesota members will attend, so join us! For more information, visit ALA's website and check it out.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve on the ALAMN Board of Directors. I won't be leaving quite yet, as I have one more year as Immediate Past President, but it already feels like an end to an era since I have retired from working in the legal field. I hope to see many of you during my last year on the Board.

Cheers - Deb

ALAMN 2024 MASTER CALENDAR

Be sure to check out the Full Calendar on our ALAMN website for more details about upcoming meetings and events!

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
<p>1/30 – Law Firm Leaders Networking Event</p> <p>1/17 – Facilities 1/18 – Branch Manger 1/18 – BPRCT 1/25 - Small/Medium 1/23 - DEIA Career Fair 1/23 – IP</p> <p>TBD – Community Ser. TBD – Membership</p>	<p>TBD - Business Partner Appreciation</p> <p>2/13 – HR</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – Education TBD - Membership</p>	<p>TBD - General Meeting</p> <p>3/13- Community Ser.</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – DEIA TBD – Finance TBD – Membership</p>	<p>4/09 - HR 4/17 – Facilities 4/18 - Small/Medium</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – Branch Manager TBD – Finance TBD - IP TBD – Membership</p>
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<p>5/19 – 5/22 ALA National Conference</p> <p>TBD - BPRCT TBD – Community Ser. TBD – DEIA TBD – Education TBD – Finance TBD – Membership</p>	<p>TBD – General Meeting</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD - Finance TBD – Facilities TBD – HR TBD - Membership</p>	<p>TBD - ALAMN Summer Social</p> <p>7/18 – Small/Medium</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – Branch Manager TBD – Community Ser. TBD – DEIA TBD – IP TBD – Membership</p>	<p>TBD – General Meeting</p> <p>8/19 – HR</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – Education TBD - Facilities TBD – Finance TBD - Membership</p>
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>9/19 ALAMN Conference</p> <p>TBD – General Meeting (Salary Survey)</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – DEIA TBD – Finance TBD – Facilities TBD - Membership</p>	<p>10/17 – Small/Medium</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD – Branch Manager TBD – Community Ser. TBD – Finance TBD – HR TBD – IP TBD – Membership</p>	<p>ALAMN DEIA Event</p> <p>TBD - BPRCT TBD – Education TBD – Facilities TBD – Membership</p>	<p>ALAMN Holiday Social</p> <p>TBD – BPRCT TBD - Membership</p>

ALAMN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	1	2

- 13 HR Meeting**
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- 22 Community Service Event**
1:00 - 3:00 pm
The Food Group

MARCH

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

- 13 Community Services Meeting**
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

***PLEASE NOTE:**
ALAMN MEMBERSHIP IS REQUIRED to attend Team and SIG meetings.



ALA was founded in 1971 to provide support to professionals involved in the management of law firms, corporate legal departments, and government legal agencies. Learn more about ALA [HERE](#).

MEET THE ALAMN BOARD NOMINEES FOR 2024-2025



Past President: Deborah O'Connor

Deb O'Connor, CLM, is currently retired after working in the legal field for over 25 years, most recently at Jellum Law, PA. Upon joining her first firm she was encouraged to join ALAMN, as she had

never worked in legal before, and has been an active member ever since.

Deb's first involvement with ALAMN was as a participant of the Small/Medium Group, which she eventually co-chaired three different times. She is also a past participant of the Education Team, the Membership Team, and the Community Service Team. She is currently a member of the Business Partner Relations and Conference Team, as well as a past co-chair of the Team. At the international level, Deb has served on the ALA Business Partner Project Committee, as well as several Nominating Committees.

She will serve as the Immediate Past President on the ALAMN Board. This is the second time Deb has filled this role. She previously served on the Board from 2010 to 2016, and has functioned as the Administrative Director, Education Director, Membership Director, and President. She came back on the Board as Advisor in 2022, and then stepped into the President role.

Deb earned her bachelor's degree from Metro State in Business Administration. She is also a Certified Legal Manager in ALA, having earned her certification in 2009 after participating in two consecutive Minnesota CLM study groups.

Deb resides in Lake Elmo with the best puppy in the world, a Shih Tzu named Izzy. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling (currently writing this on a balcony in Panama City Beach), reading, music and theater.



President: Vanessa Kahn

Vanessa has been a member of ALAMN since 2015. She is an active member of the Business Partner Relations Team (BPRT), served as BPRT co-chair for two terms, and has

chaired the Membership Development Team (MDT). This will be Vanessa's fourth year serving on the ALAMN Board of Directors. Staying connected to the members and business partners in ALAMN is a priority for Vanessa. She believes the more members participate in ALAMN teams and activities, the more people they can meet, exchange ideas with, and learn from each other. These connections have shaped her professional development and added significant value to her law firm.

Vanessa thrives in the variety and challenges that come with law firm management. She has worked in legal administration for 22 years, holding various roles and has worked as an administrator for 11 years. She is currently the Firm Administrator at Monroe Moxness Berg and focuses on strategic planning but enjoys the nuances of employee retention and engagement, associate development, budgeting, and financial management, as well as IT technology and data security. Vanessa holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from St. Catherine's University and a master's degree in counseling psychology from St. Mary's University.

Vanessa is an active member of the Bloomington Noon Rotary and serves on the Membership Development Team. She also volunteers on the Legal Assistant Advisory Board for Anoka Technical College.

Vanessa lives in Richfield with her husband, Andy, and daughter, Mia. They enjoy trips to Lake Vermilion, water and snow sports, hiking, and BWCAW camping.

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MEET THE ALAMN BOARD NOMINEES FOR 2024-2025 - CONT.

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President-Elect: Bernie Theis

Bernadette (Bernie) Theis is the Office Administrator at Jardine, Logan, and O'Brien P.L.L.P. She began her career with the firm in 2006 as an Administrative Assistant and became

the Administrator in 2018. Collaborating with the IT & Accounting/Billing departments, working with her team, and getting to wear many different hats are what she enjoys most about her job.

Bernie holds an associate's degree in Business from Inver Hills Community College, and a bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management from Metropolitan State University. She returned to Metro State and is currently enrolled in their Master of Business Administration (MBA) program.

Bernie joined ALAMN in 2018, and she immediately got involved with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility team. Meeting speakers such as Erin Jones and Rhitu Basin, building relationships with teachers and counselors to promote the Diversity scholarship and career fair/speaking opportunities in schools to promote legal administration career opportunities to high school and college students, and forming friendships with fellow members are the top three highlights of her years in the DEI&A Team.

Born in Manila, Philippines, Bernie immigrated to this country at ten years old. She speaks Tagalog and English. She enjoys her volunteer work with CAPI, a non-profit that helps provide basic needs shelter, job opportunities, and so much more to immigrant, refugees, and under-resourced communities.

Bernie resides in Woodbury with her husband (Mick), son Parker (22), and their 11-year-old rescue, Buster. This past summer they celebrated her oldest son's wedding, Tanner (25) to Anna.



Administrative Director: Rebecca Doyle

Rebecca Doyle is the Firm Collections and Legal Project Manager for Maslon LLP where she has worked since 2019.

She is an experienced professional with over 15 years of legal experience in various roles such as legal administration, finance operations, innovation, and records. She is passionate about setting (and meeting) goals, efficiency, and project management. In her current role, she directly oversees the firm's Records department, Conflict/Intake process, Billing and Collection efforts, and serves as the firm's project manager on internal projects. One of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of Rebecca's job is working closely with Firm Management and attorneys on creating/implementing/refining best business practices to meet revenue goals. Rebecca joined ALAMN in 2021, currently serves as the Finance Special Interest Group Leader, and is a member of the DEIA team. Over the past few years she has recognized the value the ALAMN organization has brought to industry education, collaboration, and professional and personal connections.

Rebecca is a graduate of the University of St. Thomas with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science. She lives in NE Minneapolis with her partner, Kyle, and their blended family of three kids and one hermit crab. In her free time, Rebecca enjoys cooking, baking, eating, amateur cake decorating, binging podcasts, reading, yoga, traveling, bargain shopping, and organizing and cleaning out any area in her house that she can find – on repeat.

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MEET THE ALAMN BOARD NOMINEES FOR 2024-2025 - CONT.

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Communications Director: Jessica Johnson

Jessica Johnson is the Office Administrator at Fox Rothschild's Minneapolis office. She has over fifteen years of experience in the legal industry. Jessica joined ALAMN in 2013 at the recommendation of another ALAMN member and has continued to be an active member since. Building relationships with other members and business partners has been an invaluable resource.

Jessica's first involvement in the chapter was co-chairing the Small/Medium group. She presently serves the chapter as co-chair of the Branch Office Team and as the Social Media Coordinator.

Jessica lives in Andover with her husband Josh and their two daughters. She enjoys spending time with family, traveling, being outdoors, reading, and playing the piano.



Education Director: Kim Motzko

Kim Motzko is the Litigation Legal Support Manager at Fredrikson & Byron. She has been a member of ALAMN since 2018. She is an active member of the Membership Team, served as co-

chair for Human Resources and Education Teams, and has chaired the Facilities Team. Kim is passionate about education and attends every conference and seminar she can. She holds a law firm leadership certificate, a Human Resources certification, as well as a financial management specialist certificate from the Association.

Kim lives in Blaine with her husband, Joe, and her son, Austin. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, camping, hiking, biking, and gardening

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SAVE THE DATE!

ALAMN 34th Annual Conference

Thursday, September 19th 2024

Hilton Minneapolis
Downtown Minneapolis, MN

MEET THE ALAMN BOARD NOMINEES FOR 2024-2025 - CONT.

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Finance Director: Suzette Allaire

Suzette has over 20 years of law firm experience in various roles, including technology, innovation, operations, and finance. At Maslon, she oversees all aspects of firm operations, and

she sits on the firm's Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

In addition to her work as Maslon's COO, Suzette is an assistant professor of finance at St. Mary's University in Minneapolis. She has also served as a board member at a local charter school and at Women Leading in Technology.

In her spare time, Suzette enjoys spending time with her husband and four children.



Membership Director: Gayle Hildahl

Gayle Hildahl is the Director of Office Administration at Ballard Spahr LLP, where she has worked for over 21 years. She began her career as a Legal

Administrative Assistant, and in 2021 she became the Director of Office Administration for Minneapolis and Sioux Falls offices. As one office is large and the other small, this provides her with a variety of experiences and satisfaction.

Gayle joined ALAMN in 2018 and most recently served as Communications Coordinator and HR Section Chair. She enjoys meeting people, and her involvement with ALAMN has provided the opportunity to broaden her relationships within the organization and legal industry as a whole.

Gayle lives in NE Minneapolis with her husband, Kraig. Gayle enjoys traveling, specifically to Virginia and Canada to visit her children and grandchildren. She also loves hiking, biking, and reading.

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ALAMN ANNIVERSARIES

ALAMN Members with 20 or more Years of ALAMN Membership

Shannon K. Banaszewski	20 years
Karla A. Billehus	31 years
Laurie A. Blum	30 years
Kristin Rene Borowske	22 years
Laura J. Broomell, CLM	36 years
Wendy Jo Cornelius	24 years
Karen L. Davis	34 years
Linda J. Deering, CLM	25 years
Ann Marie Entenmann	22 years
Kimberly Ann Ess	24 years
Pamela M. Gerads	24 years
Catherine Gorr	29 years
Kimberly A. Hansen	25 years
Ryan P. Helmer	23 years
Chong A. Lee	21 years

Connie M. Luckey	23 years
Lynn M. Mattson	21 years
Richard J. Nigon, CPA	35 years
Kevin J. Rappana	21 years
Barbara J. Romanko, CLM	20 years
Philip Rush	25 years
Jodi M. Schmidt	29 years
Neil A. Simmons	23 years
Tracey R. Skjeveland, CLM	21 years
Patricia M. Stender	26 years
Theresa G. Stewart, PHR,SHRM-CP	21 years
David Jon Straiton	25 years
Valerie J. Studer	24 years
Rebecca Lee Vaughn	22 years



CHILDREN'S BOOK DRIVE



The ALAMN Community Service, DEIA & Education Teams are working together to bring you a great opportunity to help make a better future for our local community.

Planting People – Growing Justice’s mission is to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and outreach. In partnership with Dr. Artika Tyner, who is our November general meeting speaker, ALAMN is hosting a:

BOOK DRIVE

Between November 1st, 2023 and February 29th, 2024 in celebration of Black History Month

Why Books?

- 61% of low-income families have no books in their homes for their children.
- Because students who are not proficient with reading by 4th grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of school, and youth who drop out of school are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested in their lifetime.
- Literacy levels across the U.S. have dropped significantly over the years. One in 4 children have never learned to read. PPGJ are committed to improving literacy rates.
- Children of color have been traditionally underrepresented in literature. Diversity in books allows readers to see themselves represented and to imagine new possibilities for themselves.

To Donate by making a direct purchase, click here: [Amazon Wish List](#)

You can have Amazon deliver the books directly to: PPGJLI - PO Box 131894, St Paul, MN 55113

And CC your receipt to Tracy Smith, tsmith@smithgendler.com for tracking and the final count.

Or you can [Donate an Amazon Gift Card](#) and we will buy the books for you.

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ALAMN'S SHINING STAR

The ALAMN Board is very pleased to announce Sarah Ptacek has been selected as a Shining Star for the MN Chapter!

Sarah, a graduate of University of Wisconsin-Stout, has been the Human Resource Manager at Henson Efron since 2022. She spent many years in corporate retail and non-profit in different positions in operations and accounting before making the switch to the legal field. She's very happy to have landed at Henson Efron because she enjoys getting to know everyone and building relationships with attorneys and staff. She also enjoys the variety in her work, from administering benefits and payroll to the whole recruitment and onboarding process, all the way to development and retention.

Since joining ALAMN in 2022, Sarah has joined the DEI&A and Community Service Teams and began volunteering. She is also involved with the Nominating Committee and helped with the card signing project. Sarah is really looking forward to connecting with her fellow ALAMN members and developing relationships with her peers.

With the ALA Annual Conference in Aurora, CO right around the corner, Sarah was asked to share about her very first conference experience and favorite moments when she attended the 2023 conference in Seattle, WA. Attending such a big conference can be very overwhelming, but ALAMN does a great job helping first-time attendees navigate the

whole experience. They held a pre-conference information session via Zoom for all attendees which offered very helpful tips. First time attendees were assigned buddies and were invited to events, which made her feel included. Overall, it was a great experience because she learned a lot and was able to expand on her HR knowledge and other areas, and the best part was getting to know all the other ALAMN members.

Sarah resides in Plymouth with her husband (Jamie), her son (Ethan), and their 4-year-old Havanese dog (Quincy). They love to travel to a new destination every year and look forward to their first trip to New Mexico.

Sarah's favorites and fun facts:

Favorite local restaurant - The Baja Haus in Wayzata

Favorite Books - Elin Hildebrand books

Favorite Vacation Destination - Key West

Binge Worthy TV - Bridgerton, Queen Charlotte, The Gilded Age, My Life with the Walter Boys, and Selling Sunset

Hobbies - Supporting and cheering on her thirteen-year-old son who plays baseball, basketball, soccer, and tennis

Fun Facts - Knows sign language and coaches her son's baseball team.

Please join the Board as we celebrate and thank Sarah for her outstanding work and commitment to the MN Chapter!

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GET TO KNOW YOUR ALAMN BOARD

If you could host a talk show, who would be your first guest?

Deb O'Connor, President

Oprah Winfrey – she has had the opportunity to interview/talk to so many notable people.

Vanessa Kahn, President-Elect

My first guest would be Brene Brown. She is thought-provoking and inspirational.

Bernie Theis, Administrative Director

Oprah Winfrey

Samantha Tschida, Communications Director

Barbara Corcoran ... or Lisa Vanderpump. Maybe both!

Pat Stender, Education Director

I think Elton John would be a great guest – of course, he will be the musical guest too! He seems honest, open and has been through and seen a lot!



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