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Vishen: Hi, I'm Vishen Lakhiani, founder of Mindvalley, the school for human transformation. You're listening to the Mindvalley Podcast where we will be bringing you the greatest teachers and thought leaders on the planet to discuss the world's most powerful ideas of personal growth for mind, body, spirit and work.

In this podcast episode, I'm bringing you a really remarkable person. He was voted Young Australian of the year. His name is Sam Cawthorn. And what you're gonna hear is something that is quite special. You see, Sam Cawthorn fell asleep at the wheel one night in October 2006. He crashed into a semi-trailer at a combined speed of 206 kilometers per hour. He was pronounced clinically dead by paramedics for a full three minutes. Sam woke up in a hospital bed. His kids were just happy to see that he was alive, but he lost a good deal of his body, arms, legs, but rather than decide to live in misery Sam decided that he was going to, in his words, "bounce forward." He went on to create a whole new life for himself and his story has inspired people across the world from Fortune 500 companies to the amazing audience at A-Fest in Thailand in 2014 where he shared this particular talk. Sam is an authority in personal and corporate resilience, he's a bestselling author, a professional speaker, a philanthropist, as I said he was named the Young Australian of the year in 2009, and he is just an all-around amazing guy. So check out the speech from Sam Cawthorn because I know it's going to inspire you as it did for me.

I'm Vishen Lakhiani, and this is the Mindvalley Podcast.

Sam: I've been thinking a lot about today. I've been thinking a lot about how I can add as much value as I can, how I can meet you where you're at, how I can serve you the best pos-



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sible way. Has anyone here heard of a guy by the name Simon Sinek? He wrote the book called "Start With Why." He's TED Talk top 10 most watched ever TED Talks. Awesome, awesome guy. He created what he likes to call the golden circle. This is my version of the golden circle, and it's this. What, how, and why. Every single person in this room knows what you do. Hands down we all know what we do each and every day. Most of us in this room know how we do it, how do we create the results that we create each and every day? Like what's our differentiating value proposition? But I suppose my whole obsession is this whole area of why. Why do we do what we do? Like why do we wake up every morning each and every day? What is our cause? What is our belief? And why should anyone care? Now, most people think that our why is to create profits, win money, but money is result, but there is no cause or meaning tied to that. So why do we do what we do? Like why do we wake up every morning each and every day?

So I'm gonna take you on a bit of a journey of discovery in your own why, and I'm gonna do this through one particular way and it's through the power of story. Now, I believe the greatest communicators in the entire planet are master storytellers. Actually I believe the greatest salespeople, the greatest teachers are master storytellers. Because what do stories do? Stories disrupt our thinking, they emotionally connect us, they inspire us, they get us over the line as well. Recently I did a massive big global national tour for the Association of Financial Advisors, and what they wanted me to do they wanted me to teach them how to tell them all stories, how to teach financial advisors stories. Because stories emotionally connect us and they get us across the line as well.

So today I'm gonna spend a lot of my conversation just telling you lots of stories. Now, these stories will make you laugh, some of these stories will even get you emotionally connected. But I'm hoping that by the end of today's conversation you're gonna be inspired to take action in your own life. You're gonna be inspired towards your why. And yes, I'll also give you a great system that has really helped me. Now, as you saw there in that first slide my talk today is all about being asleep at the wheel. Now, this is a brand new conversation I've recently created and a lot of my IP has recently been around bouncing forward. You know how we've all heard of this terminology bounce back, look how we're bouncing back from the global financial crisis, how we're bouncing back from natural disasters. A lot of my content in my IP has been all around bouncing forward. And my latest book reached the top three international bestseller, given in the hands of Bill Clinton, the Dalai Lama. It has been a huge part of my life to teach people, organizations, and individual people how can they bounce forward. What do we need to do to be awake at the wheel rather than asleep at the wheel? Because the metaphor is this, I had a major car accident, the police said it was a 206 kilometer head-on collision with a semi-trailer truck. And it was my fault, it was my fault. I fell asleep at the wheel. I veered over the other side of the road and had a 206 kilometer head-on collision with a semi-trailer truck.

My arm was amputated there at the scene. I also completely wrecked my leg. Six broken ribs, a lacerated liver, punctured kidney, both of my lungs had collapsed at the same time. This is just a few years ago. Before I show you a video about my accident, I just wanted to tell you another story. As was said I won this amazing privilege, I was the Young Australian of the Year. And I remember the day before Australia day, they flew me through to Canberra. And so here it was, you know, on Australia Day, I'm about to meet the Prime Minister



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of Australia which is the equivalent of like the president of our country. But I'm thinking to myself, what can I do in order for the Prime Minister of Australia to remember me? Because as you guys know, PM probably meets hundreds of people every day as if he remembers everyone that he meets. So I actually flew my mom and dad up there at the time and something else you need to realize about me is I was born and raised under a dictatorship. And the dictator at the time her name was mom, she had an accomplice and his name was dad.

So my mom was born in Calcutta in India, my father was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. And I'm one of 11. Seven boys, four girls. Massive family. I'm also an uncle 33 times. I've got 33 nephews and nieces, so it's a huge family. So I flew my mom and dad up there to Canberra to come and meet the Prime Minister of Australia. But at the time I had one of my other bionic arms on, actually, I've got eight arms all of. How many do you have? And you're probably wondering about this arm. This arm is what they like to call a myoelectric arm, you guys probably heard of it it's called a bionic arm. This is the most advanced bionic arm in the world right now, it's the only one in Australasia, it's worth over \$120,000, and get this right, I program it with my iPhone 5S. I've got an app for my arm. Boom!

And also you can get different attachments. So I've got this other attachment for playing golf, I also have another one for playing 8-ball pool, yeah? I've also got like a swimming arm, all right. So it's like a little flipper, it fits on the end of my stump. So I just start it up, put it behind me. Actually, get this. Do you know that very soon the paraolympians will overtake the able-bodied Olympians? Do you know why? One thing we can do which you guys can't. One thing I can do which you can't, I can upgrade. Seriously, and the way that technology is moving with bionics it's phenomenal. There is a guy out there he's got no legs at all, two prosthetic legs, running 100 meters sprint under 10 seconds flat. I mean, he killed his wife that's a whole another story. So here I am, I'm about to meet the prime minister of Australia, but I had my cosmetic hand on so he didn't notice at all that I had a prosthetic arm, so I had a long sleeve jacket on, he didn't notice. So as the prime minister of Australia came over to me to come and say hello he went to shake my hand. As the prime minister of Australia went to shake my hand my hand came off into his hand, and literally like everyone just started cracking up laughing, the world's media came in taking photos. The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, standing there holding my hand.

It was a very, very funny moment that's for sure. But I think we all have moments in our life and some moments can be quite funny, quite hilarious, you know, he'll never forget that. I've now interviewed him for my online community. But then we have these other moments in our lives which are quite life defining and life challenging. So recently I found a word and the word is called this, kairós. Has anyone in this room heard of the word kairós before? Anyone at all? Okay, maybe six, seven hands. Let me teach you a word, kairós is the Greek word for time, so contrast to chronos or chronological time, you know, meaning ordinary or normal time kairós time is laden with meaning and choice. So get this, the dictionary meaning of the word kairós is this. It's a moment within a moment, a particular moment in where drastic change takes place. I'll say that again. Kairós moments are moments within a moment, a particular moment in where drastic change takes place.

Let me ask you entrepreneurs a question. Hands up for the people in this room who knows



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that being an entrepreneur things don't always go according to plan? It's true, isn't it? We can plan to go in one direction, but life situations, life circumstances will take us in a complete different direction. And so my kairos moment was my car accident, was when I was asleep at the wheel. Now, before my accident I was very motivated, very passionate. I was doing a lot of things being classically-trained as a singer, been playing the guitar ever since I was seven years old, had a great job with the federal government as a Youth Futurist. But in a way I lacked why? Destiny, purpose. I was asleep in my own life. So right now, I'm just gonna show you just a very quick video and sort of show you guys a little bit about what happened in my life, and this was just a few years ago.

Woman: One man is in a critical condition after a four-vehicle accident which blocked the Bass Highway for much of the afternoon. Two cars and a truck were heading towards Devonport just after 3:00 O'clock when it's believed a Holden Statesman traveling in the opposite direction collided with the back of the truck sparking a chain reaction.

Sam: You know, I remember that day so clearly. I was saying goodbye to my kids and, you know, at the time as I was saying, I was working for the federal government. I then said goodbye to my wife, we were high school sweethearts, actually she is here today. Her name is Kate. Can we all please put our hands together for the love of my life? Thank you. You know, sometimes we take our family and our loved ones for granted and I can tell you something now, you know, from high school sweethearts to even just going through that journey together with my wife, and her being there with me the entire journey is quite miraculous. I'm so grateful, I love what Vishen and the other guys were talking about, about gratefulness. It's very much through our life right now. We live a life of gratefulness.

And I remember just before I actually fell asleep at the wheel I was there with my friend over lunch and I remember we don't normally do this, but on this particular day we shook hands. That was the last handshake I've ever had with my right arm. You know, if you talk to this guy today he said he can still feel that handshake. It's one of those handshakes that hands just locked. Whereas now, now my world consists of left-handed handshakes. Left hand, left hand, hey. Actually, why don't you guys do me a favor? Turn to the person next to you and give them a left-handed handshake. Left-handed handshakes, yeah? [inaudible] shake with their left hand. Very cool. So I said goodbye to my mate there at this restaurant and as I was saying it was my fault. I was doing a lot of kilometers, I was traveling a lot and something had to give.

It was me falling asleep when I was going bit over 100 Ks an hour, the semi-trailer truck was going over 100 Ks an hour. I was actually pronounced dead at the scene. Even the coroner was called. Obviously, they resuscitated me, put on life support for an entire week, in hospital for five months, and then in a wheelchair for an entire year. Doctors told me initially they said, "Sam, you'll never be able to walk ever again. You'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life." You know, when someone says that to you, you know when someone sort of says, "You'll never be able to do it. There's no chance. Oh, you might as well give up, you won't be able to..." There's something deep down within that says, "Stuff you, I'm gonna prove you wrong." Come on, who's felt that before? Who's felt that before? We've all felt that before, every single one of us.



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I remember being there in a hospital and I remember my little girl, she's coming in to see daddy for the first time. This is her here, she's at the top there and her name is Emelia, and she's a beautiful dancer. There on the right-hand side, that's Ebony and she's a singer, my eight-year-old and there on the left-hand side there is Jacob, our five-year-old. But I remember when I woke up from being on life support I was in a complete and utter state of denial. This hasn't happened to me, I haven't really had a car accident, it's okay, I'm gonna wake up from this nightmare. For two days, look Sam, you haven't really lost your arm, you haven't really wrecked your leg it's okay. You're in this really bad movie, it's gonna end soon. You're in this nightmare, it's gonna finish. For two days I was in a complete and utter state of denial. And then realizing what had happened, going through pillow, after pillow just simply for my tears.

Around this whole journey of self-discovery I then learned that my little girl, she was gonna come in and see daddy for the first time. It made me realize my little girl, she was four years old at the time, and the last time she saw daddy, the last time she saw me I was throwing her up in the air with both arms, we were running, we were skipping and then suddenly here I am lying in a bed with only one arm. I didn't know how she's gonna react, I didn't know how she's gonna accept daddy for what happened, how she's gonna adapt to this change, I didn't know. And I remember lying there in my hospital bed and out of the corner of my ear I remember hearing my little girl she was singing as she always does right down the end of the hospital hallway. And I sat up in my bed, and my eyes started to well up not knowing how she's gonna react, not knowing how she's gonna accept daddy for what had happened.

And I remember lying there in my hospital bed and then I saw these two tiny little hands. She grabbed hold of the door like this and she peered in and our eyes just met. And she ran to the hospital room tears were running down my face and she jumped up in the bed and she goes, "Daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, did you have a car accident?" And I said, "Yeah, I had a car accident." And she goes, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, did you lose your arm in the accident?" And I said, "Yeah, I lost it. I lost my arm." And she goes, "Daddy, daddy, the doctors, they couldn't find it anywhere?" She literally thought they just had to find it, sticky tape fixes everything daddy. Now, we can learn so much from young people. We can learn so much from little ones. You know, the reality is that my kids have never come up to me and said, "Dad, what if?"

What if you didn't have that...they've never said that to me. I was interviewed recently on CNN, and they asked me a question, they said, "Sam, if you could go back to that place where you had your car accident would you change it?" They said, surely you'd change it, surely you would not drive in front of a truck. You know what I said to him, "No, I wouldn't change it. I would not change it because this is the person I was meant to be today." Who am I to play God and try and change the past? But for me there's an entire future there that is yet to be created. You know, it's quite interestingly recently I was reading about different animals and different animal groups. You know how they have names like a group of bees is called a swarm, a group a cattle is called a herd, a group of lions is called a pride, a group of crows is called a murder, murder of crows. Have a guess what a group of jellyfish is called?



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You know that a group of jellyfish is called a smack. A smack of jellyfish. A group of vultures, a group of vultures is called a venue. A venue of vultures. A group of flamingos is called flamboyance, flamboyance of flamingos. A group of buzzards, actually you guys are like this. A group of buzzards is called a committee. A committee of buzzards. But my favorite out of all the different group of animals is a group of rhinos. Now get this right, rhinos can run over 45 kilometers an hour, but they can only see nine meters in front of them. So do you know what a group of rhinos is called? A crash. A crash, I love that and if someone comes up to me and says, "Look Sam, I can predict what happens in 10, 20 years time." I'll call them a liar. The future is there to be created, so wake up and start creating the future that you were born to live.

Three areas that really, really help me in a way these are three ways how I leveraged myself coming out of an adversity, coming out of a massive death experience. I'm gonna give you three key areas that really, really helped me. One of these is this, I needed to learn how to leverage crisis. You know, there's a massively corporate buzzword out there which is actually called adversarial growth, which means through almost toughness of adversities can ignite some of the greatest of growth periods in our lives. Chinese have a two syllables word for the word crisis. It's danger and crucial point, or danger and opportunity. Crisis equals opportunity. Let me ask you a question, what's the fastest growing company in the history of time? Let's say to reach five billion. Fastest growing company, come on we should know this. Apple, no. Sorry?

Audience: Facebook.

Sam: Facebook, no. Yes, you are right. Groupon. Groupon within a year and a half of being founded, Google offered them \$5.3 billion, within 18 months. And get this, they started in the middle of the biggest financial recession of our day, 2007-2008. If you study the Blue Chip Fortune 500 companies, over 60% of them started in a financial recession. Do you know what I tell people that have actually got a frustration, or a problem, or an issue, or something that's really annoying them? I tell them to turn that into a crisis. Because when it's a frustration, or a burden, or something that's.. we tend to procrastinate dealing with it. We do, don't we? We say, "Look, I know it's a problem, I know it's an issue, but we've got all this other stuff, when we have time we will deal with that." But get this, when it's a crisis there's something in our biology that leaks so much pain into it that says we must get ourselves out of it. So I would even say turn it into a crisis. Because when it's a crisis we deal with it, we deal with it then and there. So leverage crisis.

And again, even my own life, you know, through my own journey and obviously since my accident, since then we've actually now started an amazing charity where we work with the true poorest of the poor which are the kids that live with a disability in developing world. We've built these really cool five eco-sustainable green schools over there in India, we're doing some phenomenal things and that's actually obviously how I have bounced forward, and how I'm now awake at the wheel. Also now training over a thousand professional speakers down there in Australia and New Zealand how to be commercially smart. I'm now, you know, doing some phenomenal things because I've learned to leverage an adversity, a problem or an issue, I've actually turned that into a crisis and then leverage from it.



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Second area of leverage that has really helped me is this, leverage your proximity. Vishen said earlier on that you are the average of your five closest friends, the company that you keep determine who you are. [inaudible] Tony Robbins talk about, you know, proximity is power. We are the average, you know, this study also shows that it's exactly the same with our weight, with our bank account balance, with our energy levels, with our happiness results, that we are the average of our five closest friends. The company that we keep determine who we are. You know, it's quite interesting back in high school I was hanging out with these real negative toxic proximity, and they influenced me to do things that I knew I should not have been doing. But they influenced me in a very toxic way and I found myself getting kicked out of school. So what did I have to do? I had to disassociate myself from a lot of my mates, from a lot of my, you know, friends to start hanging out with people that inspire me in a positive way rather than a negative way. You know, I love connecting with people like Vishen, love connecting with people like Brendon Burchard, I love connecting with people like one of my other really good mates, Skrillex.

And another one of my other good mates, his name is Brad Smith, he's won the Entrepreneur of the Year in the whole of Australia, three years in a row. The first time in Australia's history, someone has won it more than once. He's won it three years in a row. I'm on the phone with him nearly every single day. What's that gonna do with my entrepreneurship? You already have some amazing proximity, by the way, that's probably the reason why we're all here today as well, to leverage the proximity in this room. And I just love connecting with proximity that influenced me in a positive way, that drive me, that have really helped me to get from where I am today to where I want to be and I am now strategically hanging out with those right type of people.

And the third area that's really, really helped me is leverage happiness, leverage happiness. Now, we've all heard of a lot of the research that's coming out why happiness is great, but one thing that really frustrates me in the growing levels of depression and unhappiness right now, depression rates today are 10 times greater than what they were in the 1930s Great Depression. The main onset age of depression 35 years ago was 29 years old. Today it is 14 years old. The World Health Organization now predicts that depression will be the number one cause of illness by the year 2016, it will overtake cancer. There was a recent study that was done in Australia and New Zealand that showed that 45% of Australians right now feel unhappy in their jobs. There must be a way how we can bring happiness and positivity back into our proximity purposefully, and we've already heard a lot of the research that Vishen was saying earlier on today.

But here's some other research that is really optimistic workers outperform their pessimistic colleagues by 56%. Happy children show three times more creativity than their unhappy counterparts, positive doctors perform better diagnoses. And what they did with this study, they got three groups of doctors. The first group they prime to be happy, the second group they've got them all these books, resource and that academic results. The third group they said go into this particular case completely neutral. You know, in every single case the doctors that were prime to be happy outperform their peers by over 35%. And do you know what they gave the doctors, to prime them to be happy, do you what they gave them? Chocolate This is a good one, happy nuns outlive neutral or unhappy nuns.



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Apparently nuns are the best group of people to do a study on. Do you know why? They ate the same, they dress the same, they live the same way and also they are quite cheap. But what they found with these nuns, they studied these nuns journals for many, many, many years. Now, get this, at age 85, 90% of the happy nuns were still alive. Get this, at age 85, 70% of the unhappy nuns had actually passed away. The age-old saying happiness leads to good health backed up by so much research. Staff told they're more appreciated by their boss increase their productivity by up to 30%. Positive workers have great levels of productivity, which is high-quality work and perform better in relationships. They are also less likely to take sick days, become depressed, and/or even quit. And the reality of it all is this if we are not priming ourselves, and our colleagues, and our proximity, in a happy and a positive way, we are handicapping us in regards to our performance, successful productivity, and even profitability by up to 50%.

You know, the doctors told me initially they said, "Sam, you'll never be able to walk ever again, you'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life." And my rehabilitation was really, really hard with sometimes talking up to, you know, 10 hours a day, seven days a week. It was really full on. My right leg as you can see I physically can't bend it at all, so I'll never be able to ride a bike, go for a jog. It's hard for me to sit in the car, in a theater, in a plane. I'm six-foot-three and my leg doesn't bend at all. But I choose to focus on the good things in life. I get disability parking spots, how cool is that? I get free upgrades on planes all the time. The doctors also said to me initially, they said, "Sam, you'll never be able to play the guitar ever again, you've lost your most dominant arm." Did you know I'm one of the only people on the entire planet that plays the guitar with one hand? How cool is that? And I brought along my guitar with me, can I play something for you guys?

Audience: Yes.

Sam: All right. So can I ask everyone in the room right now, who in this room is a musician? Come on, hands up, proud musicians, proud musicians. Great. I'll show you something you might not have seen before. This here is what they like to call a guitar prosthetic. It might look really basic to you, but trust me, this alone cost me 8,500 bucks. So just while I'm getting set up here I just wanted to just very quickly show you this slide here about our charity. We work with the true poorest of the poor which are the kids that live with a disability in developing world. It's like a stigma, a lot of the time that you were cursed in a previous life so we're gonna outcast you from our own family. And so we've got a lot of micro-finance going on, empowering the women. These amazing green schools modeled from the green school there in Bali, it's really cool some of the stuff that we do and that all started from one kairos moment that my wife and I had a few years ago.

So this song I'm going to sing, I've actually never done this song before, so it's a new one that I've specifically written for this event and it goes like this.

[music]

I am awesome, I am awesome,  
every day of my life I am awesome.  
When I focus on being thankful and ensure that I am grateful



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I am awesome, oh I am awesome.

I'll sing it once more

I am awesome, I am awesome,  
every day of my life I am awesome.  
When I focus on being grateful and ensure that I am thankful  
I am awesome, oh I am awesome.

[00:28:40]

Thank you very much. Thank you. I've got one more story, I've got one more story, sit down. Thank you. Thank you very much. This here is my younger brother and he's the youngest in our family of 11 and his name is David. Everyone say, "Hi Dave."

Audience: Hi, Dave.

Sam: And he's my best mate in the world you know. We hang out all the time. As I was saying he's the youngest of a family of 11. Have you guys noticed the youngest in the family is always the most loved? So true, you know it's true. So imagine a family of 11, so he's my best mate in the world, you know, we hang out all the time. Just recently he was diagnosed with cancer. Nineteen years old, and it's really sad seeing my younger brother go through chemo, radiation, lose all his hair things like that. But I suppose the good news was I was the same blood match as him, so I donated my bone marrow to my brother. We're all believing Dave, mate you're gonna get through this, you're gonna be fine, no problems at all. He just recently passed away, he died. It was really sad me saying good-bye to my best mate, to my younger brother. But sometimes things don't go according to plan. We can plan to go in one direction, but life situations, life circumstances will take you in a complete different direction.

And yes there is a time for trauma, yes there is a time for sadness, yes there is a time for grieving. But there is also a time to pick ourselves up and just move forward. So I wanted to ask you a question, what was your kairos moment? What was that moment within a moment that had drastic change in your life? And tell me something, are you asleep at the wheel? Or are you actually awake? So on the count of three can I please get every single person in this room, one more time, can I please get you to stand up? What I'm gonna get you to do right now you probably already know what I'm gonna do. But I'm gonna ask you to sing along with me. So I'm creating a moment in your life, a kairos moment if you will. Because I was born and raised in Tasmania, right? Down in Australia, I now live in Sydney. But how often does a one-armed-Indian, Tasmanian, Scotsman play the guitar with one arm and ask you to sing along with him?

So, we're all gonna sing this together and let's see how good of voices you've got. So it goes like this, ready?

[music]

I am awesome, I am awesome,



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every day of my life I am awesome.  
When I focus on being grateful and ensure that I am thankful  
I am awesome, oh I am awesome.

Let's do it one more time.

I am awesome, I am awesome,  
every day of my life I am awesome.  
When I focus on being grateful and ensure that I am thankful  
I am awesome, oh I am awesome.

Thank you very much guys, thank you very much. Thank you.

Vishen: If you guys liked Sam's talk, you might wanna consider checking out in A-Fest. Just go to [afest.com](http://afest.com). This is sort of like a TED Talk-style event put up by Mindvalley, but unlike a regular TED Talk A-Fest kind of combines burning man, exotic locations, incredible parties, an incredible community of visionary world changes from 40 something countries in a paradise location. What can be better than that, right? So we're always taking applications for the A-Fest tribe, go check it out on [afest.com](http://afest.com) and you have to get to not only hear people like Sam, but actually be in their presence, hang with them, and experience incredible adventures, incredible friendships.



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