

drawing ideas a hand drawn approach for better design ebook mark baskinger

drawing ideas a hand drawn approach for better design ebook mark baskinger is an invaluable resource for designers seeking to elevate their creative process through the power of sketching and ideation. This comprehensive article delves into the core principles and practical applications presented in Mark Baskinger's influential ebook, highlighting how a hand-drawn approach can unlock novel design solutions and enhance visual communication. We will explore the fundamental benefits of sketching, the common pitfalls designers encounter, and specific drawing techniques that foster innovation and clarity. Furthermore, this guide will illuminate the process of translating rough ideas into polished concepts, emphasizing the iterative nature of design and the importance of visual exploration. Whether you are a seasoned professional or an aspiring designer, understanding these drawing ideas can significantly impact the effectiveness and originality of your work.

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Understanding the Core Value of Hand-Drawn Ideas

The ability to generate strong drawing ideas is foundational to effective design. Before any digital tool comes into play, the human hand and mind work in concert to explore possibilities, identify problems, and propose solutions. A hand-drawn approach allows for a rapid, unfiltered exploration of concepts, bypassing the constraints and complexities that can sometimes arise with sophisticated software. This initial phase of ideation is crucial for establishing a strong conceptual framework and ensuring that the design addresses the user's needs and the project's objectives.

Hand-drawn sketches serve as a tangible representation of thought processes. They capture the nuance of an idea in a way that is often difficult to articulate verbally. This direct translation of cognitive activity into visual form facilitates clearer communication among team members and stakeholders. The imperfection inherent in hand-drawn work can also be a strength, inviting dialogue and feedback rather than presenting a seemingly finished product that might stifle early critique. The raw energy of a sketch can communicate potential and excitement.

Why Embrace a Hand-Drawn Approach for Design?

Embracing a hand-drawn approach offers a multitude of advantages that directly contribute to better design outcomes. It fosters a more intuitive and exploratory mindset, encouraging designers to think outside the box and consider a wider range of possibilities. The act of drawing itself can be meditative, allowing for deeper concentration and a more profound connection with the problem at hand. This direct engagement with the medium bypasses the analytical gatekeepers that can sometimes hinder creative flow in digital environments.

One of the primary benefits is the speed and agility it provides. Designers can quickly generate numerous variations of an idea, iterating rapidly without the commitment of creating fully rendered digital mockups. This allows for a broader exploration of the solution space before settling on a particular direction. Furthermore, hand-drawn sketches are inherently accessible, making them ideal for collaborative brainstorming sessions where everyone can contribute and build upon each other's visual ideas. The low barrier to entry ensures wider participation in the design process.

Enhancing Creativity and Innovation

Hand-drawn sketching is a powerful catalyst for creativity and innovation. It encourages a playful and experimental attitude towards design problems, allowing for unexpected connections and novel solutions to emerge. The freedom from the precise lines and grids of digital tools enables a more organic and fluid generation of forms, patterns, and compositions. This untethered exploration is vital for developing truly original and impactful designs that stand out from the crowd.

The process of sketching also helps designers to develop a stronger visual vocabulary. By constantly translating ideas into drawings, designers hone their ability to communicate complex concepts effectively through line, shape, and form. This visual fluency is a critical asset in any design discipline, enabling them to articulate their vision with greater clarity and conviction. The tactile nature of drawing can also unlock different cognitive pathways, leading to insights that might not be accessible through purely digital means.

Improving Communication and Collaboration

Sketches are a universal language in the design world. A well-executed sketch can convey a wealth of information quickly and efficiently, making it an indispensable tool for communication and collaboration. Whether presenting ideas to clients, discussing concepts with team members, or documenting the design process, hand-drawn visuals bridge the gap between abstract thoughts and concrete understanding. This shared visual language fosters alignment and reduces misinterpretations.

During collaborative sessions, sketches allow for real-time ideation and feedback. Participants can draw on a shared whiteboard or pass around sketchbooks, contributing to a collective pool of ideas. This active participation ensures that everyone feels invested in the design process and encourages a sense of shared ownership. The low-fidelity nature of sketches also makes them less intimidating, inviting constructive criticism and fostering an environment where ideas can be freely exchanged and refined.

Common Challenges in Design Ideation

Despite the clear advantages, designers often face several hurdles when it comes to effective ideation. One of the most prevalent is the fear of the blank page, a psychological barrier that can paralyze creativity. This anxiety is often amplified when designers immediately jump to digital tools, where the perceived finality of a digital canvas can be daunting. The pressure to produce polished results from the outset can stifle the experimental spirit necessary for true innovation.

Another common challenge is the tendency to get stuck in a single solution or approach. Without a robust process for exploring multiple alternatives, designers may prematurely commit to an idea that isn't the most effective or optimal. This can lead to designs that are conventional rather than groundbreaking. Furthermore, a lack of diverse ideation techniques can result in a limited output of ideas, making it difficult to find truly compelling solutions to complex design problems.

Analysis Paralysis and Perfectionism

Analysis paralysis is a significant impediment to creative ideation. This occurs when designers become so caught up in researching, analyzing, and overthinking that they fail to generate actual design concepts. The constant need for more information or a deeper understanding can prevent them from taking the leap into creative exploration. Coupled with perfectionism, this can lead to a state where no ideas are ever deemed "good enough" to be committed to paper or screen.

Perfectionism, while sometimes driving attention to detail, can be detrimental to the early stages of design. In ideation, the goal is quantity and variety, not immediate perfection. Hand-drawn sketching provides a low-stakes environment to overcome this, allowing for rapid prototyping of ideas without the pressure of flawless execution. Embracing imperfection in this phase is key to unlocking creative potential.

Limited Exploration of Alternatives

A critical challenge in design is the failure to explore a sufficient breadth of alternatives. Designers might settle on the first plausible solution they identify, rather than pushing further to discover more innovative or efficient approaches. This can stem from a lack of structured methods for generating diverse ideas or a perceived time constraint that discourages extensive exploration. The result is often a design that is functional but lacks originality or a unique point of view.

To combat this, designers need to cultivate a habit of deliberate ideation. This involves actively seeking out different perspectives, applying various creative techniques, and setting goals for the number of distinct ideas to generate. The hand-drawn approach, with its inherent speed and flexibility, is perfectly suited for such systematic exploration of alternatives. By generating many rough ideas, designers increase the probability of stumbling upon a truly exceptional concept.

Mark Baskinger's Philosophy on Sketching for Design

Mark Baskinger's approach, as detailed in his ebook, emphasizes the profound impact of a hand-drawn perspective on the design process. He advocates for sketching not merely as a preparatory step, but as an integral and ongoing tool for thinking, problem-solving, and communicating. Baskinger's philosophy centers on the idea that the act of drawing engages different cognitive processes, fostering a more intuitive and holistic understanding of design challenges. It's about letting

your hand and eye work together to discover solutions rather than simply executing pre-determined plans.

He champions the idea that sketching is a language in itself, capable of expressing complex ideas with a clarity and immediacy that words often cannot match. This visual dialogue, facilitated by hand-drawn marks, is crucial for both internal exploration and external communication. Baskinger encourages designers to embrace the iterative nature of sketching, viewing each drawing as a step in a continuous process of refinement and discovery, rather than a final artifact.

The Power of Visual Thinking

Baskinger highlights the inherent power of visual thinking, which is deeply intertwined with the practice of sketching. When designers draw, they are not just representing objects; they are thinking visually about relationships, flows, hierarchies, and user interactions. This visual exploration allows for the identification of design opportunities and constraints that might be overlooked in purely verbal or analytical approaches. The brain processes visual information differently, often leading to more insightful discoveries.

This method of thinking visually through drawing enables designers to quickly test hypotheses and explore different design directions. It allows for a more dynamic engagement with the problem space, where ideas can be manipulated, combined, and evolved on the page. By prioritizing visual thinking, designers can unlock a deeper level of problem-solving and generate more innovative and user-centered solutions.

Sketching as a Tool for Exploration and Iteration

A central tenet of Baskinger's philosophy is that sketching is an essential tool for exploration and iteration. He views the sketchbook as a playground for ideas, a safe space to experiment without fear of judgment or the need for perfection. This encourages designers to generate a high volume of varied concepts, which then form the basis for subsequent refinement and iteration. The process is cyclical, with each sketch informing the next, leading to a progressively more developed and robust design.

The iterative nature of sketching is what allows designers to push the boundaries of their initial ideas. By quickly sketching multiple variations, designers can compare different approaches, identify strengths and weaknesses, and converge on the most promising solutions. This continuous loop of creation, evaluation, and refinement is fundamental to achieving truly effective and innovative design outcomes.

Key Drawing Techniques for Enhanced Design

To effectively leverage a hand-drawn approach, designers can employ a variety of techniques that unlock creative potential and improve design clarity. These techniques are not about artistic prowess but about strategic visual communication. They focus on capturing ideas efficiently, exploring different possibilities, and refining concepts for better understanding. Mastering these methods can transform a designer's ability to ideate and problem-solve.

The selection of techniques often depends on the nature of the design problem. Some methods are excellent for rapid brainstorming, while others are better suited for detailing and refining specific

elements. The goal is to equip designers with a diverse toolkit that allows them to adapt their drawing approach to various design challenges and project phases. These techniques are practical, actionable, and directly contribute to stronger design thinking.

Rapid Sketching and Brainstorming

Rapid sketching is a cornerstone technique for generating a large volume of ideas in a short period. This involves quick, loose drawings that focus on conveying the essence of a concept rather than intricate detail. The emphasis is on quantity and diversity, encouraging designers to explore many different possibilities without self-censorship. This method is ideal for initial brainstorming sessions where the aim is to unearth a wide range of potential solutions.

During rapid sketching, designers might use simple shapes, lines, and basic shading to represent forms and interactions. The goal is to get ideas out of the head and onto the page as quickly as possible. This process helps to break through creative blocks and can lead to unexpected insights. The sheer volume of sketches generated provides a rich pool of concepts from which to select and further develop promising ideas.

Thumbnails and Iterative Development

Thumbnail sketches are small, quick drawings used to explore composition, layout, and form at a preliminary stage. They are invaluable for rapidly testing different visual arrangements and exploring various conceptual directions before committing to more detailed renderings. This iterative development through thumbnails allows designers to efficiently evaluate multiple options and identify the most effective visual structures for their designs.

By creating dozens or even hundreds of thumbnail sketches, designers can systematically explore a wide design space. This process helps to uncover optimal solutions that might not be apparent through a single, more detailed approach. The small scale of thumbnails also reduces the perceived effort, encouraging more rapid experimentation and iteration, thus leading to stronger, more considered final designs.

Gesture Drawing for Form and Movement

Gesture drawing, often associated with figure drawing, can be powerfully applied to product and interface design. It focuses on capturing the essential form, energy, and movement of an object or interaction rather than precise anatomical details. This technique involves fluid, expressive lines that convey a sense of dynamism and flow, making it excellent for visualizing products in use or user interfaces in motion.

When applied to design, gesture drawing helps designers to think about how forms relate to each other in space and how users will interact with them. It encourages a more organic and naturalistic representation of design elements, leading to more intuitive and engaging user experiences. The emphasis on movement and energy can also inject a sense of life and purpose into design concepts.

Storyboarding for User Flows and Narratives

Storyboarding is a powerful technique for visualizing user flows, interactions, and narrative

sequences. It involves creating a series of sequential drawings that depict the steps a user takes to achieve a goal or experience a product or service. This visual storytelling approach helps designers to understand the user's journey from their perspective, identifying potential pain points and opportunities for improvement.

By mapping out user interactions through storyboards, designers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the user experience. This method is particularly useful for complex systems, mobile applications, and interactive products. It facilitates clear communication of user journeys to stakeholders and helps to ensure that the design aligns with user needs and expectations. The visual narrative makes abstract processes tangible and easy to comprehend.

Exploring Different Types of Sketches

The world of sketching for design is rich and varied, offering different types of visual representation for distinct purposes. Understanding these variations allows designers to select the most appropriate tool for the task at hand, thereby enhancing the clarity and effectiveness of their ideation process. Each type of sketch serves a unique role in the journey from initial concept to polished design.

From quick annotations to detailed representations, the spectrum of sketching techniques provides designers with the flexibility to adapt their approach. This adaptability is crucial in a dynamic design environment where problems can be multifaceted and require a range of visual communication strategies. The following explores some of the key types of sketches that form the backbone of a robust hand-drawn design practice.

Wireframe Sketches for Interface Design

Wireframe sketches are fundamental in interface design, serving as the skeletal structure of digital products. They focus on the layout, organization of content, and functionality of an interface, deliberately stripping away visual design elements like color and typography. This allows designers to concentrate on the core user experience and information architecture before getting bogged down in aesthetic details. They are quick to produce and easy to modify.

These low-fidelity representations are excellent for early-stage prototyping and concept validation. They facilitate clear communication about how different elements on a screen will be arranged and how users will navigate through the interface. Wireframe sketches are essential for ensuring that the underlying structure of an application or website is sound and user-friendly.

Concept Sketches for Form and Aesthetics

Concept sketches are dedicated to exploring the visual form, style, and aesthetic qualities of a product or design. They aim to capture the emotional appeal and overall look and feel of a design. These sketches can range from rough explorations of silhouette and proportion to more detailed renderings that suggest materials, finishes, and stylistic details. They are crucial for defining the visual identity of a design.

When developing concept sketches, designers experiment with different shapes, curves, and proportions to find a visual language that resonates with the target audience and brand. These drawings often convey the aspirational qualities of a design, communicating its intended personality and appeal. They are vital for presenting different design directions to clients and stakeholders early

in the process.

Annotated Sketches for Explanation

Annotated sketches combine visual representation with explanatory text, providing context and detail that a simple drawing might lack. These annotations clarify design decisions, highlight key features, explain functionality, or provide user instructions. They transform a static image into an informative communication tool, bridging the gap between the visual and the conceptual.

Adding annotations to sketches is particularly useful when presenting ideas to individuals who may not have a deep understanding of design principles. It ensures that the intent behind the design is clearly communicated, reducing ambiguity and fostering a shared understanding. This technique is invaluable for detailing specifications, explaining user flows, or justifying design choices.

The Iterative Process: From Idea to Refinement

The journey from a nascent idea to a polished design is rarely a linear one; it is a deeply iterative process. Hand-drawn sketching is the ideal tool for navigating this cyclical path, allowing for continuous exploration, refinement, and evolution of concepts. This iterative loop is where the true magic of design happens, where initial thoughts are tested, challenged, and ultimately shaped into robust solutions.

Embracing iteration means understanding that the first idea is rarely the best. Instead, it's a starting point. Designers must be willing to revisit, revise, and reimagine their concepts based on feedback, testing, and new insights. The flexibility and speed of sketching make this iterative cycle not only manageable but highly productive, leading to more innovative and user-centered outcomes.

Testing and Validation Through Drawing

Sketching provides a low-fidelity and accessible way to test design ideas early and often. Before investing significant time and resources into digital mockups or prototypes, designers can quickly sketch out different scenarios, user flows, or interface layouts to gauge their effectiveness. This visual testing allows for rapid identification of potential usability issues or conceptual flaws, saving valuable time and effort.

By sharing these sketches with colleagues, potential users, or stakeholders, designers can gather crucial feedback. This early validation is essential for course-correcting and ensuring that the design is on the right track. The visual nature of sketches makes them easy to understand and discuss, facilitating constructive critique and collaborative refinement. This iterative validation loop is a hallmark of effective design practice.

Refining Concepts Based on Feedback

Feedback is a gift in the design process, and sketches are the perfect medium for receiving and acting upon it. When designers present their hand-drawn ideas, they open themselves up to critique, which is vital for improving the design. The ability to quickly sketch revisions in response to feedback allows for a dynamic and responsive design process, ensuring that the final product is well-aligned

with user needs and project goals.

The iterative nature of sketching means that designers can easily incorporate suggestions and modifications. A quick sketch can represent a significant change or a minor adjustment, and the speed of this process encourages designers to be open to multiple rounds of feedback. This continuous refinement ensures that the design not only meets initial requirements but also evolves to become more effective and elegant.

Translating Sketches into Digital Assets

While the power of hand-drawn ideation is immense, the ultimate goal in many design projects is to create digital assets. The transition from a tangible sketch to a digital format is a critical step, and it's one that can be approached strategically to preserve the integrity and intent of the original idea. This translation requires a thoughtful consideration of how to best represent the hand-drawn concept in a digital medium.

The process of translating sketches into digital assets is not merely about replication; it's about enhancement. Digital tools can bring precision, interactivity, and polish to the concepts born from the sketchbook. The key is to use these tools to elevate the original vision, rather than dilute it. This often involves understanding the strengths of both analog and digital approaches and finding the optimal synergy between them.

Digitizing Sketches for Prototyping

Once sketches have been refined through iteration, the next step is often to digitize them for prototyping. This can involve simple methods like taking clear photographs or scans of sketches. These digitized versions can then be used as a basis for creating interactive prototypes using various software tools. This allows for testing of user flows and basic functionality in a digital environment, providing a more realistic simulation of the final product.

The process of digitizing sketches for prototyping allows designers to build upon the conceptual foundation laid by hand. It's an opportunity to organize ideas, add basic interactivity, and prepare for more detailed design work. This bridges the gap between initial ideation and the creation of testable digital experiences, ensuring that the user-centered thinking from the sketching phase is carried forward.

Developing Polished Designs from Rough Concepts

The transition from rough sketches to polished digital designs is where creativity meets technical execution. Designers use their hand-drawn concepts as a blueprint, employing design software to refine shapes, apply color palettes, select typography, and build the final visual elements. The original sketch serves as a guide, ensuring that the core idea and visual direction remain intact throughout the development process.

This stage involves careful attention to detail, ensuring that the fidelity and quality of the digital assets match the vision established in the sketches. It's about bringing the concept to life with precision and polish, making it ready for implementation or presentation. The best digital designs are those that retain the spirit and clarity of their hand-drawn origins while benefiting from the capabilities of digital tools.

Developing a Personal Sketching Practice

Cultivating a personal sketching practice is paramount for any designer who wishes to harness the full potential of hand-drawn ideation. This is not about becoming a professional artist, but about developing a consistent habit of visual exploration. A dedicated practice allows designers to build confidence, hone their skills, and create a personal reservoir of ideas that can be tapped into whenever needed.

The most effective sketching practices are those that are integrated into a designer's daily routine. This can involve setting aside specific times for sketching, carrying a sketchbook everywhere, or dedicating a portion of each project to hand-drawn ideation. The regularity of practice is more important than the duration of each session, fostering a continuous engagement with visual thinking.

Consistency and Habit Formation

Developing a consistent sketching habit is key to reaping its benefits. Like any skill, drawing improves with regular practice. Designers are encouraged to establish a routine, whether it's sketching for 15 minutes each morning, dedicating a specific day of the week to ideation, or integrating sketching into every project phase. The aim is to make drawing a natural and automatic part of the creative process, rather than an occasional, forced activity.

Habit formation involves making sketching accessible and rewarding. This might mean keeping a sketchbook and pencil readily available, using prompts for inspiration, or simply embracing the joy of creating without judgment. Over time, this consistency builds muscle memory, refines visual perception, and allows designers to generate ideas more fluidly and confidently.

Tools and Materials for Sketching

While sophisticated tools are not necessary for effective sketching, a thoughtful selection of materials can enhance the experience and output. The beauty of hand-drawn ideation lies in its simplicity and accessibility. Basic tools can unlock immense creative potential, and experimenting with different options can reveal preferences and aid in visual expression.

Commonly used tools include:

- Sketchbooks: Various sizes, paper types (smooth, textured), and bindings (spiral, perfect bound).
- Pencils: Graphite pencils in different lead hardnesses (e.g., HB for general use, 2B for darker lines, H for lighter lines).
- Pens: Fine-liners, ballpoint pens, brush pens for varied line weights and styles.
- Markers: For adding color and shading, offering a quick way to explore different palettes.
- Erasers: Kneaded erasers for subtle adjustments and block erasers for clean removal.

The choice of tools can influence the style and feel of the sketches, allowing designers to experiment and find what best suits their individual approach and project needs.

The Impact of Drawing Ideas on Design Outcomes

The integration of strong drawing ideas, facilitated by a hand-drawn approach, has a profound and far-reaching impact on the ultimate design outcomes. It moves beyond mere aesthetics, influencing the functionality, user experience, and overall success of a product or service. Designs born from robust ideation are typically more innovative, user-centered, and effective in achieving their intended goals.

Ultimately, investing time and effort into developing a hand-drawn approach to design ideation pays dividends. It equips designers with the ability to tackle complex problems with greater creativity, communicate their visions more effectively, and produce solutions that are not only visually appealing but also deeply functional and user-friendly. The skills honed through sketching are transferable and invaluable throughout a design career.

Producing More Innovative and Original Designs

Designs that originate from a thorough hand-drawn ideation process are inherently more likely to be innovative and original. The freedom to explore a wide range of concepts without the constraints of early digital execution allows for unexpected connections and novel solutions to emerge. This uninhibited exploration fosters a culture of creativity, pushing the boundaries of conventional design thinking and leading to truly groundbreaking outcomes.

By generating a multitude of diverse ideas, designers increase the probability of discovering a unique and compelling approach. This iterative exploration helps to break away from established patterns and develop designs that stand out in a crowded market. The raw, unrefined nature of initial sketches often contains the seeds of unconventional brilliance.

Creating User-Centered and Intuitive Experiences

The emphasis on visual thinking and rapid iteration inherent in hand-drawn ideation directly contributes to the creation of user-centered and intuitive experiences. By sketching user flows, interactions, and interface layouts from the user's perspective, designers can anticipate needs and identify potential usability issues early on. This visual problem-solving ensures that the design is not only functional but also a pleasure to use.

The ability to quickly sketch and test different scenarios allows designers to refine their understanding of user behavior and adapt their designs accordingly. This iterative process of empathizing with the user and visually prototyping solutions ensures that the final product is intuitive, efficient, and meets the actual needs of its intended audience. The direct translation of user needs into visual form is a hallmark of this approach.

Improving Clarity and Effectiveness of Design Communication

Hand-drawn sketches serve as a powerful tool for clear and effective design communication. They translate abstract ideas into tangible visuals that can be easily understood by a wide range of stakeholders, regardless of their technical background. This visual language facilitates alignment, encourages constructive feedback, and ensures that everyone involved in the project shares a common understanding of the design direction.

The clarity of a well-executed sketch can accelerate decision-making and reduce the potential for misunderstandings. When designers can visually articulate their ideas, they can present their vision with greater confidence and conviction, leading to more informed discussions and ultimately, more successful design outcomes. This enhanced communication is a direct benefit of prioritizing a hand-drawn approach.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary benefit of using a hand-drawn approach for design ideation as discussed in Mark Baskinger's ebook?

A: The primary benefit is unlocking creativity and problem-solving potential by engaging different cognitive processes, allowing for rapid exploration, and fostering clearer visual communication compared to immediate digital work.

Q: How does Mark Baskinger suggest overcoming the fear of a blank page when starting a design project?

A: Baskinger emphasizes starting with quick, loose sketches to get ideas flowing without judgment, focusing on quantity over quality in the initial stages, and using sketching as a way to think visually rather than pre-plan.

Q: What are some key drawing techniques recommended for enhancing design ideation?

A: Recommended techniques include rapid sketching for brainstorming, thumbnail sketches for compositional exploration, gesture drawing for form and movement, and storyboarding for visualizing user flows and narratives.

Q: How can a hand-drawn approach improve collaboration among design teams?

A: Hand-drawn sketches create a universal visual language that facilitates easy sharing and understanding of ideas. They are low-fidelity and less intimidating, encouraging broader participation and constructive feedback during collaborative sessions.

Q: Is it necessary to be an artist to benefit from Mark Baskinger's drawing ideas for design?

A: No, it is not necessary to be a professional artist. The ebook focuses on using drawing as a tool for thinking and problem-solving in design, emphasizing clarity and ideation over artistic perfection.

Q: How does sketching help in translating abstract ideas into concrete designs?

A: Sketching allows abstract thoughts to be visualized quickly, making them tangible and easier to manipulate, refine, and discuss. This visual representation helps designers to explore different forms and functionalities, moving from abstract concepts to more concrete design solutions.

Q: What role do annotations play in hand-drawn design sketches?

A: Annotations add context and explanatory detail to sketches, clarifying design decisions, explaining functionality, or providing user instructions. This enhances the communication value of the drawing and ensures a deeper understanding for all involved.

Q: How does the iterative nature of sketching contribute to better design outcomes?

A: Iteration allows for continuous refinement and improvement of ideas. By quickly sketching, testing, and revising, designers can identify flaws early, incorporate feedback, and explore multiple solutions, leading to more robust, user-centered, and effective final designs.

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