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# Ethical Business Practices in Fitting Hearing Aids

Oliver F. von Borstel, MBD



# Oliver von Borstel

As an expert in consultative selling, Oliver invented for the hearing care industry the non-manipulative Ethical Selling Concept™. His Ethical Selling Business Practices Concept™ is applied by independent audiologists & independent dispensers of hearing aids in many countries around the globe. He also has 17 years of international experience in personal coaching of audiologists and HCP/HIS. For practice executives Oliver has a dedicated Audiology Leadership & Managementship program.

Oliver, a Swiss living in the Netherlands, has a long track record in international business development when he was in former CEO positions at different multinational companies. His background is Business Economics and Marketing Management. He founded 17 years ago Masters of Business Development Ltd. in Amsterdam/the Netherlands. MBD is a recognized consulting firm in supporting independent audiologists & independent hearing aid dispensers worldwide to become more successful and, therefore, distinguish themselves successfully from competitors who sell on price.

Oliver is an accredited member of the Dutch National StAr Audiologist Association and is fighting for the anti-stigmatization of hearing aids.

# Disclosures

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial: Oliver F. von Borstel is the inventor of the Ethical Selling Business Practices Concept™. He received an honorarium for presenting this course. Non-financial: Oliver F. von Borstel has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.
- **Content Disclosure:** This learning event does not focus exclusively on any specific product or service.
- **Sponsor Disclosure:** There is no external sponsor for this course.

# Learning Outcomes

*After this course, participants will be able to:*

- Describe how to apply individual and non-manipulative open-ended probing questions to discover needs and hidden needs.
- Discuss how to substantiate their advice with individual arguments and facts that will improve the quality of life of the patient, client, and/or family members.
- Explain a professional assessment meeting structure that conforms to the philosophy of person-centered care.

# Topics

1. Introduction
2. Key-ethics in audiology: What is important when dispensing hearing aid solutions
3. Is it ethical to advise High-tech Hearing Aid Solutions
4. Ethics in audiology must be based on person-centered care
5. Assessment meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said!
6. Summary

# Introduction

- Oliver F. von Borstel: who is he?
- Why are business ethics in dispensing hearing aid solutions so important?

*Introduction:*

# Oliver F. von Borstel



- CEO of Masters of Business Development, President of the Ethical Selling Foundation
- 17 years of experiences: Audiology trainer & personal coach
- Keynote speaker: 2024 in Wisconsin, 2023 in Australia & South Africa
- Training Workshops in EU, SA, AUS, USA
- Ambassador of the Anti-stigmatization of Hearing Aids Movement
- Advocate of the Individualized Hearing Aids Solutions

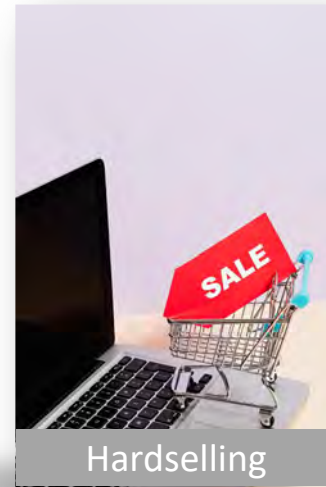
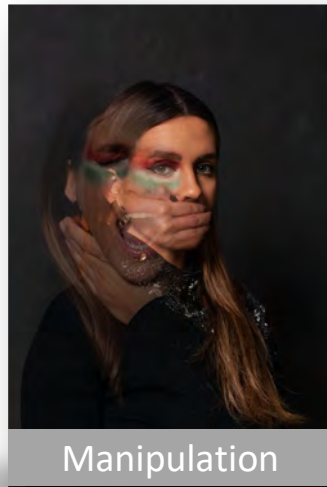


# Key-ethics in audiology: What is important when dispensing hearing aid solutions

- Definition Business Ethics
- Definitions Ethics in audiology
- The importance of both

*Key Ethics in Audiology:*

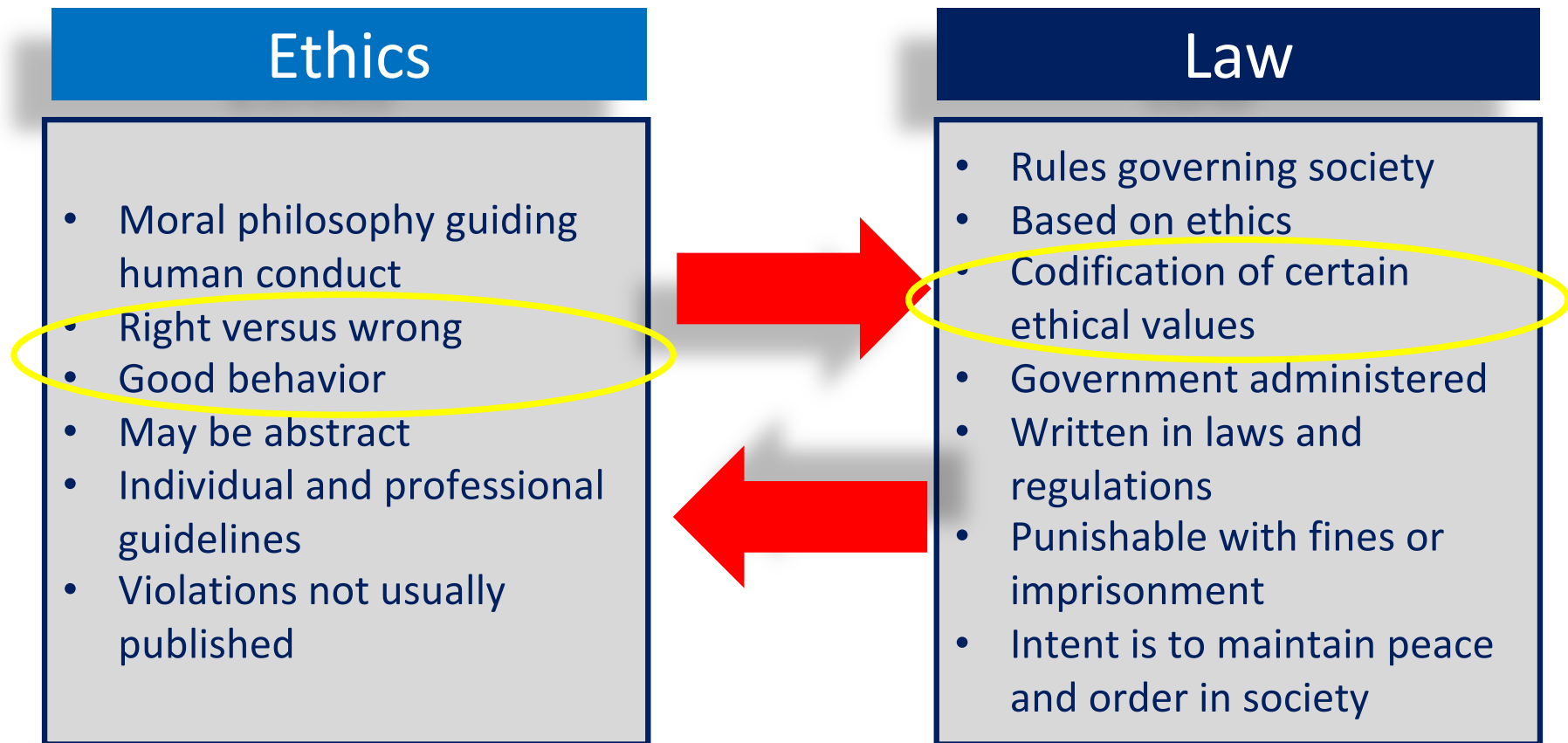
# Pushing clients to a decision is not ethical in our business!



- It is about to improve the quality of life: Patient, Spouse, Family Members, etc.
- Hearing Aids are more than “devices” such as a coffee set of a cell phone:
  - They need to be advised by an expert and to be serviced by experts!
  - Patients/clients rely on services and aftersales services

*Key Ethics in Audiology:*

# Definition of Business Ethics



*Key Ethics in Audiology:*

# Definition of Ethics in Audiology

Standards described:

(among others)

**audiologyonline**

AMERICAN  
ACADEMY OF  
AUDIOLOGY 


 **ASHA**

**Ethical Business Practice:**

Analyze needs/listen to hard of hearing persons, learn how to help and give a non-manipulative advice!

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"Ethics in audiology" refers to the moral principles and standards of conduct that guide audiologists in their professional practice. Audiology is a healthcare discipline focused on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and management of hearing loss and balance disorders. Ethics in this field encompasses a range of considerations, including **Patient Welfare, Professional Competence, Integrity and Honesty, Respect for Persons, Legal and Professional Standards, Confidentiality, Collaboration and Interdisciplinary Interaction**

*In summary, ethics in audiology encompasses the responsibilities and moral obligations of audiologists to act in the best interests of their patients, maintain professional integrity, and contribute positively to the field and the broader healthcare community.*

# Is it ethical to advise High-tech Hearing Aid Solutions?

- Ethical issues: low grade or high grade, which is better?
- Is it ethical at all to earn money in audiology?

*Is it ethical at all to advise High-tech Hearing Aids?:*

# Ethical issues: low or high grade. Which is better?

**Hard of Hearing...**

*“Is it ethical at all to sell Low-grade Hearing Aids?”*

**Hard of Hearing...**

*“Is it ethical to advise High-tech Hearing Aid Solutions?”*

***Neither is right or wrong!***

It depends on the ***needs*** of the

- client, and/or
- spouse
- family members
- or even colleagues or friends!!

*Is it ethical at all to advise High-tech Hearing Aids?:*

# Ethical issues: low or high grade. Which is better?

A 'device' which is expensive and for many not working at all...and, besides of this, *they make people old!!*

What people think it is...

What it really is!

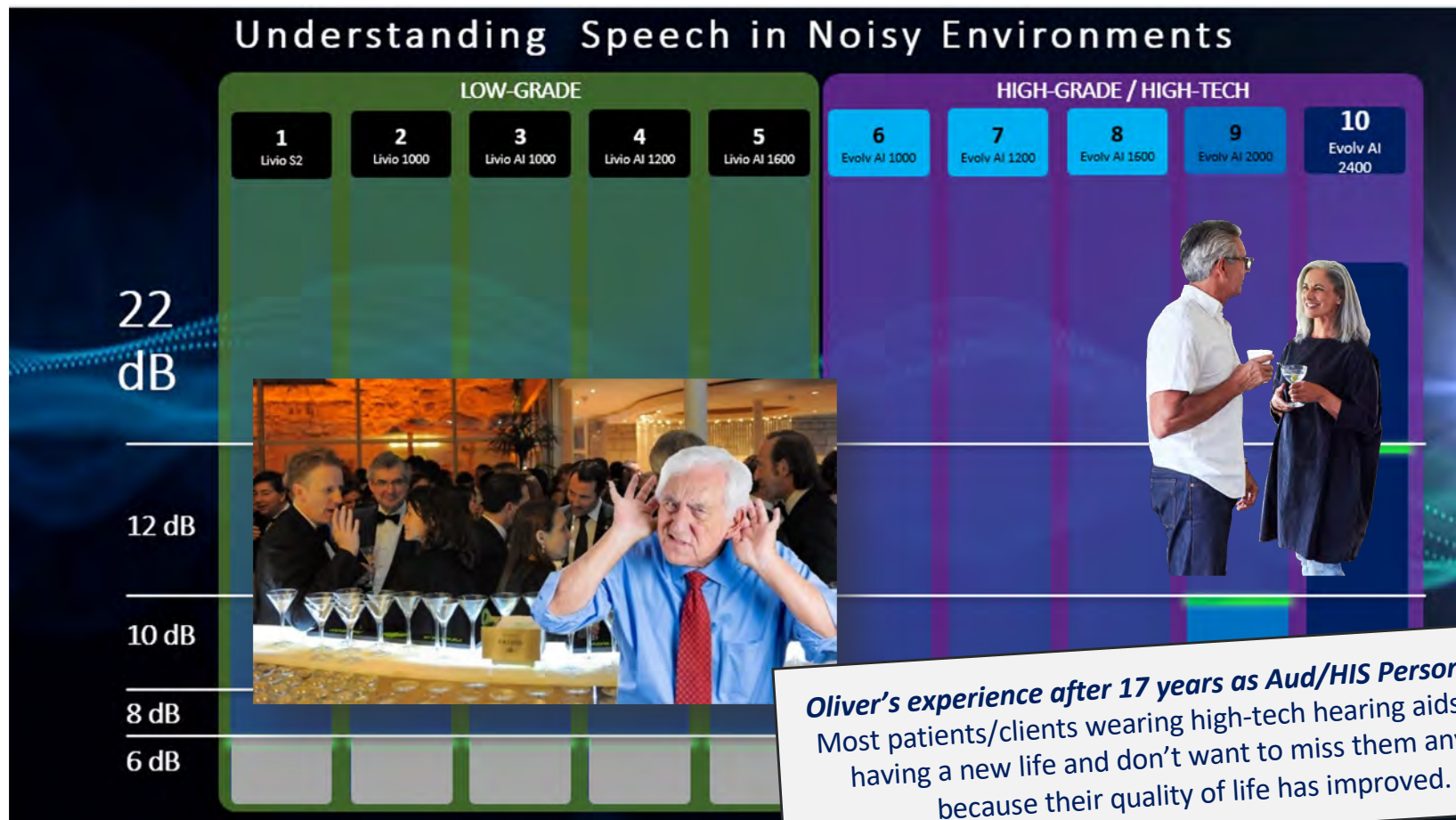
Fall detection

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The image features an iceberg in a blue ocean. The tip of the iceberg is labeled 'What people think it is...' and contains a large icon of a hearing aid. The submerged part of the iceberg is labeled 'What it really is!' and contains numerous smaller icons representing various aspects of the hearing aid's functionality and user experience, such as a brain, a person using a hearing aid, a person with a question mark, a person with a speech bubble, a person with a heart, a person with a calendar, a person with a fall detection symbol, a person with a customer service sign, and a person with a hand icon.

*Is it ethical at all to advise High-tech Hearing Aids?:*

Ethical issues: low or high grade.  
Which is better?





*Is it ethical at all to advise High-tech Hearing Aids?:*

# Is it ethical at all to earn money in audiology?

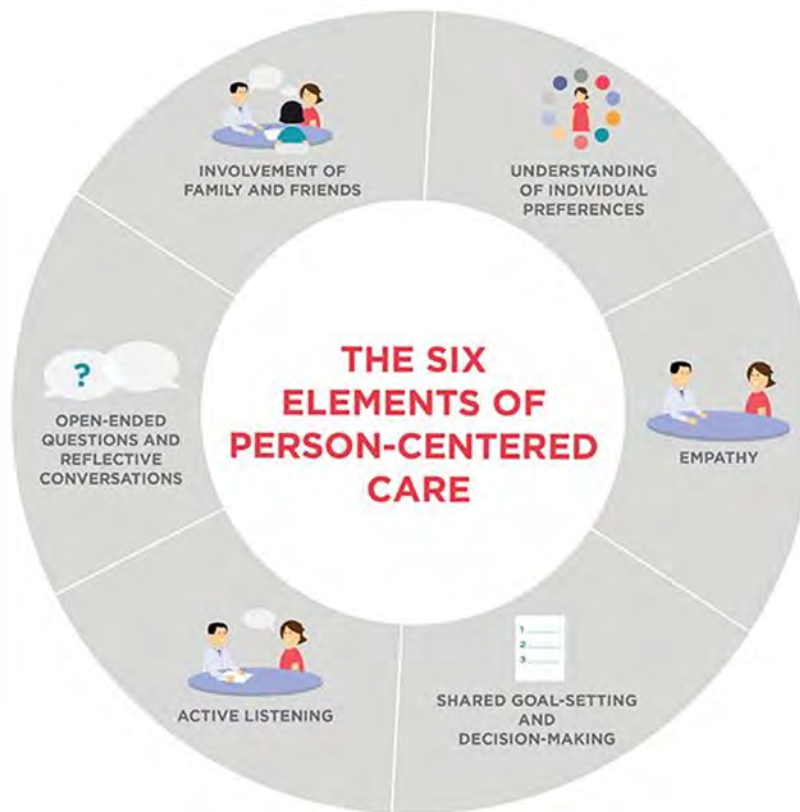


# Ethics in audiology must be based on person-centered care

- What exactly is PCC → Person-centered care?
- Why is it so important?

*Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:*

# What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?

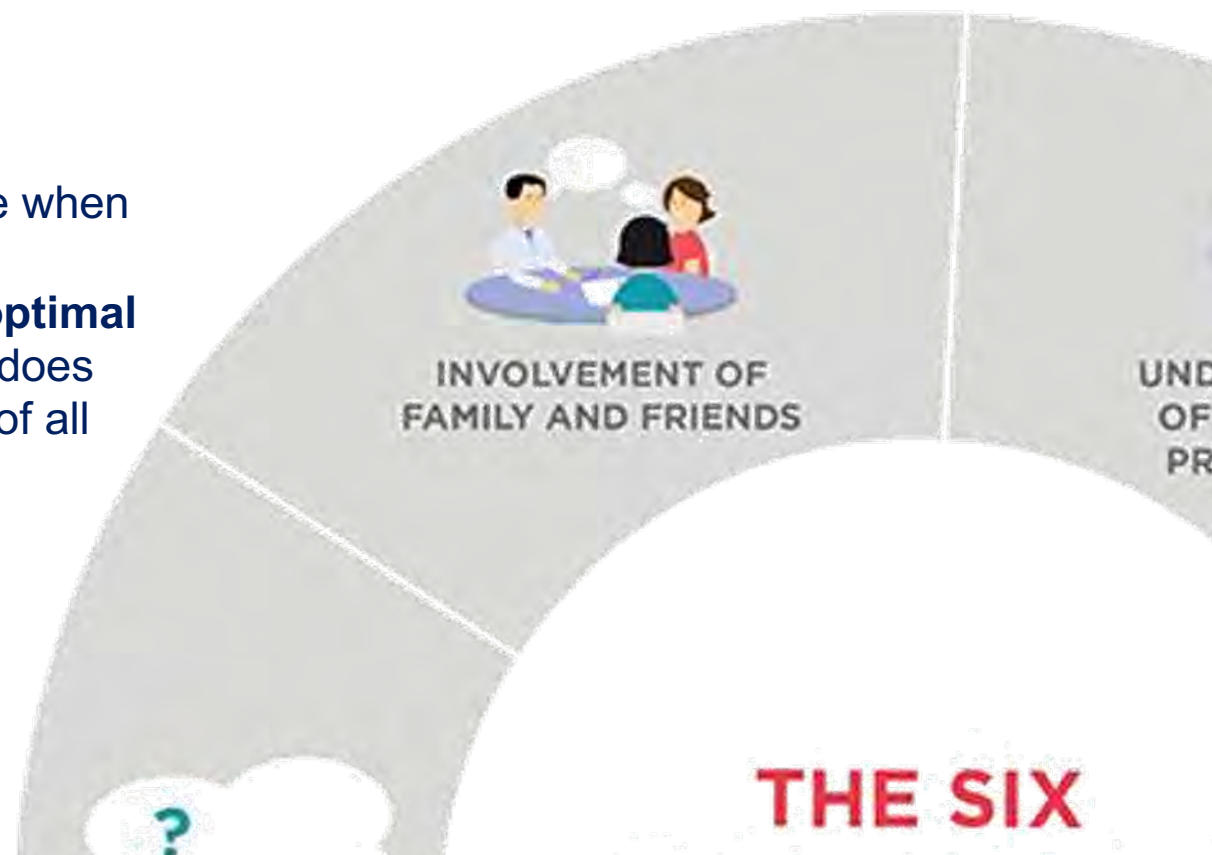


*Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:*

## What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?

### *Involvement of family and friends*

- Not only the Client has needs...
  - Also, the spouse, and/or
  - Family members
  - Friends
  - Care Personnel, etc.
- They could play an important role when it comes to advise the
  - **Individual best and most optimal hearing aid solution**, what does
  - **Improve the quality of life** of all involved



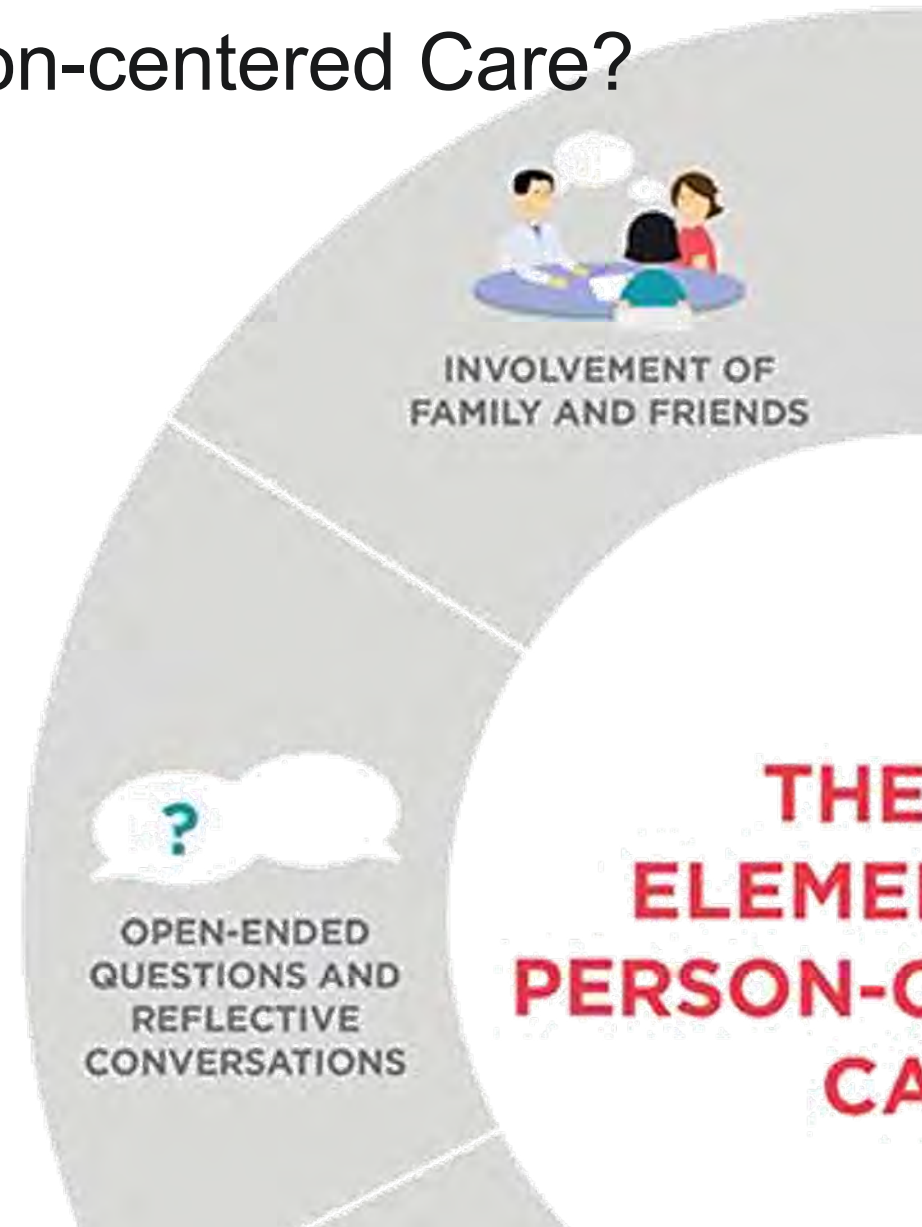
*Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:*

## What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?

### *Asking open-ended questions to analyze needs*

- Open-ended questions are 'bridge-building'
- They are the cause that Client start to talk and explain personal situations
- Open-ended question set the focus on the client/spouse which needs...
  - Active listening what is answered and/or what is not said.
- React with empathy:
  - Show understanding
  - Confirm what was said
  - Etc.

[www.idainstitute.org](http://www.idainstitute.org)



*Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:*

## What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?

### *Active listening*

- Never 'listen' to react...
  - ***Always listen to understand!***
- Active listening means
  - It consumes your (listening) energy
  - To understand what is not said



# THE SIX MENTS OF N-CENTERED CARE



SHARED GOAL-SETTING  
AND  
DECISION-MAKING

***Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:***

**What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?**

***Shared goal-setting and decision making***

- The process where the expert convinces the Client and/or family members that there is a real need for a hearing aid solution
- The basis of this is the professional need analysis according to COSI and that goals are defined together

# THE SIX ELEMENTS OF PERSON-CENTERED CARE

UNDERSTANDING  
OF INDIVIDUAL  
PREFERENCES



EMPATHY

***Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:***

**What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?**

***Empathy & E.Q:***

***Emotional Intelligence***

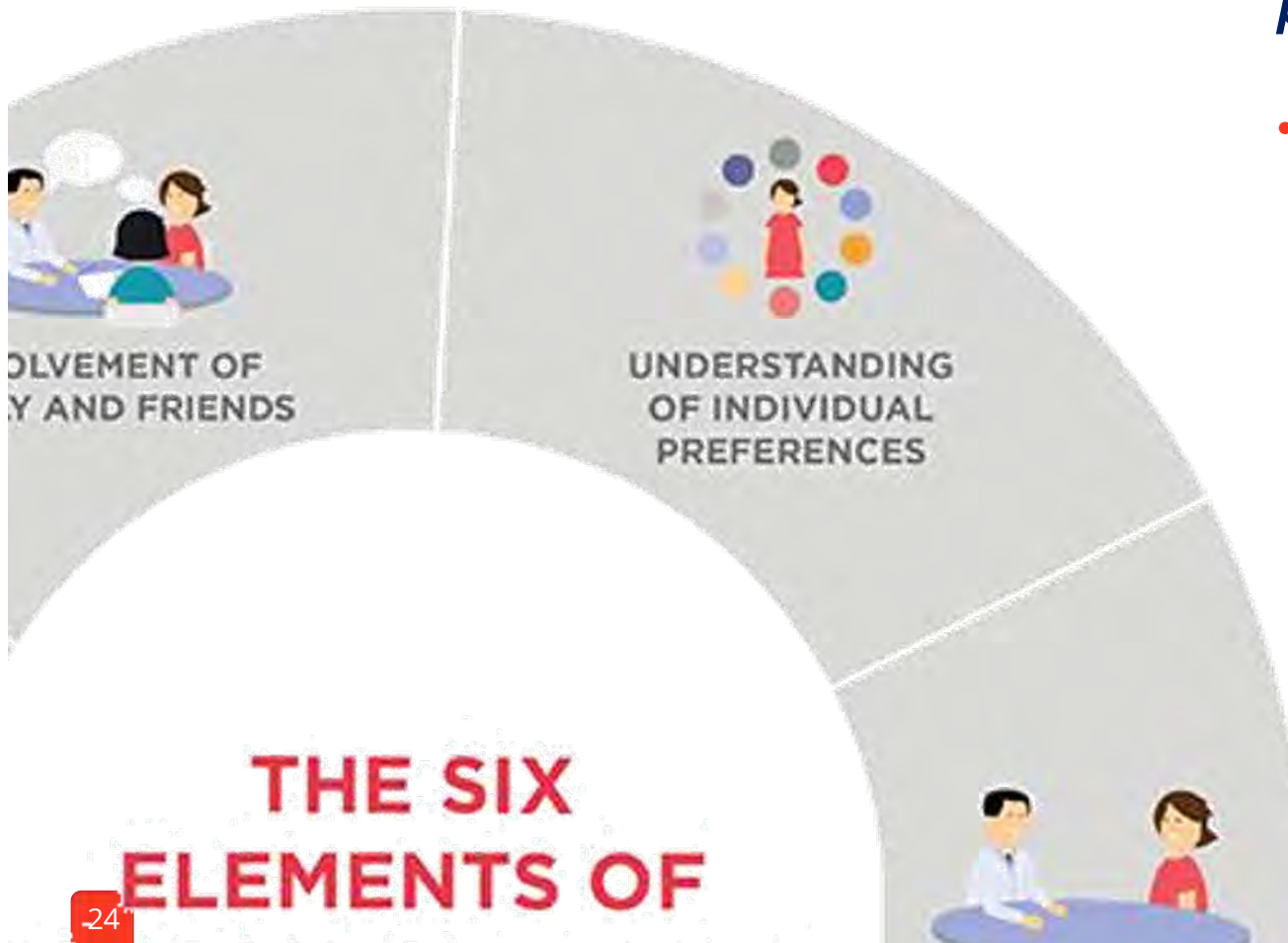
- Empathy is necessary to understand how someone feels
- The ability to understand what and why someone is saying what they say
- The ability to understand what is not said



*Ethics in audiology must be based on Person-centered Care:*

## What exactly is PCC → Person-centered Care?

*Understand individual preferences of clients*



- Following aspects could play a role:
  - Life situations
  - Health
  - Vitality
  - Expectations
  - Concerns
  - Feelings
  - Impact on their life
  - Income situation
  - Etc.

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*Assessment meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions!*

# Why is Person-centered Care so important?



It is about person's needs!  
Not about a 'device'.

It is about the improvement of the quality of Life:  
Patient, spouse, family members, etc.

It is not about the 'price' or 'costs': it is about a total  
solution. Hearing Aid plus everything around it.



*If you want to sell something, sell nothing.  
Approach a patient/client with the intent to help, to solve a  
problem, not to sell a product or service.*

***And, win the trust of the decision maker first before you sell!***



# Assessment meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said!

- Proven successful structure of the assessment meeting
- Open-ended probing question: why?
- Analyze needs & hidden needs
- Gather individual arguments & facts to improve the patient's quality of life

**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Proven successful structure of the assessment meeting

*It is always about the **individual** best and most optimal Hearing Aid Solution!*

Open-ended questions

Active listening

Understanding

Empathy:  
*React, Advise*

20 / 80  
asking / listening

Client

Spouse and/or family members



**Need analysis**



**Create needs!**



**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Proven successful structure of the assessment meeting

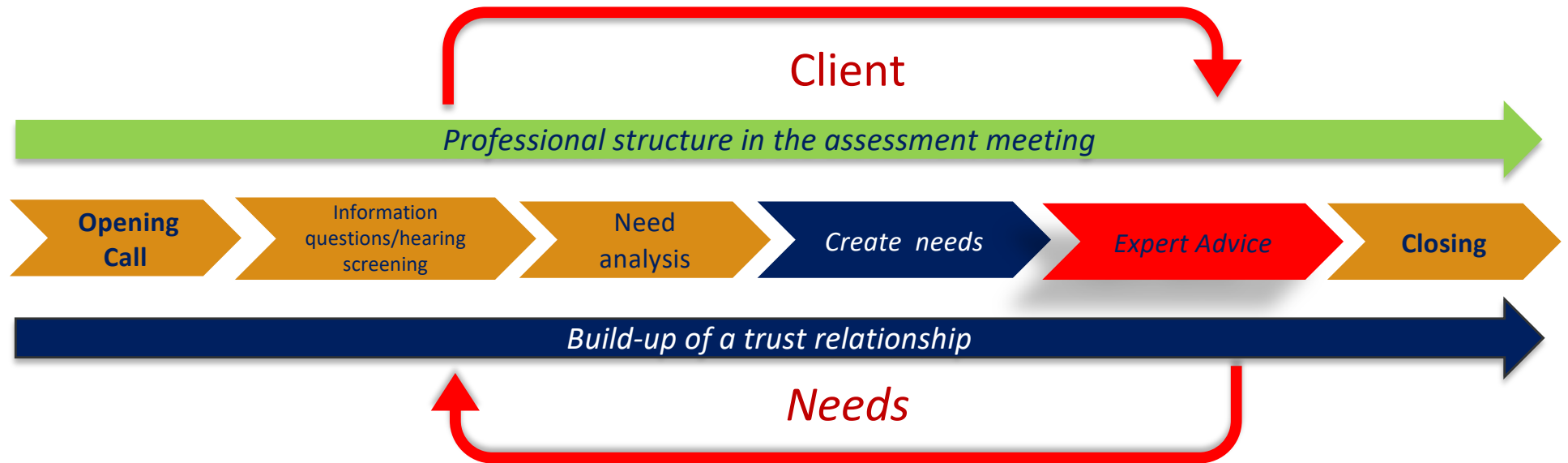


**Do you want to convince more patients/clients about your Hearing Aid Solution?**

1. Actively listen to understand THEIR NEEDS how to improve the quality of life
2. Don't talk about yourself, the clinic or about devices/brands/models (unless they want it themselves)
3. Learn arguments & facts how you can help to improve the quality of life
4. Present one solution as a clear and structured PROCESS, not a product!

**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Proven successful structure of the assessment meeting



**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

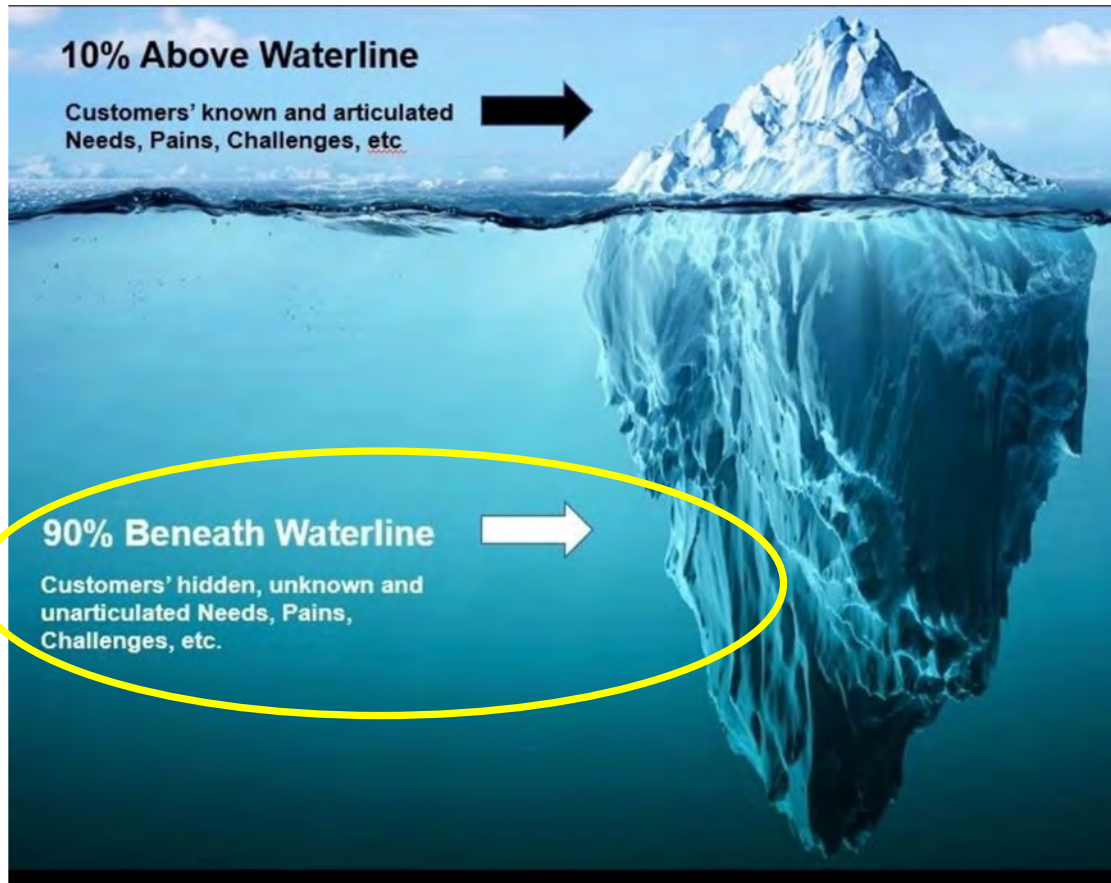
# Proven successful structure of the assessment meeting

*It is always about the **individual** best and most optimal Hearing Aid Solution!*



*Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.*

# Open-ended Probing Questions: Why?



What the patient/client thinks is relevant or urgent

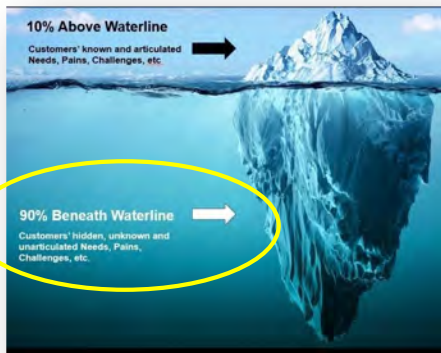
What you think is relevant and/or urgent: Audiogram

Needs & hidden needs how to help must be uncovered in detail, with:  
Patient/client  
Spouse  
Family members  
Friends, colleagues, etc.



**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Open-ended Probing Questions: Why?



1. **“What are you doing in your spare time?”**
2. **“Which is your favorite TV program?”**
3. **“Which are your social activities?”**
4. **“Which music do you like best?”**

5. ☐ if they named tinnitus:

**“What is tinnitus doing with you?”**

*You don't need to ask, “do you have hobbies?” ☐ is a closed question! By asking this open-ended question you will hear much more about Client's activities!*

*You will learn about programs they watch, how they understand them in normal volumes etc.  
Good to know to demonstrate your solution later.*

*Herewith you will learn what their social activities are, or no social activities at all: e.g., birthday parties, receptions, sports events, friendships, meetings, etc.*

*Important to know what music they listen to and/or if they play an instrument themselves.  
Ideally to give them a sound demo later.*

*If they answer with e.g., “...it irritates me often, I hate it” you might convince with a hearing aid solution which has a built-in tinnitus masking functionality.*

**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Analyze needs and hidden needs

*You must learn individual arguments and facts how to help!!*

1. *“What are you doing in your spare time?”*
2. *“Which is your favorite TV program?”*
3. *“Which are your social activities?”*
4. *“Which music do you like best?”*

☐ if they named tinnitus:

5. *“What is tinnitus doing with you?”*

**“Tell me more” Questions**

“Tell me more about that”

Why is this important for you?

So, if I understand you right...this is for you...

What do you do in such a situation?

Can you share an example of the situation?

So, if I understand you right...this is for you...

Let me summarize...I want to understand everything you said: “XYZ....”

**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Gather individual Arguments & Facts how to help:



**Assessment Meeting: Ask open-ended probing questions and listen/understand what is said.**

# Gather individual Arguments & Facts how to help:



(...if you do not have needs analysed, or needs created, missed individual arguments & facts, then handling objections/concerns might become a **REAL obstacle!**)

# Summary

- What did we learn?

# Summary

## BUSINESS ETHICS MAKE YOU STANDING OUT FROM COMPETIORS!

IF YOU ARE NOT DOING IT...A COMPETITOR MIGHT!!



Neither is right or wrong!

It depends on the needs of the



Open-ended Probing Questions: why?

What the patient/client thinks is relevant or urgent

What you think is relevant

Needs & hidden needs how to help

Individual Arguments & Facts

Building up TRUST with client and spouse

Individual Arguments & Facts how to help

Individual Arguments & Facts how to help

Individual Arguments & Facts how to help

Individual Arguments & Facts how to help

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Define your own Practice Ethical Standards

It is much more than a 'device', brand or model!

The Person-centered Care Approach

Never assume: Uncover Needs and Hidden Needs

Individual Arguments & Facts how to help

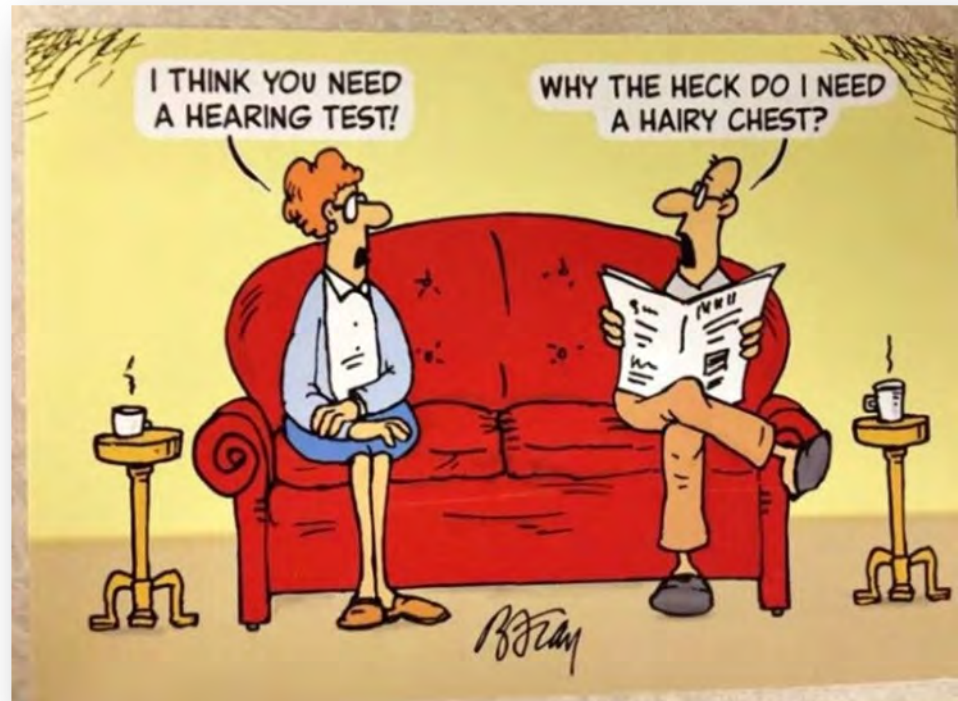
Win the trust of your Patients/Clients first, before you 'sell'.

Don't focus on objections or concerns: Focus on CREATING CLIENT FANS. **THE WORD OF MOUTH!**

# Summary

**FINALLY...** *LET'S STAND OUT FROM COMPETIORS!*

IF YOU ARE NOT DOING IT...A COMPETITOR MIGHT!!





May I answer your questions?

Oliver's Business Development Training Workshops:  
Non-manipulative Ethical Selling of Hearing Aid Solutions  
AuD/HIS Personal Coaching live on the job

[www.EthicalSelling.org](http://www.EthicalSelling.org)

My

facebook

*'Non-manipulative Ethical Selling'*

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