



LLP-LDV/TOI/07/IT/016

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The Virtual Museum of the European Roots

Discover the European cultural Heritage

<http://www.europeanvirtualmuseum.net>



E-COURSE FOR

VIRTUAL MUSEUM COMMUNICATOR



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INTRODUCTION

The current e-course aims to give you ideas and techniques how to communicate effectively your virtual museum.

Thus you will ultimately attract more supporters among the wide public, journalists, educational institutions, donors.

Goals of the course

- Support the museum staff to identify, train and position an effective virtual museum communicator.
- Lead the identification of skills, activities and expected results from the work of the virtual museum communicator.
- Support the virtual museum communicator in identifying and reaching target groups of communication
- Support the virtual museum communicator in planning and implementation of communicational strategy.

E-course structure

The structure of the course is offering practical information, useful for all museums even if they have different communication level:

Part A. General information

Part B. Assessing the level of development of the museum from the perspective of communication and public relations.

Part C. Choosing an e-museum communicator

Part D. Course for e-museum communicators

- A course for e-museum communicators - Basic level
- A course for e-museum communicators – Medium level
- A course for e-museum communicators – Advanced level

Part E. Further reading and useful links

E-course public whom is the course for?

- Effective communication involves all museum staff.
- The course involves task and information aimed at:

Museum management (director and deputy-director) Communicator of the virtual museum

Communicator or PR of the museum

Course guide

Symbols used in the virtual museum communicator course:



A tip and tricks selection for e-museum communicators



Additional information for your individual further reading



Complete the described task individually to be able to proceed effectively with the course



If you need further information contact Cultura Animi experts at k.velichkova@cultura-animi.org

PART A. GENERAL INFORMATION

COMMUNICATION: WHY BOTHER?



GOLD RUSH. The race is on to uncover the golden splendors of its Thracian past before sites are looted and developers move in.

By A. R. Williams

In December 2006 National Geographic published an article for the unconventional methods used by the Bulgarian archaeologist Georgi Kitov.

The publication influenced negatively the image of Bulgarian archeology worldwide.

What could communication do? A regular contact between museum representatives and media in all times guarantees that journalists will be more interested to present the museum perspective



Fresh scandal hits Bilbao's Guggenheim

By Elizabeth Nash in Madrid

The British paper Independent was only one of many media which covered the scandal with Thomas Krens, CEO of the Guggenheim Foundation, who spent outrageous amounts for modern art works way above the market value.

The scandal is changing the mind of traditional supporters of the Guggenheim Foundation, who have ceased donation programs.

What could communication do? Communication specialists could react quickly and professionally through organizing discussions with the Foundation donors and

journalists. The lack of reaction from the Guggenheim Foundation made the scandal flourish.

Communicating your museum: how do you manage?



Please answer the questions with Yes or No:

- Does the public know about your museum?
- Do you hold regular meeting with journalists?
- Do you have a mechanism to hear back from the museum public (feedback forms, questionnaires, other)?
- Do you have updated contact data of journalists, working in the spheres of culture, education and society?
- Do you maintain regular contacts with potential supporters of the museum (companies, foundations, potential private donors)?
- You need to have at least 3 positive answers to the questions above
- You need to have a person responsible for the communication of the virtual museum (this could be the PR of the museum if you already have one).
- You need to have the support of the museum team for the work of the one, who is involved in communication

Profile of the communicator

The person, responsible for communication should be:

- Communicative
- Structured and organized

- Knowledgeable about the museum collection
- Above average technologically savvy
- Not necessarily involved directly in museum researches

Branding your museum

Branding the museum will help you with communicating the e-museum and the museum in general. Branding is the process of making the name and services you propose to the public popular

Components of the brand

- Museum name
- Museum slogan
- Advertising and marketing materials

Brand slogan

Slogan is a sentence which describes briefly but clearly the museum mission. The slogan should be brief, clear and inspirational.



The museum slogan could be developed through a brainstorming session with staff, supporters and public representatives .

Examples:

- A museum of the world, for the world (British Museum)
- The national gallery of international modern art (Tate Modern)
- A rich past, an ambitious future (Louvre)

Logo

Logo is the sign you want the public to identify with your museum.

Examples for museum logos:



Marketing and advertising materials

- All marketing materials (brochures, publications, visitors tickets, events invitations, catalogs, press releases, merchandising, site) should have similar, recognizable design and contain the brand elements: name, slogan, logo



Look for some examples at: www.museumbranding.com

Brand development

Introduce procedures for:

- meeting and seeing off visitors,
- answering telephone calls



Add information on museum physical and virtual shops on all points, where visitors have access – entry and exit of the museum, toilets, etc.

Organizing successful events

Stage the event – decide on idea,
scenario, materials, catering

Manage operational planning - choose
place, decide on guests, send invitations

Promote – communicate your event

Market – evaluate results from the events;
aim to make profit



Are you ready?

Please answer the following questions with YES or NO:



- Do you have clearly written requirements for communication code and dress code for all museum staff, meeting visitors?
- Are the above codes clearly communicated to museum staff?

- Is the implementation of the above codes followed by the museum management?
- Is the museum staff performance related to their salaries?

You should be able to have at least 3 positive answers to the above questions prior to starting the virtual museum communicator course.

Why a virtual museum?

The new technologies are giving us the opportunity for intensive communication with the virtual wide public. The virtual museum is the best channel through which you can communicate your ideas, new discoveries, services of your museum and.....attract additional funds

E-museum services

Some services that the e-museum can offer are:

- Process questions from academic researchers worldwide related to material, stored in the museum
- Process scientific questions related to school projects, students' works, etc.
- On-line sale of scientific publications.
- On-line sale of post cards, souvenirs.
- Accept on-line reservations for using museum space for events.
- Virtual walk in the museum.
- Games and other on-line activities for kids.

- Tourism related services – providing contacts of tourist companies, cultural heritage sites, etc



Complete the list with other possible services

Virtual museum target groups

- Local and international academic scientists in the areas covered by the museum (archeology, history, anthropology)
- Journalists from local and international media
- Students from Universities, high school students, young people interested in scientific areas covered by the museum
- Schools and University management
- Parents
- Corporate sponsors and philanthropists; volunteers



Complete the list with people who could use the services of your virtual museum

PART B. ASSESSING YOUR LEVEL

Preliminary preparation: Understand what do the museum staff know for the virtual museum and the services it offers

Step 1. Prepare and distribute a questionnaire among museum staff. Optional questions: Q1 Are you informed for the existence of the virtual museum (Yes/No)

Q2 What do you think are the goals of the virtual museum (choice of answers: to attract visitors to the physical museum; to attract financial income to the museum; other

Step 2: Collect the questionnaires and calculate:

- How many people have completed the questionnaire (%form all staff);
- How many people are informed for the virtual museum (% from people who have completed the questionnaire;
- How many people have circled both goals of the virtual museum.



Understand what do people know for your museum?

Step 1: Collect all media publication for the museum for the last 12 months.

Collect printed, electronic and Internet publications. .

Step 2: Count all publications.



Understand how much is the Internet site of the museum being used by the staff and public

Step 1. Request the data for the number of visits on the Internet site of the museum or take the data yourself.

The technical support staff/the company that supports the Internet site of the museum can provide you with this data

Test



Complete the following test by choosing one of the answers A, B, C

Question 1. How many museum staff members know for the existence of the virtual museum?

A. Below 50% of those completed the questionnaire B. Between 50% and 70% of those completed the questionnaire

C. Above 70%

Question 2. how many museum staff members have chosen both goals of the virtual museum in the questionnaire.

A. Below 50% of those completed the questionnaire B. Between 50% and 70% of those completed the questionnaire

C. Above 70% of those completed the questionnaire

Question 3. How many media publications have been devoted to the museum for the last year?

A. Below 50

B. Between 50 and 70

C. Above 70

Question 4. Is there a museum communicator, who will be in charge for communicating the virtual museum and its' services to its' target groups?

A. No and we don't have interested candidates B. No but we have interested candidates.

C. Yes.

Question 5. How many visits at the most has the museum site registered?

A. Below 100 per month

B. Between 100 and 500 per month

C. Above 500 per month.

Test results

Most of your answers are A: We suggest that you start the course from **slide 31**. The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

Most of your answers are B: We suggest that you start the course from **slide 45**. The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

Most of your answers are C: We suggest that you start the course from **slide 55**. The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

You have equal number of answers A and B: We suggest that you start the course from **slide 31**. The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

You have equal number of answers B and C: We suggest that you start the course from slide45. The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

You have equal number of answers A and C: We suggest that you start the course from slide 31 .The rest of the e-course should be for general information.

PART C. CHOOSING AN E-MUSEUM COMMUNICATOR

Finding the right person

Choose a member of the museum staff who should be responsible for communicating the virtual museum to its' target groups.

Step 1. If the museum already has a PR specialist he/she can be engaged with the communication of the virtual museum.

Step 2. If you don't have a PR specialist look among museum staff. Look [here](#) for an exemplary virtual museum communicator profile.

PART D. COURSE FOR E-MUSEUM COMMUNICATOR

BASIC LEVEL

Step 1 Understand PR

Harold Laswell's : Who says to whom to what effect

Karl Popper: The net which we throw out in order to catch the world – to rationalize, explain and dominate it.

PR (Public relations) aims to distribute truthful/correct information so that partnerships are established with relevant publics and target groups.



*Create a short message that explains what your **virtual** museum is. Ask a feedback from a person that doesn't know your work.*

Step 2 Identify museums ambassadors

First museum ambassadors are museum team

members and staff members. They should be well acquainted with the contents and the services of the e-museum to be able to “advertise” it.



Make a list of all potential museum ambassadors and make them to create a short message that explains what your museum is.

Step 3. Build a shared understanding for the museum or developing the community of the museum

Organize a meeting with the museum staff/volunteers/friends to present the virtual museum and its' goals. Note that the first such meetings should be organized by the museum director.



Organize an event to introduce the people with the final message.

Step 4: Identify a speaker of the museum

Usually the institutions/organizations are publicly associated with the persons that represent them. That's why it is very important to select one person that communicates with the wide public – media, institution, donors. In the usual case this is the PR or the director of the museum.



Select one person that will represent you museum in public.

Step 5. Only provide correct information

Make sure the information, posted in the virtual museum is correct, updated, clear and interesting not only for professionals but for the wide public.



Write news about the virtual museum. Give it for proofreading to friends who don't work in the field of museums and ask for a feedback. Does your friend understand what you have written? Is it interesting for him/her?

Step 7. Know your goals in communication

The communication is always done with a purpose. You have to decide what you want to achieve through the communication of your e-museum. It could be:

- Publicity
- Public awareness of the specific field you are operating in
- Attracting visitors
- Attracting donors and volunteers
- Promoting services

Goal of the communication. What do you want to achieve through it?	Define who do you want to address with the communication	What are the first steps for communication
1. To promote the museum and increase the number of visitors	Institutions – ministry, municipality, schools, universities 2. Tourists agencies 3. Media 4. Other.....	1 Creating a regular newsletter 2 Organising formal meetings 3 Proposing partnerships for different projects 4 Using the space of the museum for alternative events 5. Other.....
2. To promote the museum as a research and educational institution	∨ Universities and schools ∨ Other museums ∨ Media ∨ Other.....	1 Creating a regular newsletter 2 Organising formal meetings 3 Proposing partnerships for different projects 4. Sending press releases or organizing meetings with journalists 5. Other.....
3. To promote the new services of the museum	∨ Wide public ∨ The target group of the services ∨ Other.....	1. Sending press release to media 2. Participating in social web groups 3. Organizing special events in the museum 4. Other.....
4. To attract donors	∨ Business ∨ Citizens ∨ Other.....	1. Make a special news letter/informational bulletin for business partners 2. Organize special events 3. Other
5. To attract volunteers/	∨ Students ∨ Other.....	∨ Promote the possibility for volunteers in schools, universities, coffees and places that are visited by young people ∨ Other.....
6. To keep informed the team of the museum about the development of the museum	1. Museum Staff	∨ A newsletter for internal communication ∨ Other.....
7. Other.....		37

Step 8. Know people who are important for your communication.

It is important to create a “circle” of journalists that know the museum and its goals. Think for local and international editions, forums, professional and e-networks, Universities, tourist agencies.



Make a list of journalists whom you will address regularly with information by filling the table

Name	Media	Telephone, e-mail	Special interests:
1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.

Step 9. Make a plan for the current year.

It is really important to think carefully about the actual communication occasion for attracting media attention. After you know who you want to inform, now you have to decide when and what will be the news.



Make a list with the potential media occasions for the next three months for sending information about the museum

When	What	With what (partners if you have)	Key
1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.

Step 10. Be informed

If you are the communicator of the museum you need to know everything – from the unimportant gossips to the 10-year strategy plan for the development of the museum. Be sure that you will get the latest information about the museum on time.



Prepare a standard mail to your colleagues asking them if there is any news around their operational job? (Include the questions – what are you working on at the moment? What do you expect to achieve? Are there partners you are working with? What activities are you planning?) Send them a regular mail every week (or every month)?

Step 11. Be prepared for unpleasant questions.

Before meetings with journalists and potential partners you need to prepare yourself (or to prepare the speaker) for the potential questions for the museum

and be ready with answers and relevant data. Always think and be ready to answer critical questions (with a smile).



Write down the potential questions you are expecting to be asked by journalists. Write down at least two unpleasant questions.

Step 12. Be sure to address different target groups with the appropriate message.

Keep in mind that different groups need different messages in order to be interested.



Write a news about the virtual museum. After you are ready edit the news keeping in mind students, academics and potential business partners.

Step 13. Letters for partnerships.

Contact potential partners through individual, different and unique letters (e-mails) that will distinguish you from the others. Even the design of the letter (mail) matters if the recipient will read it.



Write partnership letters/e-mails. Make a list of partnership institutions, companies, sites and send them all a letter with clear partnership offer.

Communicating with journalists :

- Remember that you communicate with people rather than institutions – treat your communication contacts as you treat your personal contact – with attention, responsibility and creativity.

- Know journalists personally – organize a working breakfast or individual meetings.
- Have updated contacts of journalists, working in your area (society, culture)
- Know specialized media – you should have intensive contacts with them
- Be prepared with updated information in electronic format and pictures in appropriate format for media use
- Don't overburden journalists with information and messages
- Send information to media to a personal rather than to general e-mail.
- Know well the appropriate timing to send messages to journalists **!!! Sometimes you do all as it must be done but there are no results as publications... don't worry it happens to everybody.**



Writing a press release:

Start with the most important information – who, what, when, how, where, why, with what results Make an interesting title

Use statistics – correct facts, numbers, comparisons

Never use specialized language, professional jargon

Insert your contact data, use professional letterhead if possible

Use pictures

Writing partnership letters:

Know what you want from the particular person or institution

Say your story – what do you do? Do you have other partners?

Say what you offer to your prospective partners

Try to contact the person to whom the letter is addressed before you send the letter

PART D. COURSE FOR E-MUSEUM COMMUNICATOR

MEDIUM LEVEL

Step 1 Know what you expect to achieve through the virtual museum?

Possible answers are:

Attract public to the physical museum?

Increase paid and free services offered by the museum?

Attract sponsors and donors?

Attract volunteers?

Educate wide public?

Create a network among other museums?

When you know the answers of this question, it will be much easier to set objectives for the communication of the virtual museum/

Exemplary goal: To establish the virtual museum as an instrument to get information, analysis and training on archaeology and anthropology in Northern Bulgaria



Make a meeting with the key decision makers in your museum and clarify what are the main goals of the virtual museum for the next 2 years.

Step 2 Understand who do you need to achieve the goals of the virtual museum?

According to your selected goal you will also have different priority groups. For example: If you need to **attract public to the physical museum** your groups are

media, tourists, students, parents, teachers, school and University managers If you need to **increase paid and free services offered by the museum** your groups are Universities, schools, tourists, parents and children If you need to **attract sponsors and donors** your groups are media, business companies, individual donors If you need to **attract volunteers** your groups are high school and University students; e-net users



Make a list with your priority groups according your goal

Step 3 Make a communication plan with goals, activities, needed recourses, needed partners and expected outcomes

Once you know what do you want to achieve and who you need to

communicate, you can create a plan how to do this. Have goals, which are easy to measure such as:

- Getting media publications for the virtual museum – how much for which period? What occasions do you have to attract media attention? In which media?
- Getting publications about the virtual museum on University & institutions' web sites; forums; e-networks – how many? By when? On which sites?
- Identifying partners for banner exchange – how many? By when?

Selling services on-line – how many? By when? To whom?

- Conducted partnership meetings – how many? By when? With whom?

Fill in the table:



Communication goal:	Activities to achieve the goal	Needed resources	Needed partners:	Expected results
1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.

Step 4 Make attractive and recognizable PR and advertising materials

After you have completed previous tasks, you need to prepare materials, that will illustrate your work/mission.

Materials is a term for everything that comes out of the museum such as:

- Standard e-mails,
- Official letters
- Leaflets
- Presentations
- Films
- Cards

- Banners

All of these materials should have similar design and contain the museum name, logo, slogan and website. Anyone looking at your materials should be able to understand they belong to one organization

Step 5. Make a regular newsletter for partners and media

" Prepare a simple format of a regular newsletter with news for the museum, its' services and forthcoming events " Send the newsletter once per month/once every two months to all journalists that have been in touch with you, to partners, visitors "Prepare a card inviting visitors to leave their e-mail if they want to receive the newsletter and leave it at the registration area /tickets sale in the museum

Step 6. Keep journalists in touch

- Prepare a database with journalists that have published information about the museum. Include contacts and notes you consider important for each contact
- Have an alarm set to remind you to send regular updated information to contacts within the database.
- Keep the database updated – add contacts of journalists as long as you have established new contacts

Step 7. Keep an archive

" Create and maintain an archive of publications in media about the museum.

" Create a system that would allow you to refer to publications by a certain author/journalist and a certain topic.

Step 8. Identify and involve supervisors

Even when you have invested serious efforts and work in communication, things can not always work as planned and expected – publications get cancelled due to more important topics; TV interviews go wrong; journalists do not publish your point of view as agreed

- In this case you need a supervisor to talk to and identify potential mistakes
- A supervisor could be your boss, colleague from the museum or a colleague from the PR field.
- A supervisor should be available for regular sessions/discussion, which are formally agreed.



Few advices how to behave during a TV interview:

- Before the interview:
- Ask the journalist what will be the questions? Try to talk to the journalist in advance and provide him with the information you have and your point of view
- If you have any rules about the interview, tell them to the journalist.
- Expect that you are more prepared than the journalists and that not all the questions will be adequate.

- Think of some appropriate joke in advance. Journalist/editors like the interesting interlocutors, because the role of the media is not just to inform, but to entertain.
- In the studio:
- Talk to the journalist, not to the camera.
- Don't talk on topics you are not aware of.
- Use short sentences and use the facts in your side ("Our researches show...")
- Try to be more positive – if there are problems, talk about their decisions

PART D. COURSE FOR E-MUSEUM COMMUNICATOR

ADVANCED LEVEL

Congratulations! If you are starting from here you have already gone a long way in communicating your museum.

Then making the virtual museum popular should be really easy. Look at our advices on the following pages and feel welcome to share your experience back with us.

Step 1. Assess your current position

Start strategizing with analysing your current situation. Understand also about your competition and their status. You could use marketing analysis, public poll analysis, needs assessment approach and a number of other techniques.

Involve as many stakeholders (people and organizations related to the e-museum) as possible



Make an assessment of the communication of the virtual museum for the last 6 months – number of publications about it, number of visitors, numbers of the news you have published in it for the period, number of the services provided.

Step 2. Define your goals in communication

Based on the results from the assessment define your priority in communication.

Be sure it is adequate to your development status and achievements. Your priorities/goals should be clear and specific, feasible to achieve and addressing all of the priorities in the strategic plan of the e-museum.

Make sure you distinguish clearly between the goals you are setting for one year and those which are long term (for the next 3-5 years)



Write down the three main goals of the communication of the virtual museum for the next year.

Step 3. Define the target groups

You need to know what people are you communicating the e-museum to. If

you know them you will be able to talk to them effectively. Aim to understand as much as possible. You could achieve this through special research but also through questionnaires, distributed on-line and in the physical museum. Then separate them in groups according to principles, which are most important for your work. Some examples of grouping principles could be:

- Geographic principle – where do they live or work
- Social principle – to what social group do they belong
- Psychological principle – what are their interest and psychological profile



Write down the target groups of your communication strategy according your communication goals.

Step 4. Define the key figures from media and institutions

For the work of the e-museum there are probably journalists and institutions' representatives, which are key for achieving success. You need to identify and know your potential partners - what are they interested in partnership; what could they provide to the e-museum (is it funding or publicity; support and/or specific

expertise). These people are important for the e-museum and communication messages aiming at them should be prepared for the specifically.

You could prepare data base for them compiling specific information you are able to find . These communication targets could also be addressed with personal meetings and special events.



Make a table with the key journalists, key people in important institutions, key people in NGOs, and key people in business that can support your museum (for example see the table on Slide 48.)

Step 5. Communicate internally

If you haven't done so yet, define a person responsible for communicating the e-museum. This person could also be responsible for the internal communication within the museum, dress and procedures code for staff members and the overall vision of the institution. The communicator should prepare information to be used by the manager and compile an incoming and outgoing database for the e-museum with relevant information All staff members should be providing information concerning target groups to the communicator and coordinate public speaking. They should also know how could they get information form the communicator they will need. Some tools to support effective internal communication are:

- clear job descriptions, which are discussed and understood by staff memebrrs
- increased opportunities for formal and informal communication between staff memebrrs adn between staff and managers – team buildings; joint lunch, etc.
- developing procedures for internal communication jointly with staff members

Step 6. Make effective messages

The message of a communication is the essence of what you want to say to different target groups. Messages are the basis for slogans, advertising materials, PR materials.

The message contains the most important specifics of the e-museum we want the public to know for.

The message should be effective, clear , realistic and universal – anybody, whom we are interested in to know for the e-museum should understand the message.

The message answers the question who are we and what do we do?



Create a short message/slogan of your virtual museum.

Step 7. Work with communication channels

Know the diversity of communication channels you could use. When talking about the e-museum the main channel is Internet. Look for web sites (other physical and virtual museums, Universities, libraries, schools, etc.) who might be interested to partner with you and promote the e-museum.



Make a list with all potential media partners of your virtual museum, with which you can share banners starting with museums, educational institutions, tourist agencies, media etc

Step 8. Research and analyze communication channels

Always ask yourself: are you taking the most of a given communication channel? Are you using all options of a channel you have identified and approached?

To answer these questions please look at the profile of the communication channel – whom is it for? What kind of public it attracts? and look at your message – whom is it for? What kind of public you want to attract?

The budget you have is also a factor for identifying and approaching communication channels – there is no point in approaching high budget communication channels should you have a low budget for communication within the institution.

- If you aim at the maximum number of recipients of your message with diverse profile your communication channels are TV stations, national newspapers, radio stations and broad Internet portals.

- If you aim at branch specific public you could look at specialized editions, web sites, TV broadcasts on the topic; branch associations

- If you are organizing an event such as presentation, pressconference, presentation, etc you could first look at the profile of the public and then plan the communication channels you are going to use accordingly.

You could communicate one and the same message in different ways depending on the public profile. For example:

- officially from a tribune as an official address

- as a press release

- in a non formal conversation

- as a personal story if during a TV interview

Step 8. Define a budget

Understand what resources (including financial resources you need to implement your strategy? What part of them do you have in place and what do you need to complete your goals?

Look at partners that could contribute financially but also for opportunities for barter.



Make a plan with the communication activities for the year and plan your budget.

What	Key activities	When	Budget	Targeted partners

Step 9. Analyze results and improve

Set some period (one year or so) to come back to analyze the expected and achieved results, the invested resources and to change the communication strategy.

Be sure that the communication strategy should be revised regularly in order to be updated to the latest communication possibilities.



List what you expected and what you achieved in communicating the e-museum for the last 6 months

Step 10. Planning campaigns, events and promotions

You could apply the scheme so far to each individual event or campaigns:

- Assess status and practices
- Know goals and target groups
- Form a team
- Set a budget
- Identify communication thesis and channels
- Plan activities in time
- Know results and analyze
- Report finances



Make a plan about your key communicational activities for the next year.

PART E. FURTHER READING AND USEFUL LINKS

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