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Fear Development, the Staged Approach

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Abstract: In modern empiric literature that is concerning the issue of business management especially about administration of changes (turnarounds, crisis recovery etc.,) fear is majorly treated as solid, negative and demolishing phenomenon. The presented article is a first step towards the analysis of the fear circumstances and is an attempt to suggest a valid strategy for reduction of the potentially harmful results of uncontrolled and undirected fear. The article proposes a new model through which the change leaders may understand and seize control over individuals, who may become "hazard centers". The model describes stages of fear development and suggests an appropriate "intervention points".

Keywords: fear, anxiety, management techniques, crises recovery, intervention

INTRODUCTION

Fear accompanies human race since the beginning of time. In fact, the fear is so ancient that it became a part of human heritage and is deeply rooted in human genetic memory as one of the most stimulatingand powerful emotions and reflexes. Humans began to afraid since the moment they emerge into the world, from the second when calm and tranquility of the womb, is replaced with light, noise and feelings. Fear is everywhere; it is present from the beginning and till the end, throughout every phase of life.

Fear is powerful and meaningful; it is capable to provoke most unexpected and shocking behaviors, stimulate and direct activities of most overwhelming nature with very unpredictable results. It may paralyze and suppress actions, but on the other hand it may also encourage and stimulate for activity. This makes fear a highly diversified and composed emotion that cannot be treated as just another aspect of human behavior.

Fear and its "relatives" are widely discussed in empirical literature, where it is majorly arousing the interest of psychologists and psychiatrists and less the interests of managers and business leaders. In modern business environment, fear is usually treated as pure negative, devastating and demolishing factor that is incapable for any positive empowerment of the manager. But, is it always so negative and awful?

Modern business environment, where uncertainty, disloyalty, acute and sudden changes

routine, encouraging everyday becamean and "nourishing" fear. Uncontrolled and undirected fear, is taking over the logic; blinding and distorts the perception of reality. Chaos, panic and sense of failure minimize and demolish the effectiveness of any activities meant to improve the situation.

It is impossible to get rid of fear, it is deeply ingrained in human nature and it is an integral part of it. If so, it is vital to use it and transform it into positive, contributive and meaningful tool, which is capable to be an aid for a modern manager.

Evolution of fear – why is fear so important?

Evolution is a process of change, which is customary referred toa positive improvement of characteristics and abilities. There is no doubt that humans changed during the history of mankind. People became taller, straighter, the cranium volume grew significantly and its shape has changed as well. Humans enriched their appearance, communication skills, physical abilities, what made them better suited for modern life.British naturalist Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), suggested that the change (development) of species over time is an outcome of natural selection of the most fitted ones. According to Darwin, the struggle for existence is the most dominant factor of the selection, which is a war for survival among the best[1].

Struggle, which is basically a form of conflict between set of interests is habitually directed by fear. The interesting thing is that fear itself is also an outcome of conflict situations; it is an outcome of struggles that took place between two (or more) sets of interests. In other words fear is dual; it is simultaneously the motive and result, for and from the struggle/conflict.

Humans tend to believe (while driven by their own ego), that they became more sophisticated and developed during the course of evolution process. It is flattering to declare that modern humans are far beyond the basic instincts and so called "dark emotions". But is this declaration matches the truth? Seemingly it is not.

The almost fanatic believe in supremacy of modern human, who allegedly overcame the primitive emotions of his ancestors, is the essence of a huge problem, which is a denial. This denial is also the reason for continuous failures, which are repeatedly revealed in the modern business arena. The declaration of emotional supremacy of modern "homo-sapience", is also responsible for multiplication of management theories based on understanding, mutual believe, readiness for personal sacrifice in favor of others, attempts to be "just", "fair" and "right"[2]. The problem is that the existing theories are incapable to deal with unwillingness of an average person to sacrifice himself and his ego, in favor of others. In other words, those theories are incapable to provide a solid solution for fear, which possesses individuals who facing changes and obstacles.

When dealing with fear as emotion and character, it is essential to understand, that modern environment changed the fundamental nature of fear. It managed to increase and extend the variety of variables and factors, which leads to creation of fear. In the ancient times, fear was articulating around factors like preservation of life in general, worries for food, heat, protection and shelter, but, today fear is "circling" around much less significant things. Fear of losing life is accompanied with much more versatile fears, which is fear of losing the comforts of life and the external signs of success in life. The new fear is less general and more "detailed", what makes it significantly wider, than its basic form. The multiplication of reasons for fear is making the issue of fear more complex and even less controllable than in the past, increasing the influence of the fear and its effect on the environment and its participants.

Now, when the importance of the issue is obvious and so its relevancy for today's modern business environment, especially in presence of acute economic crises in global economy, it is clear – fear as emotion and as phenomena cannot be disregarded and overlooked. The necessity for frequent changes and turnarounds, thatis not only on levels of firms, companies or even multinational conglomerates, but on the level of economic structures of nations, amplifies the importance of fearfactor.

Fear - background:

Fear is present in everyday life and is inseparable part f it. Fear of flight, crime, loneliness, war, even from life itself is widely discussed and studied. Basically, fear is defined as a sort of disturbance that disorders the everyday life course of an individual and preventing him from adequate assessment of the events[3]. Fear majorly considered as harmful and dangerous, negative, devastating and demolishing phenomena that affects the mind and can be the reason for appearance of mental disorders and "problematic" behaviors[4-5].

Still, fear is not so negative and harmful as it may sounds. Fear is among the most important psychological mechanisms meant to protect and defend not only the mind but the body. Fear that is paralyzing and suppresses early, sudden and implosive reactions for events is preventing the injury and harm[6-7], by freezing the body and allowing the mind to assess the situation and the participating variables. The assessment of situation, the delay between stimulation and response, is determines the difference between the "correct answer" and "disaster".

The duality of fear, it's practically simultaneous positive and negative effect, makes it, hard to control and deal with. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored: otherwise the results may be hard and dangerous. Fear is like contagious disease; it spreads fast and catches many. One fear possessed individual, may spread his fear and infect practically unlimited number of individuals, who may initiate chain reaction of ineffable destruction[8]. The inability to provide acute and reliable countermeasures, to seize control over the destruction, to channel the fear and suppresses its negative sides, makes the situation even worse. To avoid the worsening of the situation, it is essential to understand the fear, it development and sources. The understanding of fear and its development stages is important because the intervention is ought to be very precise in terms of opportunity and time, otherwise it achieve no effect or may even worsen the situation.

Modern management theories and techniques, are failing from providing proven and reliable methods to deal with the issue of fear. Modern management theories. based on persuasion, cooperation, understanding, are also incapable to assist the managers and organizational leaders to achieve control and obedience for the decisions or maintain organizational discipline. This especially true when crisis is arriving to organization and empowers the previously mentioned uncertainty and mistrust, becomes fertile ground for rumors, conflicts and fear. The lack of order, the inability to enforce discipline and enforce decisions execution, with no disputes and persuasion; condemning the effectiveness of recovery activities right from the beginning. Fear that is controlling everything and everybody is the catalyst of the objection and encouraging the failure of the recovery efforts[9]. Being the fear such a powerful and meaningful issue, requires very concrete, acute and sometimes even cruel measures, when dealing with it. This statement is true for every possible aspect of human existence and in every possible environment or any business domain.

Modern business environment is same as any otherenvironment inhabitant with human beings. Modern markets are in fact battle fields, where numerous participants administrate all-out war for survival and money. The markets are dense with participants and offers, while the resources are quite limited. Uncertainty, mistrust and disloyalty, beside continuous crises and reversals, nourishes fear and increasing it influence. Organizations/companies/firms, who are the participants of markets, are also heterogenic mix of individuals and interests and cannot be considered as homogeneous structures and frames.

Modern organizations - incubators of fear:

On organizational level, the situation is the same as on the markets and even more complex. Organization/firm/company is a chain of participants, who are driven by sets of personal interests that establish and determinetheir behavior and their responses for events. Mutual lack of lovalty, trust and commitment between the "frame" and "participants", which is a commonly excepted fact in modern business reality, brought towards situation where the managers and leaders are unable to act as managers and leaders[10]It is obvious, that separation between managers/leaders and subordinates/employees is perceived by many as oppression, sort of a slavery that is "unfair", "unjust" and "wrong". In such an environment every decision or action that is taken by the leaders is ought to consider the possible responses of individuals, groups and unions, who may object to it, no matter how important or necessary it is.

Critical situations create even more complex reality. It is known that traditional crisis recovery efforts are offensive and painful to organization and it participants. Downsizings, minimization of activities and layoffs creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, disbelieve and mistrust. Individuals whose personal ego is sensing failure, who know that they cannot maintain their calm and usual course of their life, start to sense fear and helplessness. Fear is blinding and overtaking the rational thinking, empowers immediate emotions of frustration, anger and impulsive, uncontrolled desire for action. The helplessness, the inability to change the situation, to escapefrom it or influence it, making the level of fear even higher. Individuals with certain "intendancies", begin to develop symptoms of psychological and even psychiatric disorders, which are getting worse and are capable to bring those individuals

towards very acute responses and behaviors[11]. Moreover, those individuals are capable to enlarge the" fear circle" by infecting other "frame members" and increase their fear level. When individuals are affected/possessed with fear, no rational explanations or persuasions in necessity of changes will help. Frighten people are no longer "members of structure", but possessed herd that is trampling everything on its way.

The absence of proven techniques and methods, meant to diminish or channel the fear and reduce it devastating effect on individuals and environment, brings towards situation where managers are incapable to do anything but wait till the rage is over and deal with the results of it. The waiting is same as inaction and submission for the situation, in other words – it is failure. Time, is the most precious resource when dealing with crisis (of any kind) and inaction means deterioration of conditions. Crisis becomes deeper and the recovery more difficult, more painful and more expensive.

Exploiting the fear correctly:

As previously stated, fear is powerful and meaningful factor and stimulant, therefore when dealing with it, there is a necessity for powerful and meaningful countermeasures. The problem is, that those contra measures, are ought to be significantly stronger to overcome the existing level of fear. Wedge that is jammed in the log of wood can be extracted only by sticking a larger wedge above it.

Prior to use, it is important to understand the essence of fear, its sources and circumstances. By doing so, it is possible to locate and isolate the primary, most significant variables of fear, what is enabling the application of the required countermeasures. The issue of correct portioning is crucial for the successes of the "treatment". The reason for such a precision is in a fact that human brain is equipped with certain protection mechanism, which is enabling adaption of the individual to change of environmental circumstances and acute emotions[12-13]. This means that humans are capable to adopt themselves to variety of acute situations, circumstances and to emotions that this change is arousing from. The alternative environment, which is created by the new stimulants (circumstances), is rapidly becoming an ordinary frame and the individuals who participate in it, adopting different, "situation suited" behaviors. Obviously the new behaviors are aimed to allow the individual to continue his life course and reduce the influence of threatening circumstances. No doubt, that the influence of fear in such an environment is high and eventually may bring towards disorders, objections and mutiny. In other words - continuous and unmeasured implementation of fear reduces it effectiveness. If so, than it is important to evaluate and measure the "amount" or "volume" of fear and suit it for the events.

Of course, the timing or the "intervention moment" is also important. To channel the emotions that individuals experiencing in front of radical changes and being able to "navigate" the emotions in desired direction, there is a need to interfere in the exact/precise moment. It seems that the variable of the "intervention moment" is even more important than the "fear volume/level" variable that is practically sets the power of intervention/interference. The power of intervention can be adjusted, with accordance to result, contrary to it; the "intervention moment" is one-time opportunity that sets the outcome of the general intervention process.

If the "intervention moment", is correctly chosen, the "navigation" or "emotions channeling" is easier and the needed "fear volume/level" is lower, what allows softer control seizure. In this case the intervention is more of affiliation into the stream and it deflection to the desired direction. But, if the "intervention moment" is not correctly chosen, than affiliation is not possible. The intervention becomesa barrier, sort of a dam that is jamming the stream and needs a lot of weight and stability to sustain its demolishing force. Obviously that the required "fear volume", needed for control seizure, is considerably higher. The control seizure in this case is more aggressive, violent and acute. The feelings and emotions it will arouse, among those who taking part in the process of seizure and becoming vulnerable because of it, will be also much more acute and aggressive and so is their objection to change.

Stages of fear development – the model:

Assuming that fear development is continuous, and it develops from minimum (0), to maximum (n), it proceeds through several mutually depending stages.First stage, which is the stage of relative calm, before the stimulation of fear with actual knowledge, is marked with zero (0), not to signify the absence of fear and not to measure it actual level/weight, but merely as the beginning of process.Fear is always present in humans' life and its intensity is varies from individual to individual, depending on the circumstances in which the individual is in. But in this case, the preliminary fear is irrelevant for the model and therefore is not taken into the consideration. Never the less, to maintain the accuracy of research it is present as stage α .

Stage 0:Preliminary sensing stage: This is the stage, where the individual is sensing that something is wrong. Personal observations, rumors and speculations, raise the level of suspiciousness and creating certain level of anxiety/fear, above the regular, everyday level. The stage '0' fear is added to usual fear, with which the individual is dealing in the circumstances of his everyday life and is not necessary an outcome of the relevant event.

The stage may differ in its length (time), dependent on access to information, communication skills and speed in which the circumstances are changing.

Phase 1: Notification. This is the stage where the individual is receiving the concrete information that is about to change his life. Here the received information is solid facts. The suspicions become solid knowledge. The individual now knows that he no longer capable to maintain the regular course of his life and that change in his life is already occurred. At this moment the individual is entering into a new level of his life, sort of a new reality, which is separates him from the past.

This phase is very short in terms of time (momentary event) but very "sharp" in terms of rate in which the level of fear is arising.

The "symptoms" of this stage are very clear and acute:

• Shock – although the individual suspected that changes are feasible, until the moment, where guesses transformed into solid knowledge, the mind, as a part of the "self protecting mechanism" is actually attempting to suppress the effects of suspicions and rumors. Individual is seeking calm in thoughts like; maybe it is not true, all others are exaggerating, the organization needs me, etc. But, when there are no doubts and he understands that he is the victim of the changes, self consolidation and attempts not to think about it, replaced with shock and overwhelm.

• Anger –the individual is sensing acute indignation. This indignation is not yet aimed towards a specific object/event/person. It is an outcome of collapse of his routine environment and helplessness he sensing because of it.

At this phase the individual is passive in terms of actions and deeds. This because of the previously mentioned and described "protection mechanisms", managed by the brain and meant to protect the mind and the body from harm.

Countermeasures and actions: none. Nothing is to be or can be done at this phase. Any attempt to interfere, even in form of participation or compassion, may encounter a harmful reaction. The anger the individual is sensing may find its target, no matter if it's justified or right one. Moreover, interference may be interpreted as guilt taking by the intervening party and trigger destructive reply.

Shock and anger are dominating the individual and the fear level is still relatively low comparing its level and influence later. This phase is responsible and establishes the strength and level of fear increase.

Phase 2: Preliminary evaluation: at this phase the individual is realizing that the event is behind him, there is nothing he can do about it and his life is already changed. The shock and anger he sensing are gradually losing their preliminary severity and the individual begin to assess his status. He thinks about issues like mortgage, bank debit and other obligations. He thinks about those who may be responsible for the situation he is in (according to him), assessing the possible reasons for being in such a situation and in certain cases even begin to evaluate possible alternatives. The important thing is, that at this phase the fear is beginning to overtake the individual, more and more. The thinking and the assessment of the situation made by the individual are not rational, but deeply influenced by fear from the future events and the effect of the new situation over him and his self-esteem. Beside rapidly growing fear, the individual sensing humiliation, his dignity is harmed, he is vulnerable and his future is uncertain. Needless to say, that all those feelings and senses are nourishing the fear and "assist" in raising its level. Self hatred and hatred of others begin to rise and affect the individual and his thoughts. Although the individual knows that the new reality is a fact, he is still not accepting it completely.

This phase is longer in terms of time and depends mostly on the personal characteristics of the "participant".

The "symptoms" of this phase are:

• Sense of failure – personal sense of failure in the eyes of everybody (real or imaginary). This is potentially harmful and jeopardizing sense. Later, where the individual will become active, it may trigger actions which may cause severe personal and environmental damage.

• Fear – of uncertainty, of the new situation and etc. As mentioned, the fear level is continuously growing and affects the judgment of the individual and his reality assessment. As harder the new circumstances for the individual the higher and more significant the effect of fear over him.

• Hate – to him and others. Probably this is an outcome of failure that individual is sensing. He hates himself for the failure, for becoming a victim of change and his inability to influence the events. He also hates others, the so called "survivors" of the change. In certain way the individual is blaming others for his failure and for the new circumstances.

At this phase, contrary to phase (1), the anger he continues to sense, is already aimed at certain targets.

The individual is still passive in terms of actions and deeds. But, this passiveness is soon to be changed. Phase 2, like the previous is potentially harmful. Everything is depends on the psychological strength of the individual and the decisions he may take. Decisions, which are an outcome of highly offensive circumstances, are no doubt dangerous and potentially destructive.

Countermeasures and actions: yes. This is in fact the first opportunity to influence the events and individual's behavior/response. The intervention here, is ought to be very delicate. It is more of integration than interference or actual influence. Here the aim is not to divert the behavior, but establish form of communication and contact with the individual. But, the communication up to certain level, which cannot be interpreted as mercy or sorrow, by the individual, what may worsen the situation and bring it beyond its explosive threshold.

Fear is highly dominant at this phase and its power continuously growing. The individual is still incapable for fully rational thinking and easily may be affected with sudden "casual circumstances". Any attempt to divert or redirect, in opposite direction his thoughts or deeds or intentions, will fail. The level of participation, which can be obtained is majorly depends on the individual's previous experiences and personal characteristics.

Phase 3:Full acceptance and options evaluation: here the individual is fully accepting the facts concerning the changes, which took place. He is fully aware about the threats the changes posed in front of him and his life. The fear level, is reaching its pick, even if the preliminary participation and contact attempts, reached their goal. Obviously, that any assessment, options selection and future intentions, are deeply influenced by fear. Later, when the fear level is descending, the options selection becomes clearer and more rational. The outcomes of this phase are strongly depends on the psychological profile and the inclinations. Such a dependency creates a highly complex problem, which has several possible results:

• Assuming that the individual is of "robust/stable" psychological profile, with no destructive tendencies or he is experienced in similar situations or managed to identify an appropriate solution for the situation, the result is expected to be "positive". Such an individual is expected to seize control over his fear and concerns and is not expected to cause harm to him or the environment. Communication with such an individual is much easier and so is the required "influence" on him and his actions.

• Assuming that the individual is of "unstable/fragile" psychological profile and he is influenced by the new circumstances in a way that he reaches a conclusion that there is no outlet that enables him to continue his life or adjust himself for the new situation; the expected result is obviously negative. Fear is expected to overcome every bit of rationality and logic and make this individual harmful and dangerous to him and the environment. The amount and level of "influence" on such an individual is significantly higher and meaningful/stronger.

There is anassortment of variables, which are capable to influence upon theselection of possible responses. Things like; professional skills and personal abilities, level of education and its adequacy for demands, psychological stability/instability, quality of training programs given by the organization and their relevancy, presence of alternative jobs and etc,. In addition to it, previous similar occurrences/events and the rehabilitation process from them are also meaningful and significant.

The prominent symptoms of this phase are: • Mental exhaustion – during the change the individual is finding himself in a variety of stressing mental conditions, which varies rapidly and acutely.

• Fear - at this point, is reaching the pick of its influence.

Countermeasures and actions: yes. This phase is the most important in terms of intervention and influence. This is the final stage before the individual is making his mind concerning his actions and execute his decisions. In other words, this is the last opportunity for meaningful intervention and significant influence over the individual and his intentions.

The nature of the countermeasures differs according to individual's "psychological profile". As more stable and robust the individual, the countermeasures are softer and more of a guidance or affiliation that actual intervention. But, opposite to it, fragile and unstable individual requires a lot more "participation". In this case actual intervention is required, otherwise disaster may occur.

Phase 4: Decision and execution: this is the active phase, in which, the individual is after the decision making stage, concerning his intentions and becomes active (transforming thoughts into series of actions). At this stage the mental mechanisms which are responsible for activities suppression and which were dominant at the previous phases are no longer dominant. The urge to do something, to be active, to take again the control over the life, to make an attempt to change the circumstances or at least influence them those are motivating the actions of the individual. The Adrenal is seizing the control and replacing the brain. Adrenalin rush, is commanding the body and directing it actions, stagnation is over, time for action. The deeds and the outcomes are strongly depends on the quality of the individuals psychological profile. No matter how stable and solid this profile is, the actions at the beginning are correlated to amount of the Adrenalin that is present in blood.Later the more stable individual is suppressing the preliminary impulsivity, while the less stable, more fragile person is continuing with hysterical activities and developing signs of mental distresses.

Control seizure over the "fragile" individuals is impossible by ordinary means. People, who identified as potentially harmful and dangerous, must be isolated and even physically restrained. The problem is, that such an individuals', who as previously acknowledgedasunstable and with tendencies to develop abusive behaviors and disorders are affected so deeply with the new circumstances and by decisions they made during the previous phase, that they become unfit and impossible to communicate with. Unfortunately, there are more than enough examples to what such individuals are capable to cause. Therefore, no matter how cruel and inconsiderate it may sounds, they ought to be isolated and treated.

The significant symptoms of the execution phase are:

• Aggression – even the individuals' of stable and robust "psychological profile", sensing it. Seemingly, the sensed aggression is the "leftovers" of the previous phases, where it is stimulated by fear, because of the changes in routine circumstances. Opposite to" fragile/unstable" individuals, the "robust/stable" individuals are capable to maintain self control and are not expected for acute actions.

• Hectic activity -which is an outcome of the Adrenalin excretion, meant to compensate the mental exhaustion and suppression sensed by the individuals' in previous phase. Usually, the essence of the activities is similar to both types of individuals' (fragile and stable) and is directed to deal with the new circumstances and attempt to improve those. The difference is in the nature of the activities and the outcomes caused by those. While the stable/robust individual is seeking for possible alternatives (thinking about the potential alternative jobs for example), the fragile/instable type is thinking about the ways to express his protest, anger and frustration. He is hectically looking for those, whom he can blame and hold responsible for the situation and evaluating the means for revenge and punishment. He is creating around himself a sort of a wall that is blocking the outside stimulations (including the communication attempts) and creating a form of alternative reality in which such an individual is attempting to find consolidation and escape from the offensive environment. In this space (reality), the offended individual is finding a refuge and comfort. He is the significant person that is capable to control and shape the circumstances in this alternative world. Later, this "supreme ruler", guided by irrational thinking and "perverted" reality assessment is feeling secured enough to declare war, on the environment that offended him. Obviously, that the participants of the offending environments, becoming the victims of this war, as revenge targets.

Moreover, it is possible that the fragile/unstable individuals, who are of high intellect and of high ability for persuasion and leadership, are capable to "contaminate" additional individuals and lead them on their way. The described scenario is not limited only for those, who are also of fragile/instable psychological profile. Even the strongest and most stable, pragmatic persons may be affected and leaded into the turmoil of fear, panic and chaos. Manipulative and talented individuals, who are affected by fear and set of personal interests, may become the so called "unofficial leaders", subvert the hierarchy of existing leadership and divert the flow of events in direction that serves their own interest and which is not necessary good for the leaded individuals.

Countermeasures: too late: the decisions were made.

Phase a': A "new" α stage – at this point the reaction activities are finished. The individual have fully accepted a new reality and reached all conclusions. He developed behavior strategy, according which he intends to act and live.

The level of fear stabilized and remains unchanged – till the next time. The newly achieved fear level could be higher than initial α level, but can be lower too. This depends on the level of uncertainty that the individual is experiencing at the moment. Also, it depends on the outcomes of the change process for the individual and his life. Person, who been involved in number of such a change cycles is develops some sort of a situational adaptation to crises and reducing the fear level during additional changes.

Level of Fear



Fig-1: Fear Development Model.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the presented article was to evaluate and investigate a fear as a behavior shaping and controlling stimuli. By understanding that fear is highly powerful and meaningful factor a specially in times of crisis and acute changes, it is important to understand what are the fear development phases, this to be able to control its effects on the environment and the participants.

The proposed model, which describes the fear development stages, is a step towards the required understanding and assessment. It offers the mangers and the organizational decision makers a path and guidance not only to understand the fear but to influence and navigate it to reduce its potentially destructive outcomes.

The model is concentrated on a single individual and therefore there is a need for additional research and study, to understand the spread and contamination of fear from individual to general population.

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