

StorySHOP

DIGITAL STORIES AGAINST WORK RELATED STRESS

*A step-by-step handbook to learn a digital storytelling based training methodology
addressing healthcare professionals*

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Storytelling for Social and Health Care Workers Professional Identity Development

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Introduction

Objective

The objective of this handbook is exploring the process of producing a story, and the features of storytelling, which make it an appropriate didactical resource to be applied to the training of healthcare professionals.

In particular, telling stories gives us the opportunity to: go through our daily experience, even when it appears hard and negative to us; analyse it; spot problems and their causes more precisely; identify possible solutions.

Therefore, storytelling is particularly beneficial to professionals who undergo high level of stress due to their daily work experience.

This handbook provides readers with an overview of digital storytelling and its importance in the vocational training environment and with a description of the steps to be taken to manage a digital storytelling workshop addressing healthcare professionals.

Please note that the digital storytelling base methodology described in the present handbook is mainly a self-empowerment tool, addressing healthcare professionals, to be integrated into healthcare vocational training systems and curricula.

Context

StorySHOP project

This handbook was produced as a result of the project *StorySHOP: Storytelling for Social and Health Care Workers Professional Identity Development*, funded by the Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer Of Innovation - action of the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning programme. The programme aims at facilitating the production of innovative vocational training resources, as well as improving the quality of vocational training systems and opportunities at European level.

The specific objective of the StorySHOP project is to produce an innovative, effective training methodology and set of materials which address the trainers of healthcare professionals, with an aim

to improve the target audience's capacity to manage excessive stress and to establish balanced relationships with their clients.

It is possible to identify, aside from the cultural differences which emerged from our project, two common specifics in the healthcare profession and also that it requires a strong professional engagement in a difficult context of life. Key competences in relation to these specifics are – to be considered in the different educational paths - on the one hand socio-emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, and on the other hand resilience. For the latter competence, it is essential to underline the importance of resources such as hope, optimism and self-empowerment.

The storytelling-based methodology is a tool to promote these resources. Particularly, the StorySHOP methodology reinforces the narrative process and facilitates the sharing process, which allow capitalizing on experiences in a training environment.

More information about StorySHOP can be found on the project website <http://storyshop-llp.eu/>

Digital storytelling based methodology

In order to reach such objectives, an existing training methodology was customised and adapted to the specific learning needs and characteristics of healthcare professionals. Such a methodology was developed by seed association, one of the StorySHOP project's partner organisations; it had been applied to several social and international development projects in the field of education of children or young people experiencing difficult physical or socio-economic conditions.

When creating and telling stories, people express particularly relevant elements of their own personal experience, opinions, and thoughts, analysing them and granting them meaning in an indirect way.

Such specific features have been beneficial to young people and children, in order to improve their relational, expressive and communicative competencies; moreover, stories allow them to re-elaborate difficult or painful situations, without having to directly describe them, and learn how to better handle them.

Thanks to this particular advantage, storytelling was identified as the most effective training methodology to address healthcare professionals and improve their ability to manage stress and establish balanced relationships with their clients.

The choice to render stories in digital format, and develop a digital storytelling methodology has three main reasons: firstly, available ICT resources make it possible to increase expressive abilities; secondly, necessary hardware and software to produce digital stories is easily and freely available to any institution or individual; thirdly, videos can be easily shared among groups or international communities.

The opportunity to publish stories and make them available to a larger group of users is very important to share experiences; to promote this digital storytelling based training methodology to a wide audience, and to build a wide network of healthcare professionals who can cooperate to further develop the methodology and to further improve their capacity to manage stress on the job.

As the general objective of StorySHOP project is improving the quality of vocational training resources addressing healthcare professionals at European level, it is important to reach a wide, international community of users and stakeholders.

More detailed information about digital storytelling based training methodology is provided in the next paragraphs.

Recipients

This handbook addresses in particular trainers and teachers employed in healthcare training institutions and dealing with students who are being trained to become healthcare operators, since this group of professionals is at risk of experiencing stress and burnout (*de Jonge et al., 2007*).

Specific elements and features of healthcare related professions were identified by researchers as causes of professionals' stress, potentially causing burnout. Among them, the main ones can be listed as follows:

[...] the strain of working with too many patients (Hegney et al., 2006); not having enough time to spend with needy patients (Boykin et al., 2003); the need to make life-changing decisions, sometimes with limited information (Egan, 1993); a great deal of contact with clients and carers who are themselves under duress; and conflict with other busy colleagues with possibly differing agendas (Skovholt, 2001). [...] In addition, the changing

characteristics and expectations of the new generation of health professional graduates add complexity to the situation (Hodges et al., 2005; Holmes, 2006). This younger cohort of individuals tends to perceive hospitals as harsh and unresponsive institutions that offer stressful and unexciting employment opportunities, in which there is widespread unpaid overtime, disparaging and rigid management, limited autonomy, instability, difficult working conditions, and rapid staff turnover (Holmes, 2006). (McAllister and McKinnon, 2008).

Digital storytelling based workshops, activities and training initiatives are beneficial to healthcare professional who undergo the abovementioned kinds of risk, because they allow reflection and self-learning, starting from specific, relevant, professional experiences. In particular, telling a story about a situation that is normally perceived as difficult, or as a problem, is helpful to understand what causes such difficulty; what can be changed; if something in the professional's behaviour can be improved, etc. (Jamissen and Skou, 2010).

Learning methodology

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, digital storytelling is a valuable resource to enhance self-reflection and self-learning; indeed, several kinds of workshops have been organised and offered to individuals, for them to learn how to tell relevant episodes of their own life, and render them in a digital format. More information about these kinds of activities can be found on the website of the Center for Digital Storytelling (*Center for Dgital Storytelling*: <http://storycenter.org/> Last access on 09/10/2014).

Moreover, other programmes aim at developing, promoting and sharing stories representing patients' experiences, in order to facilitate deeper understanding by healthcare professionals. For example, the project *Patient Voices*, developed in the UK, gathers a whole set of digital stories, showing the experience of patients, practitioners and healthcare practitioners about their daily professional experience, in order to provide a deep understanding of the world of care, and make it possible to improve it (*Patient Voices*: <http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/> Last access on 09/10/2014).

Creating stories, rendering them in digital format, sharing them, analysing them and discussing about them is always helpful to enhance self-learning and understanding, but such a process can be customised and adapted to different educational and training needs. Indeed, digital storytelling based programmes can focus on particular elements of a specific individual or group, personal or professional experience, as shown by the two abovementioned initiatives.

As stated in the introduction, this handbook focuses on a digital storytelling based training methodology addressing healthcare professionals and aiming at increasing their capacity to manage work-related stress, avoid burnout and establish balanced relationships with their clients.

In order to reach such objective, StorySHOP project's consortium has transferred the *Digital Storytelling for Development (DSD)* methodology, produced by seed association, one of the project partner organisations, to vocational training field, in healthcare environment.

This methodology was developed as a resource for didactical activities addressing children and young people experiencing difficult socio-economical, psychological or physical conditions.

The main feature of DSD is the opportunity offered to learners to express, understand and re-elaborate personal feelings and experience; in particular, by creating a story, they can tell much about their own values, opinions, thoughts, without having to directly address them. Learners can thus deliver a strong and meaningful message without fearing to be judged, or to go wrong (*Botturi et al. 2014*).

Thanks to such a characteristic and advantage, DSD was identified as the appropriate training methodology to be customised and transferred to vocational training in healthcare environment. Detailed information about DSD methodology is available in the StorySHOP project's web based platform, in the "additional materials" section.

Stories

Telling a story means much more than simply reporting facts. It implies selecting relevant experiences and conveying a meaning that forms a consistent whole from characters, events and locations. Telling a story is difficult, and learning to tell stories is a powerful way to learn to understand personal experiences and how to communicate them to others (*Botturi et al. 2014*).

A story is not a mere list of events; as the main element of a story is represented by the characters who interact and act throughout it. In particular, characters need to make choices and take actions in order to react to what happens to them. Such decisions, actions and reactions communicate to the story's recipients a specific message, together with the values that characterize and influence ideas, opinions, ways to understand life, relationships, work...

In addition, characters change throughout a story; they change their way to act, react to events and take decisions. Their change is interesting to an audience because it tells what they learn throughout the story. The learning path of each story's characters and what they actually learn is a relevant part of the message communicated by the story to the audience.

Indeed, a story contains a series of events, causing the main character (or characters) to experience a tension, becoming stronger and stronger, among different possible ways to react and solve the situation. The option he/she selects at the end communicates to the audience the main value and message of the whole story.

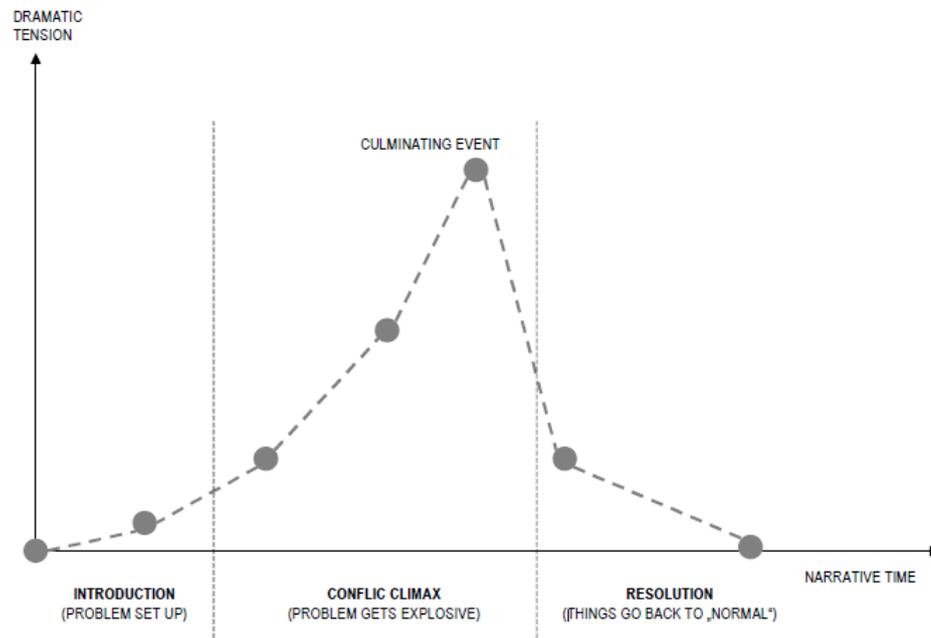
The sequence of events and actions told by a story grows throughout the plot, until it reaches a turning point, which is, an episode causing in the main character irreversible change.

A turning point happens, for example, when a character accepts for the first time a challenge that had always been avoided before; or when the objective of an adventure, or of the whole life, changes and gets wider than it had ever been before. Also, a step forward in the character's personal growth, changing the way to face the events happening in the story, can be considered a turning point. Finally, a change can occur in the characters' assumptions about the world and other elements of the story.

All the above mentioned features and elements are true for fiction stories, and fairy tales, too; for example, the story of *The booted cat* delivers us a message about trust and cleverness, through the events and choices of the cat and his master.

Consider the story *The three pigs*: the turning point is the moment when the wolf destroys the house of the first pig. Thanks to the attack, the piglets change their way to think about the meaning of work and about their brothers' commitment: they understand that it is wiser to invest time and energy in building sound resources, than working as little as possible to have fun, harming the quality and positive results of their effort.

The structure of a story can be summarised as follows; as represented in the sketch from Aristotle (*Associazione seed* (2009) *Scriviamo una Storia! Manuale per docenti ed educatori*).



Digital Storytelling Process

The following paragraphs contain a description of all the steps to be taken to produce a digital story, aiming at improving the capacity of healthcare professionals to manage stress and establish more balanced relationships with clients.

Topics

It is fundamental to identify a **theme**, which will be the subject of the story, and which is relevant for those who will produce it. For example, which is the main source of on the job stress for professionals? To keep thinking about the clients' suffering or problems, even in their spare time? To bear long and hard work shifts? To work hard to satisfy the expectations of colleagues, patients, friends, family members, etc?

StorySHOP partner organisations ran a needs analysis and research phase at the beginning of the project, during which they identified some potentially interesting topics for the countries involved in the project: Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, and the UK.

Below is a list of possible themes, which could be relevant for trainers or professionals who wish to produce a digital story, as they might represent a significant source of work related stress:

- Difficulty in balancing professional and personal life
- Excessive workload
- Interaction with clients
- Interaction with other professionals
- Interaction with clients' families and relatives
- Interaction with other stakeholders
- Ethical dilemma(s) and moral distress
- Social representation of healthcare professionals
- Status of care work
- Personal strengths and weaknesses within the profession
- Interaction with people with a different cultural background
- Interaction with mentally disabled clients
- Interaction with clients with dementia and similar
- Difficulty to manage professional practice, training, family, and other personal relationships at the same time.

It is important to note that digital stories can also address a general topic, such as a particularly relevant event in participants' professional experience, which improved their capacity to face the most stressful situation they can come across in daily job environment.

Story scripts

After having identified a relevant theme, and having reviewed the main features of stories, storytellers can write the script of their story, which should represent relevant elements of their professional experience, either positive or negative.

Storytellers should try to make sure the text they produce is a story, and not a description or chronicle of events. For details about specific features of stories, distinguishing them from different types of texts, please refer to the previous paragraphs of the handbook.

Joe Lambert (*Lambert, 2013*) identified seven steps leading to the production of a powerful story:

1. Owning insights
2. Owning emotions
3. Finding the moment
4. Seeing the story
5. Hearing the story
6. Assembling the story
7. Sharing the story

The first three steps are particularly relevant for the initial stage of the digital storytelling process, whereas the following are more useful to implement the steps illustrated in the next paragraphs of this handbook.

In particular, owning **insights** is about identifying a unique and powerful story, telling about a meaningful change; to find it, storytellers can ask themselves the following questions. “Which story do you wish to tell?” “What do you think it means to you?”

Being aware of the **emotions** caused the events told in the story (both at the time they happened and currently) is important to understand the meaning of the story to the full, and the impact on the storytellers’ lives (*Lambert, 2013*).

A precious help to produce a story script come from narrative stimuli produced by McAdams; you can find below guidelines to produce a script, focusing on a turning point:

In looking back on one's life, it is often possible to identify certain key "turning points" -- episodes through which a person undergoes substantial change. Turning points can occur in many different spheres of a person's life -- in relationships with other people, in work and school, in outside interests, etc. We are especially interested in a turning point in your understanding of yourself. Please identify a particular episode in your life story in which you underwent an important transition or change with respect to your understanding of yourself. It is not necessary that you consciously saw the event as a turning point when it actually happened. Rather, what is important is that you now see this particular event as a turning point in your life. If you feel that you have experienced no dramatic turning points in your life, then describe a particular episode in your life that comes closer than any other to qualifying as a turning point. Please describe what happened, when it happened, who was involved, what you were thinking and feeling, why this experience is significant, and what it may say about you and your personality.

(Available at: Northwestern University School of Education and Policy. https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/docs/guided_autobiograph.pdf Last accessed on 22/10/14)

In order to produce a story which can be helpful to improve the capacity to manage the most critical and stressful aspects of healthcare professions, storytellers should focus on their professional experience, while following the above-mentioned narrative stimulus to produce a story.

It is important to think about daily life episodes as professionals, trying to identifying turning points, which marked a changed in the way to interact with patients, relatives, or colleagues; or in the understanding of the role of a certain professionals; or in the way to prevent work-related stress to affect spare time or relationships...

"As the storytellers becomes clear about the meaning of their stories, we want to help them tell their story as a story by identifying a single moment that they can use to illustrate their insight. To help storytellers find this moment, we ask a series of questions: 'What was the moment when things changed? Were you aware of it at that time? If not, what was the moment you became aware that things had changed? Is there more than one possible moment to choose from? If so, do they convey different meanings? Which most accurately conveys the meaning in your story? Can you describe the moment in detail?'" (Lambert, 2009, p. 35)

When writing the story script, please bear in mind that the final digital story should be approximately 2 or 3 minutes long.

Please also consider that the writing process should not be interrupted.

Storyboarding

The next step is storyboarding, which means, dividing the story into parts, like the scenes of a movies, or a theatre play, and associating each scene to a sketch, representing how the scene should be illustrated.

Illustrations can be produced in a wide variety of ways, which will be described in detail in the next paragraphs.

This specific step in the digital storytelling process aims at supporting storytellers in finding the most appropriate images to be associated to specific parts of their stories; such images may not necessarily represent what the script is describing in that very moment of the story. Indeed, they might also represent the intended meaning or message in a metaphorical fashion, should storytellers consider it more appropriate to their story.

The storyboarding process is extremely important and should have enough time and energy dedicated to it, as it can help storytellers increase the emotional charge delivered by their video, make the message clearer and save time while recruiting or producing illustrations for the digital story. Indeed, situations, feelings, people, places or events can be represented in a variety of ways, and it is fundamental for storytellers to choose those they find closer to the specific ideas or nuances they wish to express. They could use pictures, showing what the narrating voice is describing; sentences, stressing what viewers are listening in that very moment; colours and/or shapes, evoking specific sensations; diverse materials or elements, linked to specific meanings.

Identifying the most appropriate way to depict a story will positively impact the capacity of the digital storytelling process to deepen storytellers' comprehension of their stress coping strategies and their ability to analyse and deeply understand the most stressful situations of their daily professional environment.

The following paragraph contains hints about how to identify different scenes within a story, which could be very useful during storyboarding process:

“As you recall the moment of change, ask yourself some questions: ‘What do you see? What do you hear? What’s being said? What are your thoughts? What are your feelings? What is the context behind your feelings? Have you been in this situation before or ever since? Have you been in these surroundings, or had these thoughts or feelings before or since? When? Is that part of this story [...]”

Why this image? What is it conveying to you? Is the meaning explicit or implicit? Does it have more than one meaning? If so, can you describe the multiple meanings?’ ’ (Lambert, 2009, p. 36-37)

Beside images, storytellers can add information about the kind of music or sound they would like to associate to their story, or other information.

A sample storyboard template can be found in the StorySHOP’s web based platform, in the “additional materials” section.

Such a template could help storytellers assemble the different elements of a digital story, according to the process described below:

“Digital stories contain multiple visual and audio layers. The visual layers are:

- The composition of a single image*
- The combination of multiple images within a single frame, either through collage or fading over time*
- The juxtaposition of a series of images over time*
- Movement applied to a single image, either by panning or zooming or the juxtaposition of a series of cropped details from the whole image*
- The use of text on screen in relation to visuals, spoken narration or sound*

The audio layers are:

- Recorded voice-over*
- Recorded voice-over in relation to sound, either music or ambient sound*
- Music alone or in contrast to another piece of music” (Lambert, 2009, p. 44)*

It is important to notice that some storytellers might find it more difficult to illustrate a story after having developed a storyboard, and could find easier to produce or find illustrations for some parts of a story “on the spot”. Storytellers should always feel free to work in the way they find more appropriate to their own individual approach and characteristics.

Voiceover and soundtrack

When we read stories in a book, we only need text, and possibly pictures, to understand them; besides, when we are told stories, we only hear a voice. Differently, when we create digital stories, we need to combine text, images, sounds and music into a digital format, which is, a short video. Therefore, after having identified turning points in their professional experience, having written the

story script and drafted the storyboard, storytellers should read out loud their story and record themselves. The resulting audio file will be the “reading voice” or narrator of the story.

In order to record voiceover, each participant will have to find a silent corner or room, in order to avoid background noise or other sounds interfering with the story’s flow.

It is important to notice that reading out loud a personal story is not easy and can be challenging, as it might arouse strong emotions, feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, reading one’s own story adds emotional power to a digital story; it strengthens the messages to be delivered to the audience, making it even clearer. Storytellers can take their time to exercise and find the confidence to record their own voice reading their story. It is also importance to remember to be expressive while reading the story’s text, in order to emphasise and convey specific feelings and key messages.

Thanks to free and easy-to-use audio editing software, it is not necessary to achieve a perfect reading of the whole story at the first try: if the reader says something wrong, or someone makes unpredicted noise, it will be enough to stop, breath and start from the beginning of the last sentence.

An audio editor will allow participants to cut the part of sentence containing the mistake or unwanted noise; it will also be possible to adjust the sound’s volume, and combine different tracks.

The possibility to combine more than one audio files, making one unique sound track is important; music can make storytellers work even richer, as it can further enhance the message they wish to deliver.

If a song can be combined with the narrating voice into one audio file, it will be much easier for storytellers to add pictures to it and edit the video (more information and suggestion about video editing will be provided later).

Storytellers may also add specific sounds, other than voice and music, to their story, to further strengthen expressive power of their work. Should this be the case, storytellers can record the sound they wish to include in their story, like a slamming door, footsteps, moving leaves, running water... and combine it with the voiceover recording.

Free software which allows all the above-mentioned tasks to be performed is *Audacity*, which allows users to record audio files, if they have a microphone to connect to the laptop, or to import existent files. Once imported, files can be cut, adjusted, edited and combined into a new, unique audio file.

Users might record voiceover with *Audacity*, edit it, import a song or music file they chose as the soundtrack of the story, adjust the tracks' volumes and produce a new audio file, containing both voiceover and soundtrack.

It is also possible to record narrating voice with a smartphone or tablet, reaching good quality products, which can be then easily moved to other devices, if needed. Storytellers can thus continue the digital storytelling process on their mobile device, if they wish, or on a different one, be it another smartphone or tablet, or a computer, or laptop.

After having recorded the narrating voice it is fundamental to listen to it from the laptop or mobile device without earphones, to get a clear idea of what the voice will sound like while watching the video. Indeed, listening to the recorded voice, without any soundtrack and with earphones would be very different and it would usually sound louder.

In order to be integrated into digital stories, songs or music files need to be copyright free. Should users wish to search for copyright free music to be included in their stories, there are some sources and websites, where they can look for it, like the website *jamendo.com*, which is an online library allowing visitors to search among numerous tracks by genre, instrument, and other features.

More information about *Audacity* and *jamendo.com* is available in the users' guide uploaded to StorySHOP project's web based platform, in the "additional materials" section.

Illustrations

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, illustrations strengthen the meaning conveyed by a story, by visually representing the words said by narrating voice.

Indeed, there are many different possible ways to illustrate a story, and storytellers can choose the most appropriate one, according to participants' characteristics, needs, and expectations; considering resources currently available.

For example, a digital story could be illustrated with participants' personal digital pictures; or with photographs representing them acting as the story's main characters, or with personal videos, or with videos showing people acting as the story's main characters.

Storytellers can also draw, or write sentences and then take pictures to include them in their digital story. They can be creative in terms of materials to use to produce their illustrations, using pencils, pens, crayons, watercolours, coloured paper, or even other materials like cloth or newspapers that could build a collage. Drawings can be produced on sheets of paper, whiteboards, blackboards, or even on hands or with software.

Illustrations do not necessarily have to show people, objects or situations mentioned in the story script; they can also refer to them or remind of them in a metaphorical fashion.

The general objective of the illustrating process is producing a set of digital pictures to be combined with the story's audio files, in order to visually represent the intended meaning of each scene.

Please note that the illustration and sound recording processes can be switched, which is, storytellers can also start producing or searching for pictures right after having finished the handbook, and then record the story's narrating voice and look for a soundtrack.

Copyright

Please note that all materials included in a digital story should be copyright free. If storytellers do not wish to use illustrations or music produced by themselves, they can search for copyright free materials on the internet, always mentioning the author and source of the resources they use.

More information about copyright free audiovisual materials can be found in the additional materials section of StorySHOP online platform.

Video editing

The last step to be taken to produce a digital story is editing the final video, containing illustrations, voiceover, soundtrack and credits.

Nowadays, all laptops' and computers' operating systems, as well as most tablets and smartphones, feature easy-to-use editing software, with which simple but good quality products can be easily

produced. For example, transition effects between pictures can be added; text can be overlapped to pictures or videos; different text formatting options are available.

Nearly all editing software feature the same editing process and basic characteristics: users can see a timeline, where they can drag pictures, sort them and add specific effect or transitions. Moreover, they can add text to an individual image, or to the whole video, like a title or credit. Users can also add one or more audio files, adjust the volume, and add sound effects like fading in or fading out. When users start using the software, a new project is created (which is not a video yet, remember!), and they should remember to save it often, not to lose all the work done, should the software crash. When users have finished with the editing process, users should always export their project as a video file and save it on their computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Only after having exported it, users will have a proper video to be watched, shared or sent to friends and relatives.

The whole digital storytelling process, including writing, illustrating, voice recording and editing can be easily implemented by means of a **mobile device**, like a smartphone or tablet, producing a good quality outcome. Please bear in mind that mobile devices can make certain phases of the digital storytelling process easier, but they are also more binding, as they do not allow some tasks or functionalities. More information about how to publish digital stories with a mobile device can be found in the additional materials section of StorySHOP project web based platform.

Besides combining audio files and pictures, while editing a video storytellers can also add titles to their stories, or other text objects, or enrich their videos with special effects and transitions. Such features might increase the quality of a digital story and make it more enjoyable for the audience to watch, but it might be unnecessary to add anything to the chosen pictures, soundtrack and narrating voice. Such choice is up to the storytellers. Should users wish to learn more about how to enrich a video with special effects, transitions or similar features, they can have a look at the “additional materials” section of the StorySHOP website, where they will also find more information about how to use video editing software in general.

Summing-up

After having finished the editing process, it is very useful to watch the video and think about the whole digital storytelling activity. Below is a set of questions storytellers might find useful to ask themselves, to evaluate the process they went through, and understand how it actually had an impact on their capacity to manage the most complex parts of their job.

For example, think about what you experienced while watching the video: do you like it?

Do you think the blending of words, images, music and sounds increases the story's expressive potential and strengthens the meaning it delivers?

Taking into account the whole digital storytelling process described in this handbook, do you consider the set of activities you performed useful to face the most difficult and stressful activities of your daily professional experience?

Did the whole process help you to reach a deeper understanding of your professional experience and identity?

Or to identify resources to overcome your difficulties or common difficulties shared by healthcare practitioners?

Had you ever thought about the turning point you described in your video, before producing this digital story?

Did you find it helpful to tell your own experience as a story, instead of as a description of chronicle?

Can you identify any differences between the two forms of expression?

Would you like to watch digital stories produced by other professionals?

Digital Storytelling workshop

The previous chapter of the handbook provided readers with a detailed description of the digital storytelling process, step-by-step, in order to enable any healthcare practitioner interested in reaching a deeper capacity to manage job-related stress to produce effective digital story.

This chapter provides suggestions and useful information to guide other practitioners through the digital storytelling process, in order to obtain good quality results.

The following paragraphs address trainers of healthcare practitioners in particular, but also other people wishing to share the above mentioned training methodology with other storytellers.

A digital storytelling workshop could be implemented in different contexts and environments, depending on the needs of both trainers and learners, as well as on the specific features of the vocational training systems into which it could be integrated. For example, it could be organised by vocational training institutions as an elective activity, available to students who are being trained to become healthcare professionals. Or it could be organised as an activities included into courses addressing professionals and promoting wellbeing. It could also be integrated into the range of online courses offered by open universities dealing with vocational healthcare training. As it is extremely adaptable, the digital storytelling based training methodology described in the present handbook can indeed be applied to a wide range of situations and environments.

Trainer competences

The trainer will be involved in many activities during the workshop, and should account for the individual necessity of each participant. Therefore, it could be useful to bear in mind that some essential competences could make his/her work smoother. The trainer should be able to focus on the turning point, by being totally competent in the knowledge about what a turning point is and many ways in which this can be exemplified. The trainer should be practised in handling a feedback process, which takes place at the end of the workshop, by knowing very well how to suggest feedback style and how to use feedback to reach the ultimate goal of the storytelling learning methodology. As the process involves the use of IT tools the trainer should have familiarity with the technology, and especially with the software and the devices used to develop a digital story. Finally yet importantly, the trainer needs to act as a catalyst in the creative process, by fostering the reflection of the participants.

Pre-workshop IT training

Depending on the level of digital literacy of the participants, it may be necessary to offer additional training before the experimentation activities, to enable them to become more familiar with the IT tools and software that allow the production of digital stories. To this aim, trainers could organise half-a-day “pre-workshop”, specifically focusing on increasing the knowledge of useful devices and programmes to implement the digital storytelling based methodology. In this way, during the process of story production, the storytellers would be less concerned with IT skills and able to concentrate on the content of the story itself. This has been noted during the experimentation that took place in Denmark and Italy, and for this same reason, a quick guide has been developed and is available in the section additional materials of the StorySHOP website.

When possible, during the workshop it would be useful to envision the presence of IT support staff, who could solve technical problems in real-time.

Duration and schedule

The activities hereby described can be performed in order to implement a **three-day** digital storytelling workshop, which can be scheduled as follows.

Day 1:

- Icebreaking activities, for participants to introduce themselves: *20 minutes*
- Teambuilding exercises, thanks to which participants can be helped become more familiar with stories and their specific features: *40 minutes*
- Introduction to the workshop’s content and methodology: *40 minutes*

Coffee break

- Identification of the main characteristics of stories: *15 minutes*.

A written document can also be handed in to participants

- Participants are handed a narrative stimulus and individually identify a turning point in their professional experience: *15 minutes*

- Individual drafting of the story: *1 hour*

Lunch break

- Sharing of stories' scripts: *30 minutes*
- Discussion and reflection: *1 hour*

Coffee break

- Final drafting of story scripts: *30 minutes*
- Storyboarding: *1 hour*
- Evaluation of first day's activities: *15 minutes*

Day 2:

- Review of first day's key points: discussion, questions and observations: *1 hour*
- Storyboard finalisation: *15 minutes*

Coffee break

- Search and production of multimedia components ready for the stories (workshop): *1 hour and 30 minutes*

Lunch break

- Workshop to be continued: *1 hour and 30 minutes*

Coffee break

- Workshop to be continued: *1 hour and 15 minutes*
- Evaluation of second day's activities: *15 minutes*

Day 3:

- Participants introduce and show their digital stories. Discussion: *1 hour and 30 minutes*

Coffee break

- Presentation/discussion to be continued

Lunch break

- Wrap up - review of the digital storytelling based methodology to be applied to healthcare training and feedback: *1 hour and 30 minutes*

Coffee break

- Discussion about how to integrate the digital storytelling based methodology into ordinary, ongoing healthcare training activities and programmes. Feedback: *1 hour and 15 minutes*
- Final evaluation of trainers' training activities: *15 minutes*

Please note that the abovementioned schedule is only a suggestion of how a workshop could be organised, but it could be adapted, depending on specific needs of trainers and learners.

For example, if it is possible to dedicate more time to such activities, it would be possible to further improve the work on writing the story script and retrieving multimedia resources to produce the digital story. Indeed, it would be easier to identify the most suitable method to illustrate a story, and to develop the images without time pressure. Facilitators could also help participants refine the text they write, for example paying more attention to stylistic details; to the choice of specific terms and sentences; to the choice and description of particular events, or to the use of direct and indirect dialogues. All these elements help make the story's message clearer and its emotional charge stronger, increasing the effectiveness of StorySHOP digital storytelling based training methodology.

Moreover, it may not be possible to dedicate three full, consecutive days to a digital storytelling workshop in some cases, for example because work shifts or classes' timetables could prevent it. It is thus possible to split the activities listed in the description of a possible schedule into several **shorter sessions**, to be organised on different days, as long as some activities are always implemented in the same session. In particular, icebreaking activities, teambuilding exercises, story script writing and sharing should not be split; also storyboarding and illustrations' production should not be split into different sessions, and should be organised soon after the first group of activities. Video editing and sharing could instead be implemented after a while, without damaging the whole digital storytelling and coping process.

It is fundamental to pay particular attention to the story script writing process, which should never be interrupted; not even by breaks, if possible.

Materials

The materials and equipment needed to manage a digital storytelling based workshop is not difficult, nor expensive to find and retrieve. It will only be necessary to have:

- Paper, pens and pencils, to write stories and scripts
- Materials which participants could use to produce their illustrations and which could facilitate their creativity and involvement (like coloured paper, water colours, crayons, cloth, coloured chalk, newspapers and magazines, etc.)
- A flipchart (or blackboard, or whiteboard)
- Storyboard templates, should they be helpful to participants to storyboard their story
- Cameras, to take pictures or shoot videos, should participants wish to illustrate their story in this way (or mobile devices)
- Microphones or recorders, to record voiceover (or mobile devices)
- Earphones, for participants to listen to their own recordings, or to search for a soundtrack for their digital story
- Software to edit audio files, in order to correct, improve and edit voiceover and soundtrack
- Laptops to edit the final video (or mobile devices)
- Internet connection
- If the group of participant is numerous, it is useful to have a projector, to watch the digital stories together

Icebreaking and teambuilding

If the participants to the workshop are not familiar with stories and storytelling, some exercise can be performed together, in order to start introducing the subject.

For example, everybody could be asked to tell a random word, the first that comes to their mind, and all the words can be written on the flipchart. Each one can then write a short story using those words. Otherwise, each word could be written on a post-it; then, all participants, one by one, could pick a

word and write a sentence on the whiteboard. Each sentence should be connected to the previous one, in order to build a story, on the whole.

Alternatively, facilitators can bring some images (like pictures cut from magazines' pages), showing characters, situations or actions, and participants can write a story involving the subjects of those images.

Participants could also be asked to bring a personal object and show it to the rest of the group, without telling anything. Each one could then guess a story related to one object and, at the end, the owner could reveal the true story of that object.

There are many activities to perform and create, which can be useful to understand more deeply stories and their characteristics; trainers can pick one of the abovementioned ones, or create a new one, to better fit participants' needs and features.

Such activities can serve as team building activities as well, and the resulting stories will be useful in the following steps of the workshops, to discover together the specific features belonging to stories and distinguishing them from other kinds of texts.

Aim of the workshop

It is important to make sure the objective of the workshop and of each scheduled activity are clear to participants.

Below are some sample sentences and ideas that may be helpful for facilitators to introduce the digital storytelling process:

- The aim of the workshop is learning to create a digital story, which is helpful to reach a deeper understanding of participants' professional experience, and in particular to learn how to manage more effectively the most difficult elements of healthcare practitioners' profession.
- The interaction between trainers and facilitators facilitates the process of thinking, understanding and expressing. It is never an evaluation of performed activities or achieved results. In addition, the objective of asking participants to share their stories and videos is enhancing the abovementioned process.

- All the activities during which participants are asked to share their stories, experiences or ideas have a specific objective and are meant to increase the effectiveness of the overall digital storytelling based healthcare training methodology. Nevertheless, if anyone does not wish to disclose personal thoughts or event, they should never be forced to; their choices need to be acknowledged and respected.
- Understanding and expressing an experience by means of a story may not be easy to everybody; it can actually be difficult for some and some participants may need more time allocated to retrieve ideas and words. Nevertheless, the process will finally flow for everyone, thanks to practice and the help of trainers
- During the workshop, different expressive languages will be used: at the beginning, participants will only produce written texts, which will then be combined with images, sounds and music. Each participant will find it easier or more difficult to work with some specific languages, but familiarity with all of them can improve thanks to exercise and cooperation.
- Each experience is precious in itself; right or wrong experiences do not exist. The objective of the workshop is not producing a story that everybody else likes, but a story that is helpful to participants.

After a general introduction to the workshop and its activities, it could be useful to share the schedule of foreseen activities with participants, in order to make them aware of the steps they will go through during the following days.

Scheduled activities and the general objective of the workshop could still be unclear to participants after the introduction and they might ask for example of the kind of outcome they are expected to produce. Should this happen, facilitators can provide them with examples, but they should not be linked to professional experience, otherwise storytellers would be likely biased by the example and could find it difficult to create their own story and to think about their own experience without referring to the sample digital story.

Should you wish to show a video to your group of participants, you can find sample digital stories dealing with different topics on the website of the Centre for Digital Storytelling: <http://storycenter.org/stories/>

Getting to know stories

The first activity to be performed after the general introduction to the workshop is the story script writing. Before asking participants to write a story, it is important to make sure participants know what a **story** is and are aware of its main features, which differentiate it from chronicles, reports, or descriptions. Such features are summarised in the previous paragraph of this handbook.

Trainers could review stories' specific characteristics, together with participants, starting from the texts they produced during the warm-up stages: in particular, each one could be asked to consider such tales and identify the elements that make it a story. Trainers could write such element on a whiteboard (or flipchart), to share them with the whole group; moreover, should some relevant parts be missing, they can be added and discussed with participants, to make sure they are clear to everybody.

After a collective brainstorming, trainers can hand in to participants a paper summarising all the characteristics identified together during discussions: a sample **document describing the main features of stories** can be found on the StorySHOP project web based platform, in the “additional materials” section.

At this stage, only one step is missing before asking participants to write their story: identifying a common theme, together. Trainers can decide to focus on the general objective of the workshop, which is, the capacity to manage stressful or particularly difficult situations experienced on the job by professionals in the caring environment. Otherwise, a specific theme, within such subject, can be selected as the particular focus of the workshop.

More detailed information and suggestions about possible topics on which a workshop could focus to be helpful to participants are provided in the paragraph named “Topics” of the previous chapter (“Digital Storytelling process”).

Turning points

Participants now have all the necessary information to write a story about a turning point in their professional experience; nevertheless, a narrative stimulus can be handed in to them, in order to guide

their storytelling process and help them producing a story which can deepen their understating of difficult professional situations, decreasing the stress caused by them. More information about **narrative stimulus**, together with a sample stimulus, is provided in the paragraph named “Story script” of the previous chapter (“Digital Storytelling process”).

Often times, when asked to identify a turning in their professional experience, participants do identify deep and personal events, but this is not compulsory. Storytellers are free to choose any fact or experience thanks to which they noticed a changed and took a step forward from a professional point of view. Facilitators should not encourage participants to include particularly personal or critical turning points in their digital story but, rather, respect trainees’ decisions.

Should participants find it difficult to write a whole story on their own, trainers can establish intermediate steps within the process: for example, the first step could be thinking about a turning point and share it; then, participants could be asked to think about the characters involved in that episode.

The following step could involve considering what happened before and after the turning point, or what changed, and the last step could consist in writing the whole story script, including all the above mentioned elements. When asking participants to write the whole story script, please consider that the final digital story should be a video of the duration of 2 or 3 minutes, approximately.

Sharing stories

After having identified their turning point, or written their story script, participants are usually asked to share it with the rest of the group. Such activity may be difficult for some people, and some storytellers may not see the point of it at first, but it is actually important and beneficial to them, from several points of view.

The objective of sharing the results of the intermediate steps must never be judgmental or evaluating the work of participants; rather, it should aim at making sure they correspond to the specifications mentioned in workshop’s guidelines and documents. It can be useful for participants to identify a turning point they actually wish to render in audiovisual format, to watch with the rest of the group. Sharing a story, or the description of a turning point, also helps participants understand if the message

they wish to deliver corresponds to that perceived by the audience. Finally, telling a story or a turning point to others makes storytellers more deeply aware of the emotions they feel when working on their story and of the emotions they wish to communicate to their audience.

Facilitators can help participants understanding the emotions involved in their story by asking some questions or enhance discussion about specific topics. Sample questions which could be asked to storytellers include:

“As you shared your story, or story idea, what emotions did you experience? Can you identify at what points in sharing your story you felt certain emotions? If you experienced more than one emotion, were they contrasting? [...] Which emotions will best help the audience understand the journey contained within your story? Is there an overall tone that captures a central theme? Can you convey your emotions without using ‘feeling’ words or relying on clichés to describe them? For example, how can you imply the idea of happiness without saying ‘I felt happy?’” (Lambert, 2009, p. 33)

Despite the advantages of the story sharing process, some participants may be unwilling to share their story with the rest of the group, nor with wider communities; should that be the case, such participants should never be forced to share personal stories against their will. Participants who do not wish to share a story should not provide any feedback to their colleagues, and it would be important for facilitators to individually discuss with them to understand the reason of such a choice, without trying to change it.

When stories are shared and feedback is provided, comments should also be positive and highlight the resources and positive sides of both the story and storyteller, otherwise the digital storytelling process would yield no empowerment. Moreover, all feedback should be generic and explicit suggestions should be avoided: provided insight should only help participants identify the most suitable solution by themselves, because they have all necessary resources to reach professional wellbeing on their own. Trainers should merely facilitate the process.

When all participants finish their scripts, they share them with the whole group, to gather feedback and insight; then, trainers should leave the group some time to adjust and edit their stories.

Digital stories

At this stage of the workshop, all participants have already written and finalised their stories about turning points in their professional experiences.

In the following steps storytellers should render their texts in digital format, by accomplishing the next tasks: storyboarding; voiceover recording; searching for a soundtrack; producing illustrations; editing the final video.

Detailed information and suggestions about the above mentioned steps are provided in the previous chapter of the handbook, called “digital storytelling process”.

It is important to consider that participants are likely to be quicker or slower in completing the different steps of the process, depending on how familiar they are with the expressive languages they will have to use, or with the tools suggested by trainers. This is one reason why a previous workshop may be helpful, to overcome the technical issues relating to the digital aspects of the storytelling.

It is thus useful to provide the group with a **description of all the tasks** they are to accomplish to produce a digital story, so that they can independently move from one step to another, asking for the trainers’ help if and when they need it. For example, if a participant is quicker than the other in completing the storyboard, he/she can start looking for a soundtrack or record his/her voice, without waiting for the whole group to finish, and possibly dedicating more time to other steps which could be more difficult or relevant to the story.

Please note that is extremely important to encourage participants to dedicate enough time to the storyboarding and illustrating process. Indeed, when storytellers watch their final product, together with the rest of the group and realise that they have not found the suitable picture to convey a specific meaning or emotion, they are quite disappointed.

Facilitators should therefore be very clear when introducing the different ways and tools available to participants to produce their illustrations, stating that searching for readymade pictures on the internet is always the most suitable option.

Should participants find it difficult to identify the appropriate way to illustrate their story, in order to convey a specific meaning, message or emotion, facilitators can help them but should never tell or

suggest how a story or a particular part of it should be illustrated. Such suggestion would indeed be a personal interpretation of the facilitator and would probably bias the storyteller.

A group of participants to a workshop involving a digital storytelling based training methodology are likely to have different level of confidence and familiarity with software to produce digital audiovisual materials and ICT in general. Some of them may be used to use laptops or mobile device to publish photos, audio files or videos, but others may have never performed such tasks before. If storytellers are not familiar with ICT tools and software they might need more time to produce their digital story; they might find it difficult to reach the desired quality level when producing pictures, recording the story's narrating voice or editing a video; they could also focus too much on the technological quality of the story, and too little on its content and depth. Such difficulties can cause stress and frustration in participants and they should be avoided, for example by providing storytellers with **documents describing how to use ICT tools and software** before the workshop, allowing them the time to practice and ask questions, if needed. A **pre-workshop session** could also be organised in order to review tools and programmes, together with trainers, and make exercise, if such format were more useful and appropriate to the specific needs of the participants' group.

Moreover, regarding storyboarding phase, it is important to notice that some storytellers might find it more difficult to illustrate a story after having developed a storyboard, and could find easier to produce or find illustrations for some parts of a story "on the spot". Storytellers should always feel free to work in the way they find more appropriate to their own individual characteristics. It is up to facilitators to identify the most suitable methodology and digital storytelling approach to participants' needs and expectations.

Debriefing

The last part of a digital storytelling based workshop should consist in sharing digital stories produced by participants, which means, watching them all together.

This step is extremely important for two main reasons: on the one hand, having the opportunity to watch a multimedia product is important for storytellers to see their own product, the result of their two-day work. Participants can also watch the videos more than once; they can access them whenever

they want, and can perceive that the combination of words, sounds and pictures actually increase the expressive power of a story, improving the strength of delivered message.

On the other hand, sharing the stories fosters reflection and self-learning from the digital storytelling activities, facilitating participants' process of understanding their professional experience, and increasing their ability to face the most stressful or difficult parts of their work.

The importance of feedback

In order to enhance such process feedback is welcome, and criticism too, but it **must** be constructive. The meaning of feedback is to report back, but some confusion about the concept often occurs. To be able to use feedback as an asset the trainer should prepare the participants and give some background knowledge on its goal. Trainers play a crucial role in leading and moderating discussion and reflection, for the workshop learning objectives to be successfully reached.

The workshop should be concluded by a **brainstorming session**. Below notes to provide some support to trainers in leading a brainstorming session, focussing on three main topics: compliance with the workshop's objective; participants' feelings and impressions; participants learning process. Below is a set of questions that could be asked to storytellers to assess the workshop process:

1. **Compliance with the workshop's objective**

Has the workshop's objective been reached? What made it possible? Which part was most interesting to you? Please try to summarise what happened in these two days. What have you learnt? Do you think you something changed after the workshop? Do you consider timing and schedule as appropriate? Do you think the location was appropriate? Did you feel the need to have more space and locations dedicated to individual work and reflection? Did you feel the need for more and deeper theoretical information? What was the role of the facilitator during the process?

2. **Participants' feelings and impressions**

What did you feel during the workshop? Did you find it hard? Was it easier than you expected? What did you find important during the process?

3. Participants learning process

Should you describe what happened today with three words, what would you say? (Write them on a piece of paper). Was it useful to you, as professionals? Was it useful to write and share a story to understand more deeply your professional identity? Should you describe what happened during the workshop with a metaphor, what would you say? Did you find one of the activities of the workshop particularly useful? Did you find it helpful to produce the story in digital format, or would it have been enough to write it? Did you find it helpful to watch the story together with the whole group? Was it important to work in group? How will you be able to use your knowledge about the turning point in your future view of your own professional process of change? How do you think other people can benefit from your production/your work?

Trainers should write keywords suggested by the brainstorming on a whiteboard (or flipchart), organising and structuring the information and feedback provided by participants; it would also be useful to summarise the main steps taken during the workshop, from the introduction to the end.

Assessment

During the storytelling workshop, trainers should carefully observe the learning progresses of the participants. In the scope of the StorySHOP project four learning objectives (LO), which can be assessed, have been defined:

- **LO1** Explore and understand digital storytelling, the design and concepts how storytelling can help alleviate professional stress
- **LO2** Identify and use e-tools and create digital stories appropriate for sharing with colleagues, professionals and students

- **LO3** Create and share the story, engaging peer healthcare workers, students and other professionals; create a plan to extend use of the techniques (cascade to others)
- **LO4** Evaluate and reflect upon the application of the learning process

What has been learnt during the storytelling based methodology workshop is supposed to be integrated in professional and private daily life in many ways. Therefore, besides the observation during the training activity, the best way to assess whether the learning objectives have been achieved is to make a follow-up study at 4-6 months after the workshop. Qualitative methodology, either in-depth interviews or focus group, is particularly suitable to investigate this kind of topic, meaning the experience of the participants after the workshop. The themes covered by the interview or the focus group should shed the light on the four learning objectives that have been defined. Examples of questions related to each learning objectives are the following:

- LO1: Have you ever thought, over the past months, about the story you have produced during the storytelling workshop? Did this help you living your professional life?
- LO2: Think about these months since you attended the workshop. Have you ever used any of the technological tools that you have used to produce the digital story?
- LO3: Have you ever shared the story you produced with your colleagues or with your family? Have you brought this one-step further by suggesting the others to learn this kind of story production? Have you ever triggered one of your colleagues to think about their own turning point?
- LO4: Have you ever thought about what you have learnt through digital storytelling based methodology? What do you think about this learning method?

The assessment aims at understanding whether any aspect of the learning methodology have been integrated in participants' lives, and whether the narration and sharing of past experience has been able to positively influence the future professional experience.

Conclusions

The StorySHOP project and consortium produced a highly effective, flexible and adaptable digital storytelling based methodology, which could be applied to several different environments, addressing different target groups.

The general objective is always to improve the participants' capacity to manage the most stressful and critical situations of their daily professional experience, and the methodology should always be considered a self-help tool to be learnt, or taught.

Indeed, digital stories can be produced by healthcare professionals to learn reflective thinking about their professional experience and identifying a turning point. Telling a digital story about such a topic is important to allow storytellers understand the strategies they have already implemented to overcome difficult situations and how they could cope with the daily challenges of their professional environment in the future.

Moreover, the StorySHOP digital storytelling training methodology could be integrated into vocational training systems, programmes and initiatives, in order to be taught to healthcare professionals or students, as the authors of this handbook described in the previous chapters.

If healthcare trainers wish to implement StorySHOP digital storytelling based training methodology, they should keep in mind this could be done at different levels, depending on trainers' competencies; on the specific objective they would like to reach, on the participants' characteristics and expectations.

Specifically, StorySHOP training methodology can be applied at three different levels:

- A “subjective level”. Participants would only produce a digital story, without necessarily sharing it, nor getting any feedback. Trainers should only guide them through the digital storytelling process, in order to help them tell a story about a turning point in their professional experience
- A “relational level”. Participants would produce a digital story and share it, without necessarily exchanging any feedback.

- A “community level”. Participants would produce a digital story, share it and exchange feedback. Trainers should be able to facilitate groups dynamics, in order to encourage constructive feedback, and should be aware of how to support participants’ reactions to their own digital story or to others’ ones.

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