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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

MARCH/APRIL 2021

THE ART OF BOREDOM

CREATIVITY THRIVES IN THE QUIET

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KEEP IT SIMPLE

IT IS TIME to make a difference. It is time to make an impact. And it is time to leave a legacy for this generation of marketers. The reality is that we all received a huge dose of humility in 2020. Many of us never saw it coming and we put a great deal of effort into returning things to normal. However, the main lesson may be that it is time to let go of normal and move forward positively.

Most businesses run according to conventional logic. Finance, operations and logistics all operate through established best practices where rules are set and a good reason is needed to break them. But there are other parts of a business that simply don't work this way, and marketing is one of them. To be clear, marketing is a part of business where a "best practice" is hard to define. If we find ourselves following a standard process our brand could become more like our competitors', which destroys our advantage.

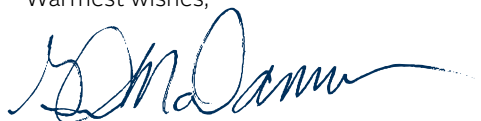
The marketer's life was difficult and lonely long before COVID-19 hit. Oftentimes, a company's management will crave the obvious, whereas the marketer generally fears the obvious. The two mindsets don't always mesh and departing from accepted logic can be risky for a marketer. Subscribing to logic has historically been so much easier than using our imagination. So, maybe we need to let go of the old mindset and get back to what matters most: our customers.

With 2020 behind us, we can resolve to simplify our work and reject thoughts of discontent, anxiety, and discouragement. Instead, we can focus on cheerfulness, generosity and diligence in our service of the communities that matter to us most. This year can be a time to let go of convention, yet embrace the simplicity of doing right by others.

There is no reason we can not have a renewed sense of hope and a commitment to building trust. And while this may seem somewhat remedial or childlike, maybe that is what is needed more than ever. We have a chance to find better versions of our brands by finding a better version of ourselves. In many ways, the past year gave us a great excuse to let go of conventional logic. And this year gives us the opening to get back to the core of understanding others and serving them with joy.

Enjoy the first issue of the new year. We hope to inspire a little creativity with our cover article, "The Art of Boredom: Creativity thrives in the quiet." And in our second feature, "Safe Bet," we offer some thoughts on filling the emotional gap for clients and keeping things simple.

Warmest wishes,



Gina M. Danner, CEO

HERMES
CREATIVE AWARDS
2020
GOLD WINNER



**From small pockets
big creativity comes**

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**Participation
Party**

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TO LET GO OF CONVENTION,
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“PEOPLE ARE LONGING FOR CONNECTION—A NEED TO ANALYZE AND UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE AND THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THEIR BUSINESS.”

— THOMAS MICHAEL HOGG,
FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR,
TMH CONSULTING AND INVESTING GROUP

THOMAS MICHAEL HOGG noticed something different during the past year—something he did not expect when the world was thrust into an on again, off again ride of unprecedented consequences caused by a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. Solidarity. His clients—which over the years have included brands like PepsiCo (Germany), adidas (Germany), Campbell's Soup, Johnson Controls—seemed to be more communicative, and more apt to ask for help and support.

This closeness with the customer, as Hogg describes it, means they are more willing to join forces to withstand the

SAFE BET





crisis together. They are more open to talk directly about their financial situations. The volatility in every aspect of the market caused financial pressure the likes that nobody has ever seen.

"People are longing for connection—a need to analyze and understand the big picture and the current situation of their business," says Hogg, founder and managing director of TMH Consulting and Investing Group. "They want to know what is going to happen to the global value chains and

economies, and how this is going to affect their companies."

In his book, "Profitable Growth Strategy," Hogg laid out a seven-step profitable growth methodology that served as a proven blueprint implemented by some of the world's aforementioned leading brands in multiple countries. And while Hogg's blueprint is designed to help transform the business mindset, the world's financial landscape went into splintering directions.

To help make sense of the new landscape, TMH proactively approached its customers on a one-to-one basis, using a customer survey to discern their key challenges they were facing. The research uncovered that of the 160 CEOs surveyed, 94% said that their companies "cross-industry" were negatively impacted due to the global crisis.

Initially, there was a lot of "Don't lose hope for a better tomorrow," and "You need to transform your business model with a focus on quality, innovation and healthy finances," talk to help ease his clients through the discovery period. The challenges were about competitiveness, profitable growth and delivering relevant products/services.

But above all else, the communication that Hogg and his team extended made the difference. "Engagement, engagement, engagement," Hogg says. "Assertive communication with a sound handling and sensitivity of the difficult situation boosts engagement. Brands with a holistic employee, client and society value delivering will win new 'brand lovers.' So you have to find ways to connect with your tribe. There must be a 'wow' value."

Hogg recalls the story of a conversation he had with the CEO of an ad agency TMH represents. Hogg told his client to defend his core business and key client sales. Serving your key customers means "key." "Customer retention was very crucial in the first month of the pandemic. Our client was able to serve almost all of the key account customers reporting a similar sales volume and profit margin in 2019. Being relevant in this situation even drove attention to a much more bigger international competitor who was willing to acquire our client."

The client was surprised to be able to achieve an exit (company sale) during the crisis. ■



Extending a hand amid the madness

When Chris Rodgers founded Colorado SEO Pros in 2012, he wanted to create a boutique agency that could provide a suite of inbound marketing services for small- and mid-sized businesses, anything from international enterprise corporations to technology start-ups and e-commerce firms nationally and abroad.

Building a team of dedicated professionals capable of offering industry-leading services, his team crafted a proven track record of success in competitive verticals, adding a full scope of value to its clients' digital marketing campaigns through creativity,

businesses are running scared, but that is an environment where there is a ton of opportunity. Specifically, there is a huge push into digital. Companies embracing that approach will likely gain market share and overtake competitors."

Because its clients need constant engagement, Colorado SEO orchestrated video meetings to help keep the communications in check. Internally, it instituted a company policy that required cameras on, which helped hasten the element of human connection.

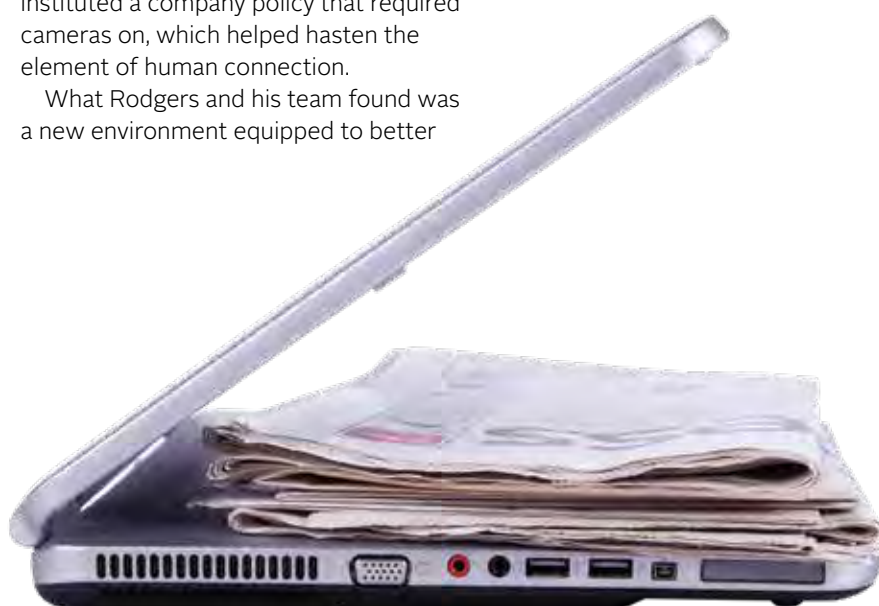
What Rodgers and his team found was a new environment equipped to better

that is moving further into the digital space," Rodgers says. "Everything is, or is becoming digital, so targeted print products can offer a unique experience for people to feel and hold something of real substance. It helps bridge that emotional gap."

As there is in any crisis, the lessons learned are the biggest benefit of all to those who read between the lines.

"EVERYTHING IS, OR IS BECOMING DIGITAL, SO TARGETED PRINT PRODUCTS CAN OFFER A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FOR PEOPLE TO FEEL AND HOLD SOMETHING OF REAL SUBSTANCE. IT HELPS BRIDGE THAT EMOTIONAL GAP."

— CHRIS RODGERS,
FOUNDER, COLORADO SEO PROS



dedication and an unparalleled desire to be the best at what they do.

This year, as the pandemic stormed its way across the country, Colorado SEO did what most businesses that could make the move did—it went remote. While some of its junior team members struggled with the adjustment early on, Rodgers knew he had to improve the company's project management workflow and software usage to adjust.

"We had some fall-out early on and some of our clients had to pause and even cancel service with us," Rodgers recalls. "We felt we needed to be flexible and help our clients with a bad situation that was out of everyone's control. Many

focus on workflow and cross-team efficiently. The remote environment forced everyone to consider how they were communicating and become more intentional with communication and workflow. "We will definitely carry-over the project management and workflow improvements, and may continue to offer remote work moving forward as well," Rodgers says.

And there is something else that the Colorado SEO team noticed. In a world consumed with digital impressions and in a time when face-to-face connections are missing, print jumped its way back into being vogue. "People still appreciate print products, especially in a world

"It is not the first, nor will it be the last crisis your company will face," Hogg says. "Many enterprises have to close forever, so the winners who survive and transcend certainly have some key competitive advantages to look forward to—better agility, better finance KPIs, better practices, better fill rates, more focused people."

Finding your way amid the madness and keeping hold of the engagements that drive your brand's success are the safest bets to filling the emotional gaps your community craves. By making the right adjustments, you can transform your business model with a focus on quality, innovation and sustainability.





THE ART OF » boredom


CREATIVITY THRIVES IN THE QUIET



BY MICHAEL J. PALLERINO

MOST OF Amy Radin's creative breakthroughs come after her quiet time. When she lets her mind rest and not push so hard, the most interesting patterns and connections appear, fostering breakthroughs that lead to creative freedom. In a time when the degree of change and disruption impacts nearly every facet of our lives, Radin believes finding creative bursts are vital to cultivating and implementing strategic visions.

In her book, "The Change Maker's Playbook," Radin profiles leaders seeking to solve unmet market needs. The leaders, Radin says, don't just have ideas, they feel commitment, and a sense of purpose toward creating new forms of value and growth—ideals that ultimately benefit employees, customers, partners and shareholders.



**THERE IS LITTLE OR NO MENTAL
AND EMOTIONAL SPACE FOR
INSPIRATION AND THE MAGIC
THAT CAN OCCUR IN UNPLANNED,
UNSTRUCTURED MOMENTS.”**

—JANINE FIRPO, FOUNDER & CEO, SEMBA

Getting to that place is not always easy. In a time when technology plays an enormous role in our everyday lives, creatives are expected to create with tech tools and for tech-engaged audiences. They want to move with urgency, speeding progress by learning from others' experiences. Radin believes this has changed how people develop their creative skills and which ones are now required for commercial creative roles. “With the demand for personalized content, there is a demand for creative that is more highly targeted. This requires an understanding of your audience. What do they care about? What are their needs? What’s on their minds?”

One of the biggest obstacles to finding these answers is that so much of our daily activity has been reduced to bite-size transactions, instead of thoughtfulness from real dialog, from consideration over

a few minutes, hours or even overnight. There is pressure put on immediacy that sometimes is great, but too often not a universally useful state of mind.


“I think the issue today is more about stress than boredom, and stress is a terrible inhibitor of creativity,” Radin says. “Creativity requires a freedom of thought, a relaxed mind that can wander and develop ideas, and find connections. It’s really hard to do that when you are under stress. It’s easy to say, ‘I’m too busy,’ but I see that as a cop-out. We can all be more productive and satisfied by taking breaks away from work.”

There are tactics that Radin uses to re-energize her creative juices—small things that have helped her disengage from the noise that so often punctures the walls of creative thought. She developed these self-revitalization strategies on her way

to becoming a leading voice on the art of enabling innovation under complex, continually changing conditions. She built an impeccable reputation for moving ideas to performance at brands like American Express, Citi, E*TRADE and AXA.

Her secrets are ones she feels are keys to breeding creativity. She suggests spending 20–30 minutes a day journaling (by hand, not into a Word document). “Just letting your mind go, writing down your thoughts and ideas, frees your mind for creative thinking and is a great routine.”

Another tactic involves taking a few walks every day to break up the monotony of isolation, especially as the days start to blur together during the pandemic. “Walking is proven to be good for creativity and health. Just a trip around the block can give you a fresh perspective and clear your head.” ■



**“CREATIVITY REQUIRES A
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT,
A RELAXED MIND THAT
CAN WANDER AND
DEVELOP IDEAS, FIND
CONNECTIONS.”**

**—AMY RADIN, AUTHOR,
THE CHANGE MAKER'S PLAYBOOK**



FROM SMALL POCKETS BIG CREATIVITY COMES

P

art of what helped Janine Firpo get through some of the darker days of the past year was the awareness that there are small pockets of creativity, innovation and forward movement happening in places all over the world.

Happening across the disciplines, and often unnoticed, Firpo, founder and CEO of investment firm SEMBA, likens them to small bubbles that form at the bottom of a pot of water as it is ready to boil. Over time, those bubbles get bigger and coalesce until ultimately, they collectively release some new steam. That is how she views the creative landscape.

"Solving the problems and challenges we have today will not come through the creativity of the individual," says Firpo, also author of "Activate

Your Money: Invest to Grow Your Wealth and Build a Better World." "I believe that shared information, deep curiosity and collaboration accelerate the process."

Firpo says that being bored, particularly as a child, is more a relic of a past era than the reality of today. Everyone, regardless of age, seems busier, more in motion and managing inflows of vast amounts of information. Most of that has to do with technology, which can be the true enemy of creative thought. "There is little or no mental and emotional space for inspiration and the magic that can occur in unplanned, unstructured moments."

For more than 40 years, Firpo was an avid traveler, where one of her motivations was knowing she would have downtime to find new experiences. "I would place myself in circumstances where the unexpected could arise. Those moments are almost impossible to find when we are in a constant state of information and activity input."

Today, in a world filled with effectively addictive technological impediments, Firpo chose to flip the script on the

distractions. She gave up social media vices like Facebook, and instead took a book to bed at night. She put down the phone when working, doing chores or other seemingly mundane activities. Eventually, she found herself sleeping better, more calmer.

"These vices and devices are addictive," Firpo says. "It is too easy to find yourself either idling away time perusing them or realizing that you are constantly listening to, watching or reading something. Withdrawing from technology takes discipline, and I fail often. In my view, brilliance comes from putting together insights from seemingly disparate sources in new ways. It requires the curiosity to gather information from a broad range of subject matter, and moments of quietude where new thoughts can emerge from within."

As we move into a new age created by natural forces that were beyond our control, taking the time to thwart the distractions you can control is a winning hand—one that can open your mind to new and exciting possibilities.



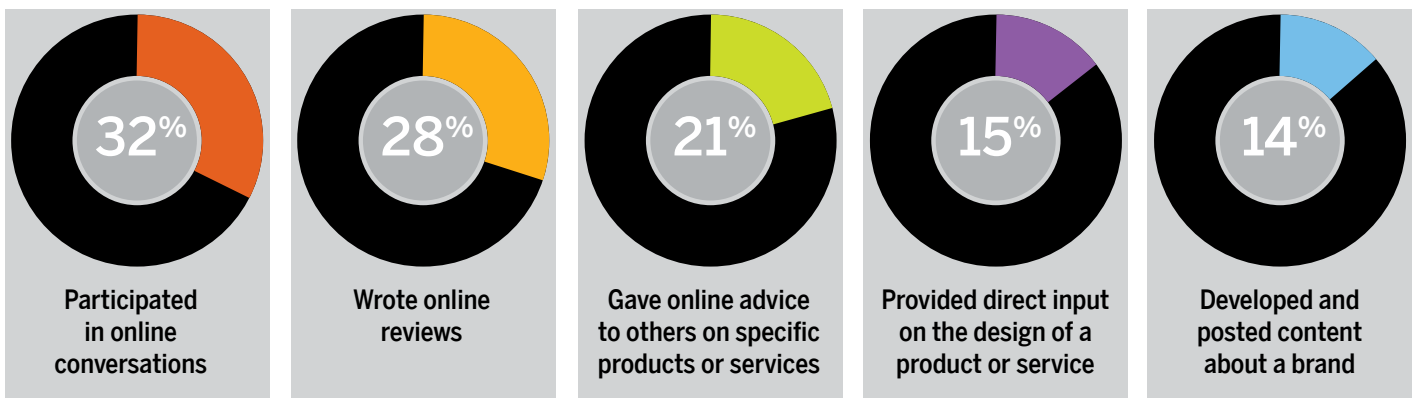
TACTICS



PARTICIPATION PARTY

HOW CUSTOMERS DIGITALLY INTERACT WITH BRANDS

Getting your customers to interact digitally with your brand is a key step in the engagement process. Not surprisingly, younger generations participated more often than older ones. According to the “Global Marketing Trends 2021” report from Deloitte Insights, 73% of people ages 18-25 interacted with brands online. Participation drops off to 64% for ages 26-45, and only 42% for those over 46. So, how are they interacting? Let's take a look at the findings from the report.



WELCOME GEN Z

STRATEGIES TO CONNECT WITH THE NEXT GENERATION

You already know that Gen Z are technology wizards, TikTok dancers, and compulsive Tweeters. But how do you connect with them? Start by meeting them where they are, with honesty and personality. Check out these five marketing tips from the blog at Later, a social media marketing platform.

1. Establish Clear Values & Mission

Gen Z wants to know what your brand stands for, so make sure to communicate effectively.

2. Be Transparent & Accountable

Build trust by being honest, ethical and owning up to any missteps.

3. Establish Your Brand's Personality

Picture-perfect is out. Gen Z wants to see the real you.

4. Be Entertaining

You have about eight seconds to catch their attention, so make it count!

5. Build a Community

Engage and digitally connect with customers, influencers and like-minded individuals.



TOP GRAPHIC DESIGN TRENDS IN 2021

- NO. 1 3D Design
- NO. 2 Emoji Design
- NO. 3 Nature-Inspired Design
- NO. 4 Optical Illusion Design
- NO. 5 3D Typography Design
- NO. 6 Cartoon Illustrations in Design
- NO. 7 Gold Design
- NO. 8 Voxel Art Design
- NO. 9 Monochrome & Duotone Design
- NO. 10 Geometric Shapes Design
- NO. 11 Typography Chaos Design
- NO. 12 Colorless Design



Source: GraphicMama.com

QA

Why should small business owners be thinking about an exit strategy from day one?

Small business owners should think about an exit strategy from day one. However, my reasoning has changed slightly over the years. When I wrote "Sell Your Business for More Than It's Worth" in 2013, I discovered that 85-95% of all startups will go out of business in the first one to five years. Startups were at great risk.

When I wrote "Exit Rich" in 2019 and did the same research, I found that the landscape had changed dramatically. Now, only 30% of startups will fail within one to five years and, out of 27.6 million businesses, a whopping 70% that have been in business for 10 years or longer will fail. Those are startling statistics. We hear about the big box stores closing down locations, but we never hear about the small businesses everywhere across the nation that are dropping like flies.

There are 30.2 million businesses in the United States. Small business is the backbone of our economy, employing over half of the U.S. workforce. If 70% go out of business, that means a lot of jobs will be lost.

Small business owners should be thinking about an exit strategy from the start in order to exit their business with maximum profit. Most entrepreneurs never think about selling their company until they have to, or until an internal or external catastrophic event occurs. When this happens, however, their business is usually trending down, and it will not be worth nearly as much in the eyes of potential buyers. The best time to sell your business is when it is doing well.

FOUNDER, SEILER TUCKER INC.

MICHELLE SEILER TUCKER

**FORMIDABLE BUSINESS LEADER
ON EXIT STRATEGY**

A leading authority on buying, selling, and improving businesses, as well as increasing business revenue streams, Michelle Seiler Tucker knows more than a thing or two about strategy. She shares her knowledge and experience in her book, "Exit Rich: The 6 P Method to Sell Your Business for Huge Profit," and as the Founder and CEO of Seiler Tucker Inc. She has sold hundreds of businesses, and currently owns and operates several successful ones herself. She has appeared in Forbes, Inc., CNBC and Fox Business.



What defines a good exit strategy?

A good exit strategy is planned from the day you buy or start your business. At Seiler Tucker, we have a five-step plan called the ST GPS Exit Model®. The first step is to determine your destination, or desired sales price. This is when you need to think about what sales price will make you happy while staying true to the actual value of your company.

Secondly, you must know your current location, or the value of your company. You must work with an M&A advisor on an annual basis to look under the hood of your business, determine your current value, and inspect your value drivers (or the ST 6 P's®).

Next, you have to identify who your buyers will be. You need to understand what buyers are looking for and build your business to suit their specific buying criteria. Then, you have to know your time frame and when you want to exit your company. This is relative and depends upon a person's age, the economy, and the appetite for wanting to exit.

Finally, you need to know your WHY for wanting to sell your business for your desired price in your specified time frame. If you leave out this key ingredient—your WHY—the sales price will never rise to your desired expectations.

Why is it best to sell when business is thriving?

It makes sense that when business is booming, your valuation will be higher. Also, not many buyers are looking to buy a business that is on a downtrend. There are more buyers for good businesses than there are good businesses to buy. These buyers want a business that is already profitable so they can recoup their investment and begin making money as soon as possible.

Even if a turnaround specialist is interested in an underperforming business, it would be impossible to maximize value. The timing of the sale of your business is just as important as your exit strategy and the characteristics listed above. This is why you should AIM: Always Innovate and Market.

What are some of the biggest mistakes small companies are making right now that lead to unnecessary business failure?

The biggest mistake that business owners make is not planning their exit strategy and being forced into selling. In turn, another mistake I see is that owners end up working in their

business instead of on their business. If a business owner is working in their business, they will not have as much time to spend on growing and developing their exit strategy.

Small companies fail to always innovate and market (AIM). When companies stop innovating and marketing, they may end up in a dying industry and they are not able to pivot to meet the demands of a changing market. Blockbuster is a perfect example of this. Even though they saw the writing on the wall, they did not innovate. They chose not to pivot and went out of business while Netflix capitalized on the changing market trends.

Finally, business owners make a mistake of not establishing official processes with the customer experience in mind. If you do not create your processes focused on the client, you will not be in business for very long. This will lead to a lot of unhappy customers who tend to tell other potential customers.

What are some of the immediate steps for scaling and preparing a business for a profitable exit, even in a recession?

The two most important steps that small business owners can take, even in a recession, is to implement the ST GPS Exit Model® and to make sure your business is running on all ST 6 P's®.

The ST GPS Exit Model is a step-by-step blueprint for building, scaling and selling your company. Having a framework like this will help you keep your effort and energies focused on where you want to take your business.

The ST 6 P's—People, Product, Process, Proprietary, Patrons, and Profits—are the value drivers of your business which are essential for maximizing your value when it comes time to sell.

Having committed people and tenured management teams can act as a value driver as they are directly involved with the direction and growth of your company.

Products are the products or services that are offered by your company. You should always design with the customer experience in mind.

Processes refers to operating procedures and employee handbooks. If established and well documented, they can be used to demonstrate how efficiently and orderly a business is run, increasing what your business is worth.

Proprietary refers to any intellectual proprietary such as brands, patents, trademarks, databases, processes, or contracts that are transferable. Assets such as these can act as one of the largest value drivers of a company. Consider the Apple brand, which is worth \$352 billion dollars alone.

Patrons refers to the customers your company serves. A diversified customer base can reduce cash flow risks and greatly increase your company's value.



Last but not least, profits matter. EBITDA is the most important profitability metric to consider as many valuations are based upon a multiple of this metric. Therefore, the higher your EBITDA, the higher the price you can demand in the sale of your business. Keep in mind, profits are never the problem, they are always a symptom of not

operating on the other five cylinders. These six characteristics, the ST 6 P's®, are pertinent to scaling and maximizing the profit from the sale of your business as they can affect the multiple used to value your company. To find out if your business is operating on all 6 P's, visit www.seilertuckeracademy.com/st-6p/quiz.



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