

Date Mailed June 8, 1998

BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Administration of the Mechanisms of Price
Regulation Pertaining to GTE North Incorporated
On the Third Anniversary Date, April 30, 1998

2180-TI-123

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS
OF LAW, AND FINAL ORDER**

Proceedings

On May 14, 1998, the Commission issued a Notice of Investigation, Opportunity for Hearing, and Assessment of Costs (Notice) in this docket. The Notice initiated an investigation to administer the mechanisms of price regulation pertaining to the amount that GTE North Incorporated (GTE) may increase or must decrease its rates for price-regulated services between the third and fourth anniversary dates. The price cap index is the mechanism established by the legislature in 1993 Wisconsin Act 496 for setting reasonable rates in lieu of rate base rate of return regulation. The Commission applies § 196.196(1)(c), Stats., and § PSC 163.04, Wis. Admin. Code, to determine prospective adjustments in the price cap index. Under § 196.196(1)(a), Stats., as modified by the Commission's order in docket 2180-TI-111, price-regulated services include basic local exchange service as defined in § 196.01(1g), Stats., and standard business access lines and usage by small businesses with no more than three access lines.

Pursuant to § PSC 163.04(8)(a), Wis. Admin. Code, the Commission shall issue an order no later than 30 days after the utility's anniversary date authorizing the amount the utility may increase its rates or mandating the amount it shall reduce them. If a hearing is held, the time within which the Commission shall issue an order may be extended by 30 days. Due to a lack of scheduled Commission meetings, it was not possible for the Commission to meet this deadline.

A draft order was mailed to all parties on May 15, 1998. Any comments received have been considered in approving this final order. No hearing was held in this docket and none was requested.

FINDINGS OF FACT

THE COMMISSION FINDS:

GTE is a telecommunications utility, as defined in § 196.01, Stats., engaged in providing telecommunications service to the public. GTE is a price-regulated telecommunications utility as defined in § 196.196, Stats.

Calculation of Allowed Increase. In determining the amount the utility may increase its rates or mandating the amount it shall reduce them, the Commission shall consider: (1) the annual percentage change in the GDPPI; (2) the productivity factor offset specified in § 196.196(1)(c), Stats.; (3) the quality of service disincentive; (4) the infrastructure investment incentive or disincentive; (5) the Wisconsin Advanced Telecommunications Foundation (WATF) incentive or disincentive; and (6) the discretionary incentive or disincentive.

Gross Domestic Product Price Index (GDPPI). According to §§ PSC 163.02(4) and PSC 163.04(2)(a), Wis. Admin. Code, the annual percentage change in GDPPI shall be calculated by using the most recent quarterly index, as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce in its Survey of Current Business, and the price index which was used in the calculation on the previous anniversary date. This code provision was designed to automatically true-up prior year's index calculations. Prior year's GDPPI indices are routinely revised by the Department of Commerce.

On the last anniversary date, the Commission did not have to determine the percentage change in GDPPI since no services were subject to price regulation last year. Because no GDPPI index was used in a Commission order, and therefore, no true-up is required, it is reasonable to use the updated corresponding prior year's index.

As reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the GDPPI chain-type index for the fourth quarter of 1997 was 113.07. This represented a 1.77 percent increase over the updated index value of 111.10 for the fourth quarter of 1996.

Productivity Factor Offset. According to § 196.196(1)(c), Stats., the productivity offset for a telecommunications utility with less than 500,000 access lines shall be 2 percentage points. Since GTE has approximately 479,000 access lines as of December 31, 1997, the productivity offset for GTE shall be 2 percent.

Adjustment to Productivity Offset for Inadequate Service. The quality of service mechanism set forth in § PSC 163.04(2)(c), Wis. Admin. Code, is based on comparing actual results to industry-wide standards and company-specific benchmarks. The industry-wide standards were established in docket 05-TI-157. The company-specific benchmarks for GTE's third year of price regulation were established in docket 2180-TI-113.

The calculation of the third year increase to the productivity offset for inadequate service is shown in Appendix B. Actual performance is compared against industry-wide standards, as well as against GTE's most recent 3-year average performance and performance ranges as

approved in the 2180-TI-113 Order. GTE's performance for all five components meets or improves upon the industry-wide standard, the company-specific 3-year average performance, and the company-specific performance range. Therefore, according to § PSC 163.04(2), Wis. Admin. Code, no adjustment to the productivity offset is necessary.

Adjustment to Productivity Offset for Infrastructure Investment. The calculation of the adjustment to the productivity offset for infrastructure investment applicable to GTE's third year of price regulation is set forth in Appendix C. The calculation is based on comparing actual performance against thresholds approved in the 2180-TI-113 Order.

Based on GTE's cumulative actual expenditures on enhancements and technology advancement as of December 31, 1997, an incentive of 0.16 percent shall be granted for this component. Based on GTE's actual deployment of Signalling System 7 (SS7) as of December 31, 1997, an incentive of 0.16 percent shall be granted for this component. Based on 1997 measurements of GTE's actual deployment of interoffice fiber, broadband facilities, Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), and the speed at which GTE's network is capable of transmitting data, no adjustment to GTE's productivity offset shall be made for these components.

Wisconsin Advanced Telecommunications Foundation (WATF). According to the Commission's order issued December 18, 1996, in docket 2180-TI-108, the productivity offset should be increased by 0.1 percent if the cumulative amount of contributions to the WATF as of December 31, 1997, is less than \$1,595,000. The productivity offset should be decreased by 0.1 percent if the cumulative amount of WATF contributions is equal to or greater than \$1,760,000.

As of December 31, 1996, GTE had contributed \$1,663,000 to the WATF. Therefore, the Commission determines that no adjustment to GTE's productivity offset shall be made for this component.

Discretionary Adjustment to the Productivity Offset. According to § PSC 163.04(2)(f), Wis. Admin. Code, in addition to the adjustments to the productivity offset for infrastructure investment, quality of service and WATF as discussed previously, the Commission may also, at its discretion, increase, or decrease the productivity offset by up to 0.1 percent for utilities with less than 500,000 access lines. To determine this discretionary adjustment, the factors the Commission may consider to the extent they relate to the utility's infrastructure investment and quality of service include but are not limited to:

1. Factors pursuant to § 196.03 (6), Stats.
2. Customer surveys measuring general customer satisfaction such as customer satisfaction regarding company responses to complaint contacts, repair requests, service installations, and billing inquiries.

3. Responsiveness to rural development and technology concerns and to demand for new services.
4. The extent to which the utility has reasonably complied with its annual commitment defined in its infrastructure investment plan.
5. The extent to which schools, libraries, hospitals, and similar institutions are utilizing the utility's infrastructure investments.
6. The extent to which the utility has established customer assistance programs and the effectiveness of those programs.
7. Compliance with other measures or standards for telecommunications service included in rules or orders, but not included in the service quality components set forth previously.

Staff proposed that GTE be assigned no discretionary adjustment to this productivity offset. Staff's proposal is based on mixed positive and negative indications of survey results measuring customer satisfaction and compliance with other measures or standards of telecommunications service as measured by complaints received by the Commission.

GTE surveys its residential, small business and large business customers to measure their overall satisfaction as well as satisfaction with installation, repair, and business office contacts. While these measurements showed a substantial decrease in the percent of residential customers dissatisfied, there was a substantial increase in the percent of small business customers expressing dissatisfaction. The number of complaints by GTE customers received by the Commission decreased 19 percent from 1996 to 1997.

Calculation of Price Cap Index. The calculation of the annual price cap index (PCI) based on the above determinations and § PSC 163.04, Wis. Admin. Code, is shown in Appendix D. A summary of PCI and actual price index (API) values is shown in Appendix E. In accordance with §§ PSC 163.04(3) through (7), Wis. Admin. Code, all API indices shall be initialized at 100 on the third anniversary date.

It is reasonable based on the calculations shown in Appendices D and E, that GTE be allowed to adjust its rates for price-regulated services so that its 3-year maximum API, presently equal to 100.00, is no more than the authorized 3-year maximum PCI of 100.09. The 3-year maximum PCI index, which includes inflationary adjustments, a productivity offset, and adjustments to the productivity offset, when applied to current rates, determines the level of rates that is reasonable on a prospective basis, pursuant to § 196.196(1)(c), Stats, and § PSC 163.04, Wis. Admin. Code.

Benchmarks for Fourth and Fifth Year

Pursuant to §§ PSC 163.04(2)(c)10, (2)(d)7 and (2)(e), Wis. Admin. Code, the Commission shall compute new company-specific benchmarks for service quality, infrastructure and WATF contributions, and industry-wide standards for service quality. These updated benchmarks shall be used in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset for service quality on the next anniversary date. Also on each anniversary date, upon a request by the utility or on the Commission's own motion, the Commission may initiate a review of the appropriateness of the infrastructure investment components.

Service Quality Benchmarks. Appendix F contains company-specific quality of service benchmarks and performance ranges to be used in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date. The benchmarks for the five service quality components specified in § 163.04(2)(c)2, Wis. Admin. Code, were computed using a 3-year average of data from 1995 through 1997. The performance ranges for all components represent a 10 percent range above and below the 3-year averages. The Commission finds the benchmarks and performance ranges set forth on Appendix F to be reasonable for use in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date.

In a draft order circulated to parties on February 13, 1998, in docket 05-TI-157, staff proposed a change in the basis of calculating the industry-wide standards for 1999 anniversary dates. Based on comments received, the Commission has not yet adopted industry-wide standards for 1999, but will hold a hearing on this matter at a later date.

Infrastructure Benchmarks. Appendix G sets forth infrastructure investment components together with benchmark ranges and component weights to be used in calculating the productivity offset on the fourth anniversary date. The benchmark ranges for GTE's fifth year of price regulation are not being set at this time, but will be addressed on GTE's next anniversary date. This is due to possible changes to the infrastructure incentive mechanism as a result of the Commission's review of price regulation in docket 05-TI-174. The measurement timeframe for infrastructure investment components shall be December 31, 1998 for the fourth year. Appendix G reflects the following changes from the infrastructure components, basis for benchmark ranges, and component weightings approved in docket 2180-TI-113:

1. **SS7.** As of December 31, 1997, GTE reports that 162 of its central offices are equipped with SS7. In docket 2180-TI-113, the Commission set tentative benchmarks for SS7 deployment in year four of 162 and 167 central offices, for a decrease and an increase to the productivity offset, respectively. The Commission's order stated that these benchmarks may be adjusted upward if Vidar switches become capable of upgrading to SS7 prior to December 31, 1998. Although GTE has since begun testing Vidar's new SS7 upgrade, it is not likely that deployment will be possible by year-end 1998. It is therefore reasonable to reaffirm the SS7-incentive benchmark approved in docket 2180-TI-113. It is also reasonable to eliminate the disincentive for SS7, since GTE has already achieved this level of deployment.

2. **Data Transmission Speed.** In docket 2180-TI-113, the Commission established that, based on a customer survey, the productivity offset should be decreased for year four if more than 80 percent of respondents reported ability to transmit data at 28,800 bits per second (bps) or higher. Based on the results of surveys performed in the first quarters of 1997 and 1998 and comments received, the Commission believes that it is reasonable to decrease the benchmark for year four to 78 percent, and to establish a half-incentive benchmark of 74 percent. GTE may also field test any customer who reports data transmission speed of less than 28,800 bps. The survey results may be adjusted if the field test determines that GTE's network is capable of maintaining a data transmission speed of 28,800 bps.

The following infrastructure investment components and the basis for measurement remain unchanged for year four:

Total Dollars of Enhancements and Technology Advancement
Interoffice Fiber
ADSL, HDSL, ISDN or Frame Relay
Broadband Facilities
Outside Plant Modernization

WATF. According to § PSC 163.04(2)(e), Wis. Admin. Code, in addition to the quality of service disincentive, and investment disincentive or incentive, the Commission shall establish specific ranges for the commitment to the WATF for each price-regulated company based on the utility's filed infrastructure commitment plan. If the company's contribution to the foundation is outside the range, then the annual component shall be assigned a disincentive or incentive value of up to 0.1 percent for utilities with less than 500,000 access lines.

GTE's commitment plan stated that its cumulative contributions to the WATF would total \$2,200,000 and \$2,750,000 by the end of 1998 and 1999, respectively. Staff proposes that a penalty of 0.1 percent should be imposed if the amount of contributions is less than \$2,145,000 or \$2,695,000 by the end of 1998 or 1999, respectively. A total WATF incentive of 0.1 percent should apply if the amount of contributions is greater than \$2,310,000 or \$2,860,000 by the end of 1998 or 1999, respectively.

The Commission finds the above proposals for determination of quality of service benchmarks, infrastructure, and WATF thresholds for the fourth and fifth years of price regulation to be reasonable.

ULTIMATE FINDINGS OF FACT

THE COMMISSION FINDS:

1. The gross domestic product price index for the fourth quarter of 1997 was 113.07. This represented a 1.77 percent increase over the index value of 110.10 for the fourth quarter of 1996.
2. According to § 196.196(1)(c), Stats., the productivity offset for GTE shall be 2 percent.
3. GTE's most recent actual performance for average time out of service, average time interval for installation, percent repeat trouble reports, initial trouble reports per 100 access lines, and average employee answer time for repair calls meets the industry-wide standard and betters the company-specific three-year average performance. Therefore, according to § PSC 163.04(2)(c)6a, Wis. Admin. Code, no adjustment to the productivity offset shall be assessed for these components.
4. Based on GTE's cumulative actual dollar investment in enhancements and technology advancement as of December 31, 1997, it is reasonable to grant an incentive of 0.16 percent for this component.
5. Based on GTE's actual deployment of SS7 as of December 31, 1997, it is reasonable to grant an incentive of 0.16 percent for this component.
6. Based on GTE's actual deployment of interoffice fiber, broadband facilities, and Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), actual WATF contributions as of December 31, 1997, and the results of a customer survey in the first quarter of 1998 regarding data transmission speed, it is reasonable to impose no adjustment to the productivity offset for these components.
7. It is reasonable to impose no discretionary adjustment to the productivity offset for GTE's third year of price regulation.
8. The calculations of price cap and annual price indices as shown in Appendices D and E are reasonable.
9. Based on Appendix E, it is reasonable that GTE be allowed to change its rates for price-regulated services so that its 3-year maximum API, presently equal to 100.00, is no more than the 3-year maximum cumulative PCI of 100.09.
10. The company-specific quality of service benchmarks and performance ranges set forth in Appendix F are reasonable for use in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date.

11. It is reasonable, due to new information, to modify the infrastructure investment components and benchmarks for GTE's fourth year of price regulation, tentatively approved by the Commission in docket 2180-TI-113, to:

- (a) Eliminate SS7 as a disincentive component.
- (b) Decrease the percent of customers with data transmission capability of 28,800 bits per second or higher required to receive an incentive from 80 to 78 percent. Establish a half-incentive benchmark of 74 percent, and adjust the results of a customer survey based on the outcome of field testing.

12. It is reasonable to defer establishment of infrastructure benchmarks for year five until GTE's next anniversary date.

13. The infrastructure investment components together with benchmark ranges and component weights set forth in Appendix G are reasonable for use in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date.

14. The WATF benchmarks for GTE's fourth and fifth years of price regulation, as set forth in the Findings of Fact, are reasonable and just.

CONCLUSION OF LAW

THE COMMISSION CONCLUDES:

It has jurisdiction under §§ 196.01, 196.02(3), 196.03(6), 196.196(1)(c) and (e)1, 196.204, and 227.11, Stats., and ch. PSC 163, Wis. Admin. Code, to issue an order establishing updated company-specific quality of service benchmarks and performance ranges, establishing updated infrastructure investment components together with benchmark ranges and component weights, determining prospective adjustments to the price cap index for GTE, and authorizing the amount by which GTE may increase its rates or mandating the amount it shall reduce them, pursuant to the discussion and findings of fact set forth herein.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 1. This order shall be effective upon mailing.
- 2. GTE is authorized to change its rates for price-regulated services so that its 3-year maximum API, presently equal to 100.00, is no more than the authorized 3-year maximum PCI of 100.09.

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3. The quality of service benchmarks and performance ranges set forth in Appendix F shall be used in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date.

4. The infrastructure investment components, together with benchmark ranges and component weights set forth in Appendix G shall be used in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth anniversary date.

5. The WATF contribution amounts shown in the Findings of Fact shall be used in calculating the adjustment to the productivity offset on GTE's fourth and fifth anniversary dates.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, _____

By the Commission:

Lynda L. Dorr
Secretary to the Commission

LLD:CWL:lep:reb:g:\order\pending\2180-TI-123

See attached Notice of Appeal Rights

Notice of Appeal Rights

Notice is hereby given that a person aggrieved by the foregoing decision has the right to file a petition for judicial review as provided in § 227.53, Stats. The petition must be filed within 30 days after the date of mailing of this decision. That date is shown on the first page. If there is no date on the first page, the date of mailing is shown immediately above the signature line. The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin must be named as respondent in the petition for judicial review.

Notice is further given that, if the foregoing decision is an order following a proceeding which is a contested case as defined in § 227.01(3), Stats., a person aggrieved by the order has the further right to file one petition for rehearing as provided in § 227.49, Stats. The petition must be filed within 20 days of the date of mailing of this decision.

If this decision is an order after rehearing, a person aggrieved who wishes to appeal must seek judicial review rather than rehearing. A second petition for rehearing is not an option.

This general notice is for the purpose of ensuring compliance with § 227.48(2), Stats., and does not constitute a conclusion or admission that any particular party or person is necessarily aggrieved or that any particular decision or order is final or judicially reviewable.

Revised 4/22/91

APPENDIX B

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Increase in Productivity Offset for Inadequate Service
for Third Year of Price Regulation

Component	GTE Performance 1997	Industry- Wide Standard	3 Year Average Performance	Maximum of Performance Range	Increase in Productivity Offset
Average Time Interval for Installation (days)	2.5	2.78	3.24	3.57	0.00%
Trouble Reports per 100 Access Lines	16.96	22.61	20.32	22.36	0.00%
Average Time Out of Service (hours)	11.0	15.64	12.21	13.43	0.00%
Percent Repeat Trouble Reports	14.41%	15.59%	15.19%	16.70%	0.00%
Average Employee Answer Time for Repair Calls (seconds)	7.53	20.00	11.94	13.14	0.00%
Total Increase in Productivity Offset for Inadequate Service					0.00%

APPENDIX C

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Adjustment to Productivity Offset for Infrastructure
Investment for Third Year of Price Regulation

Component	Actual 12/31/96	Productivity Offset Benchmarks		Infrastructure Investment Productivity Offset	
		Increase	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
Total Dollars of Enhancements and Technology Advancement	\$60,200,000	\$48,000,000	\$60,000,000		0.16%
Number of Central Offices Served with Interoffice Fiber	157	153	159		
Number of Central Offices Equipped with Signalling System 7	162	145	151		0.16%
Interval Between Signed Contract or Letter of Intent and Provision of Broadband Facilities	100% within 180 days; 100% within 210 days	90% within 180 days or 100% within 210 days	---		
Number of Central Offices With ISDN Availability	5	---	6		
Percent of Customers with Data Transmission Capability of 28800 bps or higher	68%	---	70%		
Percent of Customers within 10,000 Feet of Central Office with Data Transmission Capability of 9600 bps or higher	100%	100%	---		
Total Infrastructure Investment				0.00%	0.32%

APPENDIX D

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Calculation of Annual Price Cap Index

Annual Change in Gross Domestic Product Price Index		1.77%
Productivity Factor Offset	(2.00%)	
Adjustments to Productivity Offset:		
Quality of Service (Appendix B)	(0.00%)	
Infrastructure Investment (Appendix C)	0.32%	
WATF	0.00%	
Commission Discretion	(0.00%)	(1.68%)
Total		0.09%
Annual Price Cap Index		
+[1+▲GDPPI-PROD+INC-PEN]*100		100.09

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Summary of PCI and API Values

Annual Price Cap Index (PCI)	100.09
Unadjusted Cumulative PCI ¹	100.09
Three-Year Maximum PCI	100.09
Annual Actual Price Index (API)	100.00
Unadjusted Cumulative API ²	100.00
Three-Year Maximum API	100.00
Allowed Rate Increase or (Required Decrease) ³	0.09%

¹ According to § PSC 163.04(3), Wis. Admin. Code, on the third anniversary date, the Unadjusted Cumulative PCI is equal to the Annual PCI.

² According to § PSC 163.04(6), Wis. Admin. Code, on the third anniversary date, the Unadjusted Cumulative API is equal to the Annual API.

³ Since the 3-year maximum PCI is greater than the 3-year maximum API, GTE may adjust its rates for price-regulated services so that the 3-year maximum API does not exceed the 3-year maximum PCI.

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Company Specific Service Quality Benchmarks
for Fourth Year of Price Regulation

Component	3-year Average Performance	Performance Range	
		Minimum	Maximum
Average Time Interval for Installation (days)	2.77	2.49	3.04
Trouble Reports per 100 Access Lines	19.02	17.12	20.93
Average Time Out of Service (hours)	11.74	10.57	12.91
Percent Repeat Trouble Reports	14.81%	13.33%	16.29%
Average Employee Answer Time for Repair Calls (seconds)	8.41	7.57	9.26

NOTE: In addition to the above company-specific service quality benchmarks, industry-wide standards will also apply. These will be established in docket 05-TI-157.

APPENDIX G

GTE North Incorporated
2180-TI-123
Infrastructure Investment Benchmarks
for Fourth Year of Price Regulation

Component	Maximum Productivity Offset Values		Productivity Offset Benchmarks for Fourth Year Measurement	
	Increase	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
Total Dollars of Enhancements and Technology Advancement	0.075%	0.14%	\$57,700,000	\$76,600,000
Number of Central Offices Served with Interoffice Fiber	0.075%	0.13%	163	169
Number of Central Offices Equipped with Signalling System 7	---	0.20%	---	167
Interval Between Signed Contract or Letter of Intent and Provision of Broadband Facilities	0.075%	---	90% within 180 days and 100% within 210 days ⁴	---
Percent of Customers with Data Transmission Capability of 28800 bps or higher	---	0.13%	---	78% ⁵
Outside Plant Modernization	0.10%	0.20%	6	7
Number of Central Offices with Availability, by Tariff Upon Customer Request of either ADSL, HDSL, ISDN or Frame Relay	0.075%	---	8 ⁸	---

⁴ The annual measurement should include projects completed during the calendar year for which a signed contract or letter of intent was received after June 4 of the prior year. The annual measurement should also include projects incomplete as of year end for which a signed contract or letter of intent was received before June 4 of the current year.

⁵ Based on results of customer survey. A half-incentive of 0.10% will be granted if the measurement exceeds 74 percent. The survey results may be adjusted based on outcome of field testing.

⁶ Productivity offset increased if GTE misses its 1997-1998 commitment for total outside plant additions or incremental outside plant additions, as set forth in the Commission's order issued May 28, 1997, in docket 2180-TI-106.

⁷ Productivity offset decreased if GTE's 1997-1998 commitments for total outside plant additions or incremental outside plant additions, as set forth in the Commission's order issued May 28, 1997, in docket 2180-TI-106, are each exceeded by at least \$2.85 million.

⁸ For purposes of this calculation, frame relay totals will not include past commitments of switches for Sun Prairie and Wausau and will be limited to one. Availability is interpreted as having outside plant and circuit equipment readily available so that requested services may be installed within a reasonable time after a customer request.

APPENDIX A

This proceeding is not a contested case under Chapter 227, Stats., therefore there are no parties to be listed or certified under § 227.47, Stats. However, an investigation was conducted, and the persons listed below participated.

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(Not a party but must be served)
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