

# Running an online networking platform for trainees: positives, pitfalls and some blue-sky thinking



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## Key messages:

- The approach to trainee communication and delivery of education, and a feeling of ‘working in silos’, have been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- With the many demands on trainee time, communication strategy and dissemination of educational activities needs to be simple, streamlined and accessible

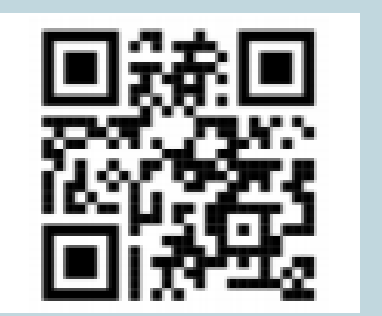
## Background: What is the Hub?

Using the open-source platform Trello, a series of ‘village noticeboards’ were created (called The Oxford Paediatrics Hub) to aid communication, education and collaboration within the deanery.

Users can comment, post items of interest or access shared learning from regional education days or conferences. It also has deanery information, sub-specialty areas, and personal area capability.

Whilst some affiliated groups have seized the technology and created national networks of people, there remains grumbling reluctance of the individual trainee to engage.

**Working example**  
(Hub RCPCH '19 conference board)



[Tiny.cc/RCPCH2019](https://tiny.cc/RCPCH2019)

## Intervention

The Hub team produced some short ‘how-to’ videos in response to reported user difficulties.

## Results

A survey aiming to assess response to these videos, general usage and improvement ideas was sent to trainees via multiple information channels (WhatsApp, email, the Hub).

**23%**

Response rate

**61%**

Access mainly via app

**6%**

Of responders had watched a video

## Challenges faced in running the network:

- Finding time alongside clinical and other necessary educational activities
- Continued enthusiasm in the face of negativity
- Meeting the diverse, often polar-opposite needs of trainees, being unsure all voices are heard
- Obtaining widespread senior/trainer engagement
- Getting people to take the first step

*We have led the horse to water... but can't make it drink!*

See one of the videos ‘How can the Hub help you?’ here:



Produced for users of the Oxford Paediatrics Hub 2020

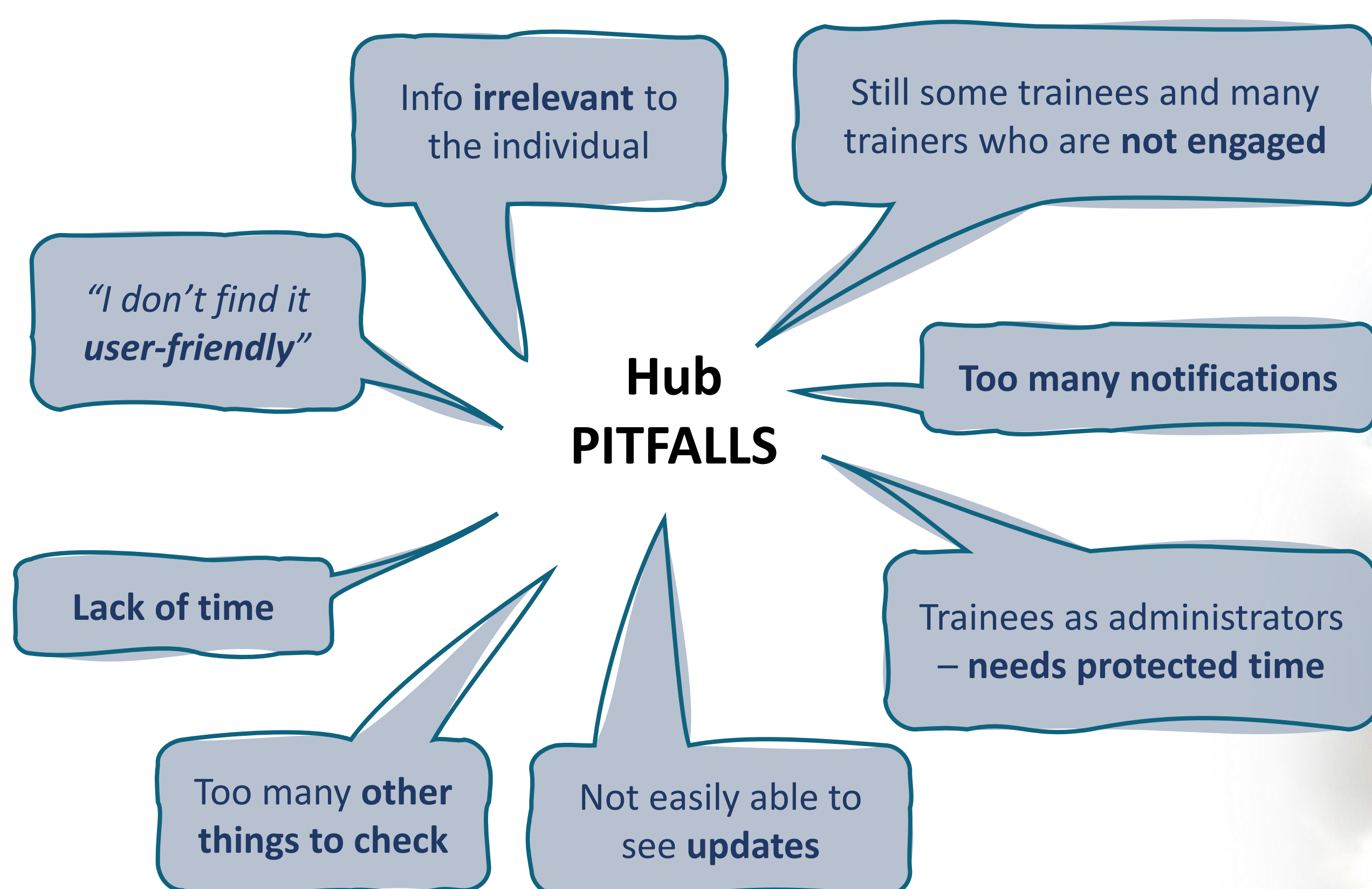
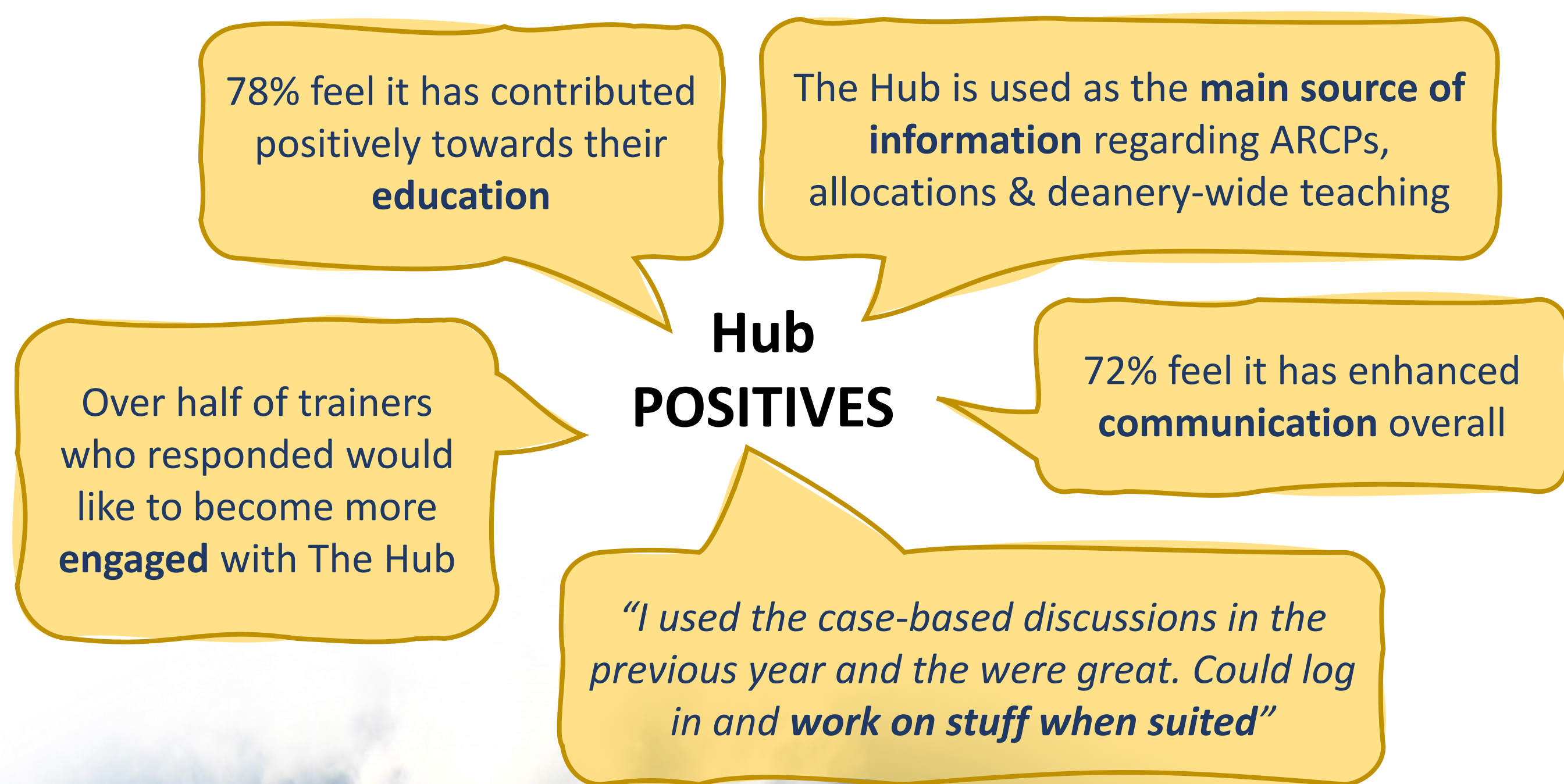


Screenshots of Hub boards

## Blue-sky thinking...

So what is the ideal solution? Trainees want improved communication, trainee to trainee and within management hierarchies. There are currently multiple sources of information, of which The Hub plays a key role. Whilst some have embraced this platform, others struggle with its user interface or choose not to engage.

The optimistic no-limits ideal is a **unified approach to a bespoke, easy to use and personalisable platform**, trainees and trainers **connected and fully engaged**, usage **embedded into culture and time-protected**. The pessimist might therefore give up now... but we wouldn't be here if we were that!



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