

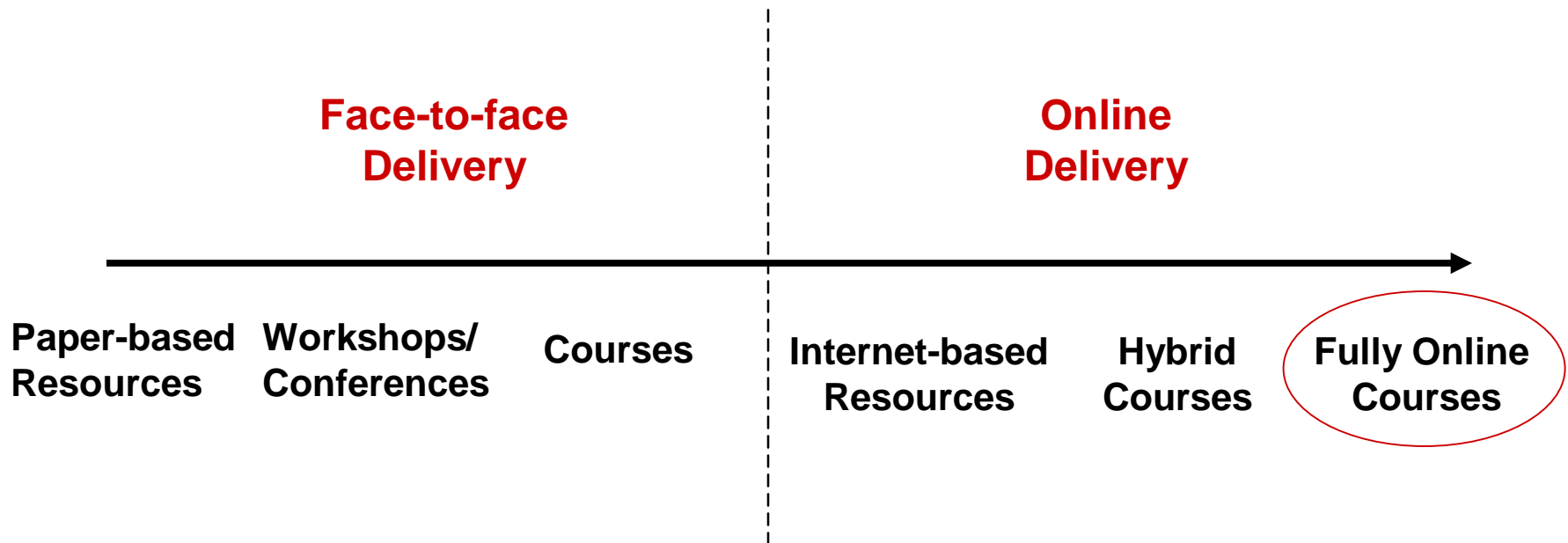


Benefits and Barriers in Online Professional Development

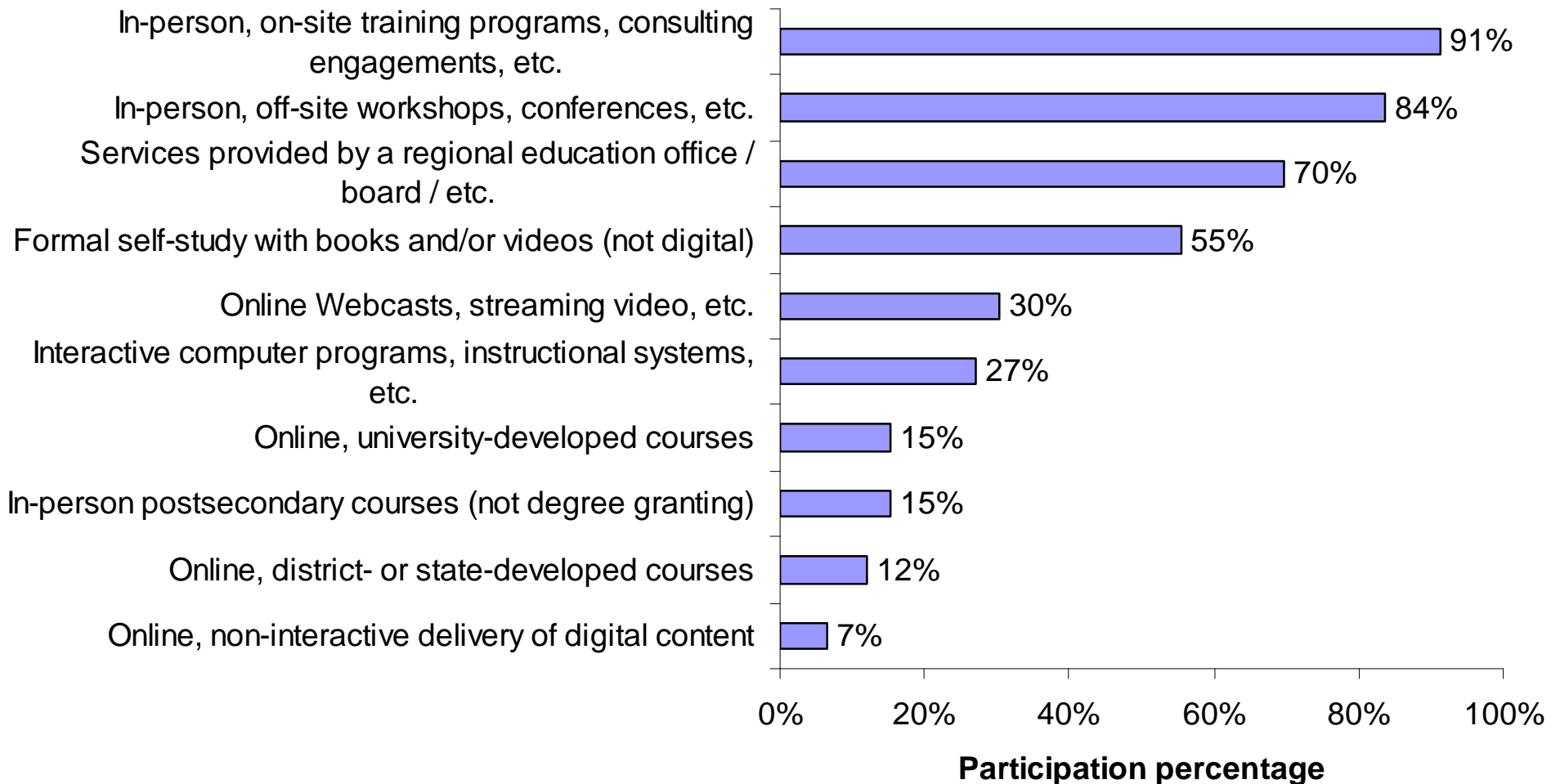
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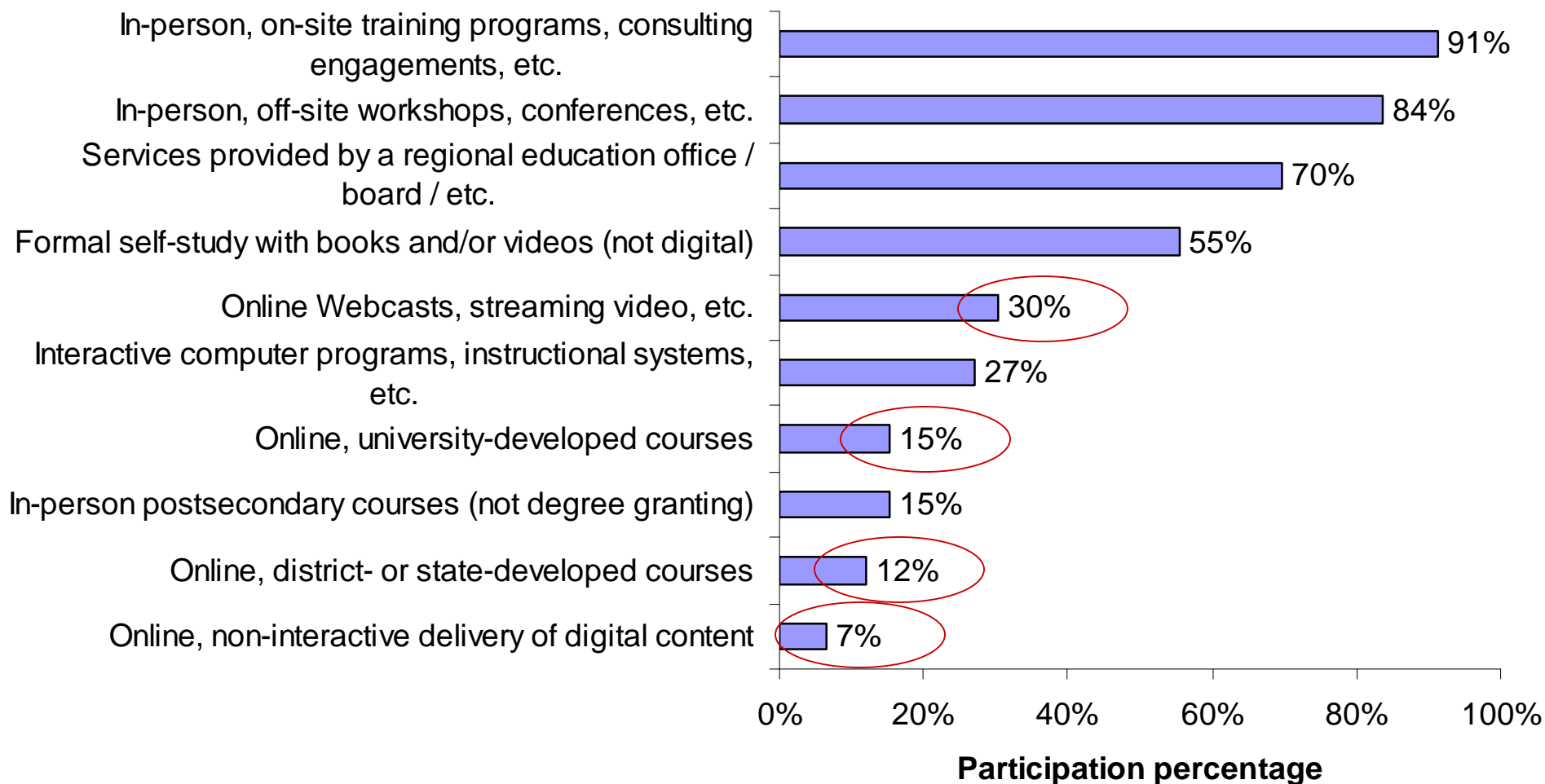
Professional Development Exists Along a Continuum of Options



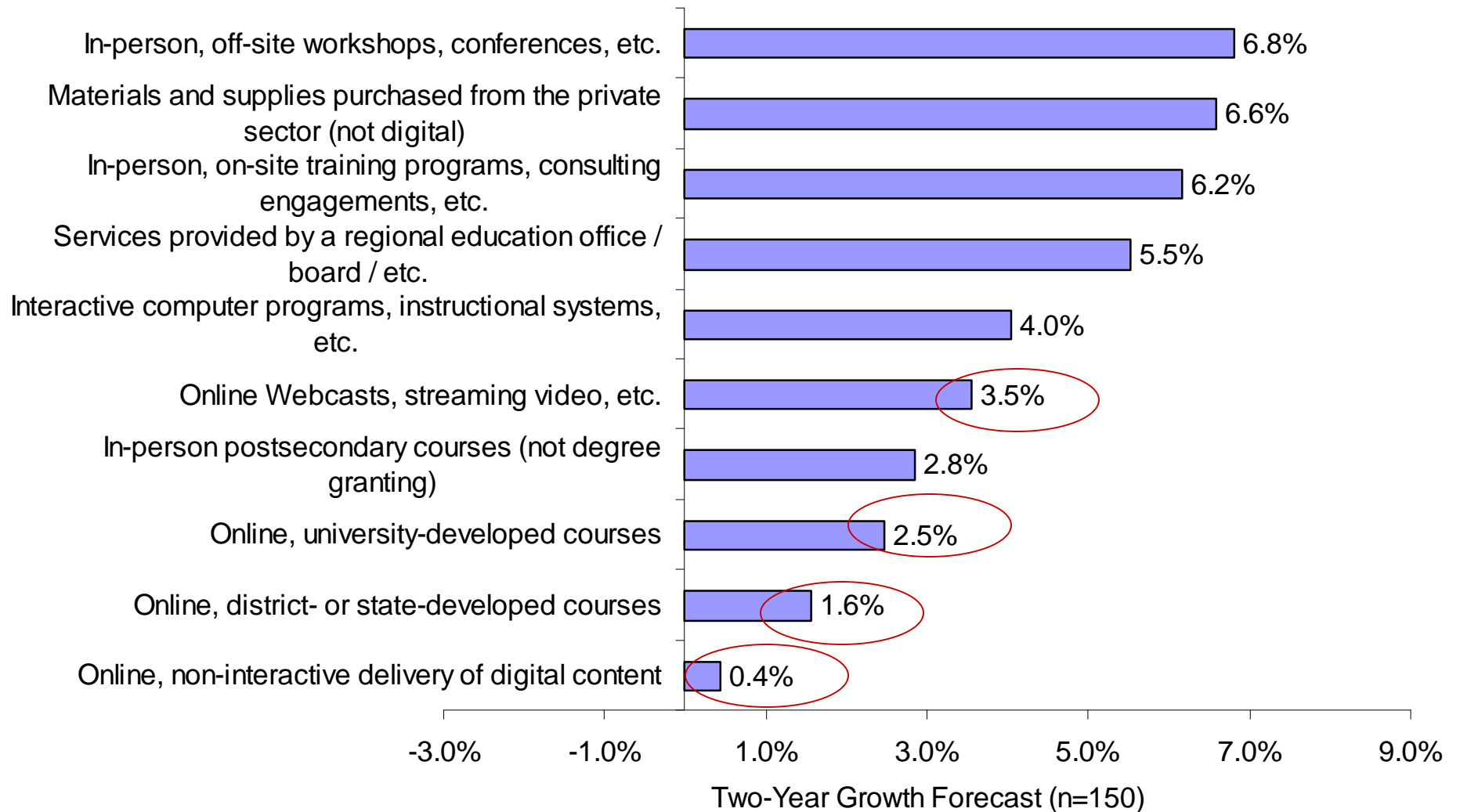
Today's Teachers Participate in Many Forms of Professional Development



Online Professional Development Participation, While Increasing, Remains Low



Projected Spending Predicts Continued Slow Growth of Online Professional Development



What Are Some of the Barriers to Scaling Online Professional Development?



Educators Rely on Scientific Research and Peer Recommendations

Most Important Source of Information on PD *% of Educators*



Professional Development Programs Are Created Predominantly In-House



- Research has revealed that the majority of professional development programs are created by the district (especially among large districts)
- Districts create in-house professional development programs for several reasons:
 - A large district tends to have the necessary resources to craft its own program
 - Homegrown programs guarantee alignment to state standards
 - Creating its own program allows a district to control the content, align the program to specific goals, implement follow-up activities as necessary, etc.
 - In-house creation can be more cost-effective than purchasing a product from a vendor or hiring a consultant

Face-to-Face Interaction Is Still Seen As More Effective



- **In-person instruction allows the opportunity to make a solid connection**
 - *“I don’t care how many e-mails you send, there is nothing like seeing the person’s eyes and working with them and developing that group as part of the community. Fabulous staff development happens when teachers work together.”*
– District Administrator, Mobile County, AL
- **In-person delivery is essential for demonstrating a methodology**
 - *“If you are showing a teacher how to do something, you need the face-to-face forum. You can demonstrate and then have the teachers practice and be able to provide encouragement or correction on the spot.”*
– District Administrator, DeKalb County, GA
- **Old habits die hard**
 - *“I prefer in-person delivery of professional development because that’s just what I prefer. I don’t have valid research to base the opinion, it’s just how I feel.”* – District Administrator, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC

Where Can Online Professional Development Provide Some Unique Benefits?



Online Professional Development Offers Some Well-Known Advantages ...



- **Online offers convenience and flexibility for busy schedules**
 - *“Online is our fastest growing delivery method for professional development that takes place outside of the school day because it meets the needs of teachers’ busy schedules.”*
 - *District Administrator, Cobb County, GA*
- **Lack of geographic boundaries enhance peer collaboration**
 - Teachers can network on specialized or niche topics without any geographic barriers
 - Offers rural districts greater access
- **Growing emphasis on data-driven decision making and use of technology in the classroom favors computer-based training**
 - Online courses are an effective method when providing training on using computer programs
- **Tool to track accountability and measurement of outcomes**
 - Inherent nature of online PD lends it to tracking and measurement to assess effectiveness

...And There Are Benefits That Are Not As Widely Promoted



- **Ability to customize and tailor professional development resources and activities to individual teachers needs**
 - Resources can be standards-aligned to meet district needs and selected by teachers to use as “just-in-time” and targeted support
 - Data tagging and feasibility of data sharing and editing leads to continuously refreshed resources
- **Ability to provide on-going and job-embedded activities**
 - Although one-day conferences are a widely used form of PD, the criticism is that they do not do any type of follow-on activities
 - Can be an effective tool for new teacher mentoring and coaching

- **We need, and can expect, more objective research to underscore online professional development’s effectiveness**
- **Getting buy-in from school administrators is critical**
- **As digital content in general becomes more pervasive, we can expect to see increased use in professional development arenas as well**
- **Unique benefits of online professional development such as customization and ability to provide informal, ongoing support should be highlighted**
- **Face-to-face interaction will remain an important component**