

# We've Come a Long, Long Way

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**W**e reprint an ancient memorandum that recently found its way into the hands of our authors. It shows how far we have progressed since the unenlightened days in which it was written.

## SECRET COMMUNICAE FROM HIS GRACE ALOFT THE PAPAL STATE

**TO:** His Excellency Romulus Augustus, Emperor of Rome  
**FROM:** His Holiness Pope Simplicius  
**DATE:** January 12, CDLXXV  
**SUBJECT:** King Arthur and the PMs of the Round Conference Table

*Simplicius Summus Pontifex Romulo Augusto Imperatori et familiae salutem dicit (Babelfish engaged):* I, Simplicius,

greet you and your family, Romulus Augustus. I hope you're all keeping well. I will be to-the-point on some rather unfortunate business that needs your urgent attention. We have received word from Our Bureau in Britain that policies, procedures, and proper standard acquisitions are being woefully and deliberately ignored in a remote region known as Camelot.

It has been brought to Our attention that a regional director in Britain, known as King Arthur, is encouraging his peasant managers (PMs) to commit heresy against the ancient Acquisition Scrolls of Process Propriety. As you know, these scrolls have been in place for as long as Migratory Swallows have attempted to transport coconuts into Mainland Europe (as the saying goes), and they dictate "exactly what work is to be done, by whom, when,

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and where.” We do not understand why Arthur believes his branch and his PMs should ignore Our ancient and hallowed procedures and policies, simply in the name of “accomplishing the mission,” whatever that means. (Nor do We understand how said Swallows think they can carry the coconuts, but that research is currently under way, as you know.)

The point is this: We have always executed Our acquisitions in accordance with the ancient scrolls. These scrolls were good enough for Noah, good enough for Moses, and good enough for Alexander the Great. Surely We do not need to remind you of the notable failures of years past caused by inattention to the Acquisition Scrolls, to include that high-rise Tower of Babel fiasco and the Philistines’ “Big Man Army of One” concept.

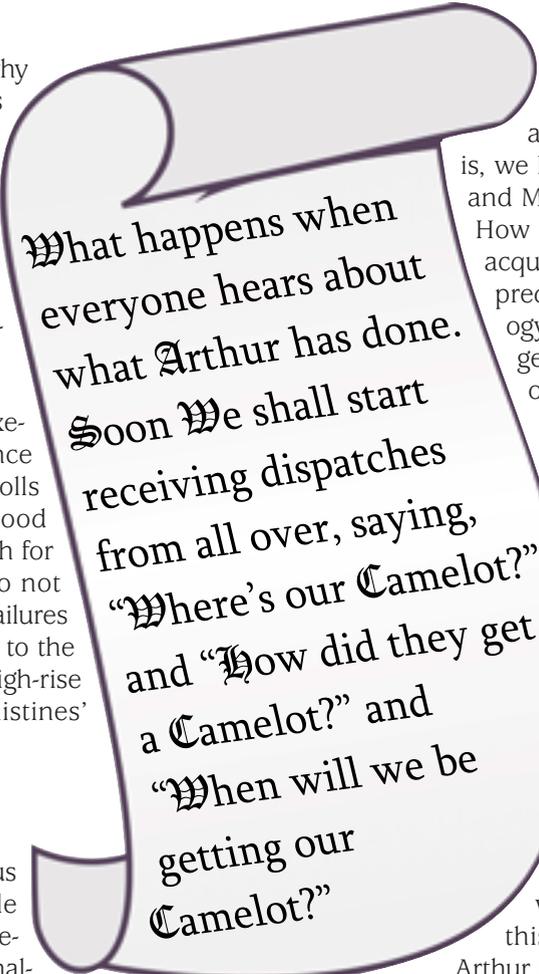
### **Thou Shalt Observe the Requirements Process**

To begin with, we have a very serious requirements issue with this whole Camelot thing. We have reason to believe King Arthur has set aside the hallowed practice of spending V years on a focused thrust to produce a SWORD (Standard and Wordy Operations Requirement Document). Our repeated requests for a SERF (SWORD Engineering Review Forum) have been unanswered to date.

Arthur unilaterally decided to create an independent Center of Excellence, which he calls Camelot, without incorporating the requisite number of PEASANTs (Processes for Evaluation and Standardization of All New Technologies). How can one create a Center of Excellence without lots of PEASANTs? Where is the assurance of system standardization?

Naturally, these rogue Britons have never filed a formal requirement in all of their miserable existence, nor have they ever submitted a claim through proper channels for things like better facilities, clothes, clean water, etc. If they really wanted improvements they could at least have composed a decent requirement so that We in Rome could decide how best to meet their needs. If Arthur and his PMs had gone through the formal requirements cycle (using their proper Latin on a standard form XVII-B) We could undoubtedly have squeezed them into the schedule within the next XXXV to XL years.

The problems created around rogue acquisitions are legendary. How shall We incorporate Camelot into the cur-



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rent operational baseline, which was established over CD years ago by Caesar Augustus? The truth is, we have no room in our Operations and Maintenance budget for Camelot. How could Arthur expect our ancient acquisition office to have been able to predict today’s advances in technology CC years ago, when today’s budget was established? Another round of budget submissions is scheduled for the year DCXXVII; he should simply wait until then.

By all accounts, the Britons roguishly acquired a Camelot and the peasants are now happy, eating every day, well protected, going to school, and are generally evolving from a bunch of ragtags clad in animal skins and painted with Woad (whatever that is) into a thriving community.

That is all well and good, but what happens when everyone on this continent hears about what Arthur has done. Soon We shall start receiving dispatches from all over, saying, “Where’s our Camelot?” and “How did they get a Camelot?” and “When will we be getting our Camelot?” Pretty soon, everybody will want this level of service, and then what shall We do? The solution, clearly, is to shut down Camelot before the idea spreads.

### **Thou Shalt Do it Our Way**

Most disturbing are Arthur’s potentially illegal contracting vehicles. Even if Arthur blew off the requirements process We have in place, there are approved and ratified industry contractors whom he could have used to create Camelot. He selected none of them—with deplorable results.

For centuries the Roman Architecture Guild has created grand structures with Roman columns and statues and the like. Our contractors have built the same design for centuries, a design that is constant and unchanging. Our understanding is that Camelot has no Roman columns. We are offended by this state of affairs. How can a proper building not have dozens of Roman columns?

Arthur is using illegal contractors without going through a multi-year selection process. What’s more, We have received most disturbing reports that Arthur incorporated a small female minority (water sprite), namely the Lady of the Lake, LLC, for weaponry development on his Ex-

calibur project. What assurance did Arthur have that the Lady of the Lake, LLC, could deliver? Arthur's trust in her is most unnerving.

Arthur persists in the belief that his agile, small, and responsive contractors can, by discovering them sooner, improve or fix any mistakes more quickly and cheaply.

Clearly, Arthur doth not know whereof he speaketh, and you can tell him We said that.

### **Thou Shalt Keep Thy People in Their Places**

As if all that isn't enough, we also have reports that King Arthur has challenged his PMs Sir Robin the Brave and Sir Lancelot the Remarkably Talented with finding the Holy Grail. They were apparently sent on a quest outside their offices to do field work. Preposterous!

Who proclaimed that these PMs were qualified to perform such a function? Did they receive the proper IV-year degree in Grail Seeking from an accredited Institution of Higher Learning? Did they not know that the Roman Emperor has already tasked a French Castle (strangely also located in Britain) with finding and maintaining the Holy Grail? In fact, they tell Us they've already got one.

As further examples of his foolhardiness, Arthur is not telling the knights where to go or what to do. He is letting his subordinates take charge and find solutions on their own. Arthur's misplaced trust in what he calls his Integrated Project Team and the dangerous levels of empowerment of his subordinates will be Arthur's undoing. Does Arthur really believe that without his constant supervision his PMs will do anything right? And if they are truly capable, as he seems to think, does he have no fear of their double crossing him? Tsk, tsk, tsk!

King Arthur has no appreciation for doing what he's told and staying within his own lanes of clear responsibility. Does Arthur believe his team's diversity and different backgrounds will improve his chances of recovering the Artifact? Would not Team Camelot be better off if all members adhered to their specific assigned Roles as described in the Scrolls? (Our rhyme is unintended.)

### **Thou Shalt Know Who is in Command**

Our final charge against King Arthur stems from the observations of his brash inability to maintain bureaucracy. Arthur has "masterfully" carved a "glorious" Round Table and placed it in the center of his Conference Room, complete with Candles and Writing Tools and a Lazy Susan for sharing Chinese Food. During meetings at this Round Table, everyone sits together at the same altitudinal plane and everyone shares ideas and is enabled to be effectively cross-matrixed. Opinions, thoughts, and plans are encouraged from all members, which is clearly a recipe for chaos.

This Round Table represents a complete lack of recognition of Hierarchy. It is not at all clear where the Most Important Person is, let alone what Process and blocks and checks there are for the most Senior Member to collaborate with the most junior of members. In fact, it seems Arthur encourages open communication and guidance from all levels of the Team, with no appreciation whatsoever for Bureaucratic Processes. Most disturbingly, information, ideas, and tasks can flow up and down the company in a matter of minutes. Furthermore, when a lowly subordinate provides Arthur with an idea or a plan, instead of rightfully claiming the idea as his own, Arthur acknowledges the subordinate by giving him credit for the idea and sometimes bestows upon the subordinate the charge of executing the concept.

### **It Won't Do**

My good Emperor Romulus Augustus, it just won't do. In the year CDLXXV, our western culture is not ready for such displays as King Arthur and his PMs of the Round Conference Table. Call Us old fashioned or risk averse if you must. Perhaps someday, thousands of years hence, entities *will* be able to harness such practices as King Arthur's. Maybe in that day and age, businesses and governments that do *not* adhere to a risk-management, leadership-empowering, entrepreneurial, customer- and mission-focused environment will find themselves left behind. Maybe. But We doubt it. In any event, the year CDLXXV is not that time.

It appears that Arthur and his PMs have an erroneous philosophy that our ancient acquisition structure should accommodate the customer, the knights, or—Heaven forbid—the peasants. We acknowledge that operations and customer support are very important and have their proper place, which is right behind cost, schedule, and politics. It also appears that in challenging Our established practices, Arthur believes some sort of "British Empire" might some day replace the mighty and eternal Roman Empire. Which is laughable, of course.

Remove King Arthur, dissolve Camelot at once, and notify the Spaniards to begin devising a means to extract information from perpetrators of such as Camelot.

Please give my regards to your family and enjoy your upcoming tour of Constantinople.

*Cura ut valeas,*

Simplicus  
His Grace

The authors welcome comments and questions. Address them in Classical Latin to [daniel.ward@rl.af.mil](mailto:daniel.ward@rl.af.mil) and [christopher.quaid@pentagon.af.mil](mailto:christopher.quaid@pentagon.af.mil).