

Dear Viewer;

This is not a presentation but rather a facilitated discussion. Each of the articles is meant to be discussed by the audience in light of their experiences. Following each of the articles is one possible interpretation.

Craig D. Wilson

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# Management Lessons of TE Lawrence

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Presented by

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# About Craig D. Wilson

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- IT Management Consultant
- 10 years of service as an independent consultant preceded by 10+ years of senior and executive management experience in several Fortune 500 companies
- Graduate degree in Management Science, additional post-graduate studies at UCLA's Anderson School, Project Management Professional (PMP), Certified Scrum Master (CSM)
- Specializing in program / large project management, project turn-around, and team and organizational development

# About TE Lawrence

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- Better known to the world as “Lawrence of Arabia”
- A British officer during WWI serving with the Arab tribes against the Turks
- Wrote of his war-time experiences in “*Seven Pillars of Wisdom; a Triumph*”

# Why study Lawrence's Observations?

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- Lawrence is a perfect example of an outsider dealing with conflicting stakeholder goals and problems
- Sometimes a different perspective can shed light on current issues and risks
  - In this case, using a historical military perspective to view today's business challenges
- Lawrence's writings are still studied today by our military

# Twenty-seven Articles

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- Written by TE Lawrence
- Published in “The Arab Bulletin”; a publication for British military personnel
- August 1917
- Intended as a guide for British officers working with the Arab tribes

# Viewed Through Your Eyes.....

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- Content of many of the 27 articles seems applicable, in spirit, to the experiences I've had as a consultant working with different companies and individuals
- The articles will be interpreted differently by different people based on their experiences and the organization in which they work
- How will you interpret them?

# Caveats

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- Articles were published nearly 100 years ago and should be judged by the times in which they were written
- Many of the statements would not be considered “politically correct” today
- English language has changed and some words and phrases are used differently today



# Article 1

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Go easy just for the first few weeks. A bad start is difficult to atone for, and the Arabs form their judgments on externals that we ignore. When you have reached the inner circle in a tribe, you can do as you please with yourself and them.

# Article 1 Interpreted

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- Be careful of cultural faux pas; you are an outsider
- Tread lightly until you develop the necessary relationships
- “You only have once chance to make a first impression”

# Article 2

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Learn all you can about your Ashraf and Bedu. Get to know their families, clans and tribes, friends and enemies, wells, hills and roads. Do all this by listening and by indirect inquiry. Do not ask questions. Get to speak their dialect of Arabic, not yours. Until you can understand their allusions, avoid getting deep into conversation, or you will drop bricks. Be a little stiff at first.

# Article 2 Interpreted

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- Your first job is to listen and learn
- Get a feel for the corporate culture as well as the group culture within which you are working
- Develop relationships with people
  - Go to coffee and lunch with team members
  - Participate in “water-cooler” chats; but mostly listen!

# Article 5

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Remain in touch with your leader as constantly and unobtrusively as you can. Live with him, that at meal times and at audiences you may be naturally with him in his tent. Formal visits to give advice are not so good as the constant dropping of ideas in casual talk. When stranger sheikhs come in for the first time to swear allegiance and offer service, clear out of the tent. If their first impression is of foreigners in the confidence of the Sherif, it will do the Arab cause much harm.

# Article 5 Interpreted

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- It is especially important to develop a relationship with your sponsoring manager
  - Be co-located if possible
- You serve best by commanding least
- Do not “lecture” your sponsoring manager; especially in front of others

# Article 7

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Treat the sub-chiefs of your force quite easily and lightly. In this way you hold yourself above their level. Treat the leader, if a Sherif, with respect. He will return your manner and you and he will then be alike, and above the rest. Precedence is a serious matter among the Arabs, and you must attain it.

# Article 7 Interpreted

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- Do not become so close with the subordinates of your sponsoring manager that you become involved in “office politics”
- You may need to maintain the same level of leadership as the manager (but not the same level of management)



# Article 11

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The foreigner and Christian is not a popular person in Arabia. However friendly and informal the treatment of yourself may be, remember always that your foundations are very sandy ones. Wave a Sherif in front of you like a banner and hide your own mind and person. If you succeed, you will have hundreds of miles of country and thousands of men under your orders, and for this it is worth bartering the outward show.

# Article 11 Interpreted

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- As a consultant, you are an outsider
- Make it clear that you are working for the manager and the team; not for yourself
  - You are not there to take anyone's job away
  - You are there to make them all successful

# Article 13

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Never lay hands on an Arab; you degrade yourself. You may think the resultant obvious increase of outward respect a gain to you; but what you have really done is to build a wall between you and their inner selves. It is difficult to keep quiet when everything is being done wrong, but the less you lose your temper the greater your advantage. Also then you will not go mad yourself.

# Article 13 Interpreted

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- Do not enter into arguments with client personnel
  - e.g.; development methodologies, programming languages, management techniques
- Even if you “win” you will do yourself irreparable harm in the long run

# Article 15

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Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.

# Article 15 Interpreted

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- Often, as a consultant, you are retained to advise and counsel
- If you do the work yourself, the client's team won't learn
- Let them do the work, guide them, and give them credit for all successes

# Article 17

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Wear an Arab headcloth when with a tribe. Bedu have a malignant prejudice against the hat, and believe that our persistence in wearing it (due probably to British obstinacy of dictation) is founded on some immoral or irreligious principle. A thick headcloth forms a good protection against the sun, and if you wear a hat your best Arab friends will be ashamed of you in public.

# Article 17 Interpreted

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- Fit in with the client's corporate and group culture
- Don't wear suits if they wear business casual
  - Join in "casual Friday"
- Don't dress below the accepted or published standard



# Article 27

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The beginning and ending of the secret of handling Arabs is unremitting study of them. Keep always on your guard; never say an unnecessary thing: watch yourself and your companions all the time: hear all that passes, search out what is going on beneath the surface, read their characters, discover their tastes and their weaknesses, and keep everything you find out to yourself. Bury yourself in Arab circles, have no interests and no ideas except the work in hand, so that your brain is saturated with one thing only, and you realize your part deeply enough to avoid the little slips that would counteract the painful work of weeks. Your success will be proportioned to the amount of mental effort you devote to it.

# Article 27 Interpreted

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- As a consultant you are an outsider and always will be – remember that
  - Watch what you say and do at all times; you can not get away with the same things as employees
  - Although, if you are fortunate, you may develop lasting friendships with individuals
- Keep your focus on your work and the success of you client
  - Their success is your success

For more information on  
TE Lawrence:

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- T.E. Lawrence Studies
  - [www.telawrencestudies.org](http://www.telawrencestudies.org)
- The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, by TE Lawrence
- Lawrence of Arabia; the Authorized Biography, by Jeremy Wilson

# For more information on Craig D. Wilson:

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