

You're not my manager, so I'm not going to ask how high when you tell me to jump

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This happens a lot. I'm minding my own business and then I start getting nag mail from somebody I've never heard of. It usually is marked "High Priority" and the content has lots of boldface and wording that makes it sound like the world is going to end tomorrow. (Pretend "elephant"[†] is some new buzzword.)

URGENT – ACTION REQUIRED

Your component has not completed its Elephant review. **Elephant-readiness is a release criterion.** You must visit <http://elephantready/?id=16384> and fill out an Elephant compliance form by the end of the week.

When you go to the web site, it asks you to confirm a few pages of statements like this:

Component does not assume rhinos.
Component does not cover animals with a blanket (elephants are big).
Component supports a variable amount of peanuts.
Component does not require animal to have a horn.
Component does not reject animals with tusks.
All interfaces exposed by component can operate on elephants.

Okay, so I get this mail and my first reaction is "What's an elephant?" I lied. That's not my first reaction. My first reaction is "Who the hell are you? Who died and made you my manager?" Note to managers: Sending out random mail like this won't make you any friends. It turns out people don't like it when somebody creates work for them. Especially when it comes out of nowhere without warning. and double especially when they've never even heard of your feature. So far, you haven't given them any indication why they care aside from "You should care because I said so." And you are who again? Often when I look at these checklists, I can't even answer them. I mean, sure, I didn't write any code that assumes rhinos, but my component relies on other components, and I don't know whether those other components assume rhinos. Similarly, my code doesn't care about horns or tusks, but maybe one of the components I rely on does. I don't know. As a result, I usually skip the questionnaire filled

with questions I can't answer and just wait for the next round of urgent messages. That way, I can ignore the second round, too. For you see, my manager decides what tasks I should be working on, not you. If you think my manager is doing a bad job of prioritizing those tasks, then feel free to have a little meeting with my manager and work out some sort of agreement. Until then, don't bug me. I have work to do. **For those new to this web site** (and a reminder to those with poor memory):

†I disguise the name because (1) it's not important to the story, and because (2) the goal is not to ridicule but rather to illustrate a point. Attempts to guess what "elephant" is will be deleted. Don't make me delete further stories in this series like I did with "Stories about Bob."

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