

The **CEO**  
and the **Monk**  
One Company's Journey  
to Profit and Purpose

ROBERT B. CATELL AND KENNY MOORE  
WITH GLENN RIFKIN



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## More Advance Praise for *The CEO and the Monk*

“*The CEO and the Monk* is anything but a traditional ‘business book’—it is an inspiration! Given the fine example herein, there’s no reason every company cannot be run in the same ethical and spiritual way.”

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“Breaking through the clutter of both the self-aggrandizing tales of CEO bravado and the growing piles of books on CEO scandals, *The CEO and the Monk* reminds us that leadership still matters in forging the character of an enterprise and its people. It leaves platitudes behind and takes the reader into the mind of the CEO to wrestle with the gripping backstage drama of real choices that challenge the soul of the firm and the reputation of its leadership. I look at dozens of management books each month, and rarely is such candor and insight offered.”

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“Thank you, Bob Catell and Kenny Moore, for reminding all of us that even in our wounded world it is still possible to do well by doing good.”

—Rabbi Marc Gellman, Ph.D., co-host and co-author of the “God Squad” national TV talk show and syndicated newspaper column

“*The CEO and the Monk* is a good read for any corporate executive, particularly in today’s troubled corporate environment. It shows time and again the importance of maintaining a moral compass in the executive suite and staying in touch with the thinking of all employees. At the core of the book is how these principles helped Bob Catell, with help from his corporate ombudsman, steer his way successfully through Brooklyn Union’s merger with LILCO to form KeySpan. I enjoyed this book thoroughly.”

—David W. Heleniak, Senior Partner,  
Shearman & Sterling LLP

“We need more compassionate and caring leaders like Kenny Moore and Bob Catell. The stories in this inspiring book are proof that enlightened organizations exist and are making a difference in the world.”

—Judi Neal, Ph.D., Director, Center for Spirit  
at Work, University of New Haven

“*The CEO and the Monk* make an extraordinary team—the power of their purpose is absolutely contagious. This book is a gem.”

—Richard J. Leider, founder of The Inventure  
Group and best-selling author of *Repacking  
Your Bags* and *The Power of Purpose*

The CEO  
and the Monk



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To my mother,  
For a lifetime of inspiration and love; for teaching me how to see the  
world and to do the right thing.

—RBC

To the fair and beautiful Cynthia,  
Who has rescued me from monasticism, nurtured me through cancer,  
schooled me in the etiquette of corporate politics (still much work to  
do here . . .), and blessed my life with children, marital bliss, and a  
spirit of compassion.

—KCM



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# INTRODUCTION



## *What Is Good for the Soul Is Also Good for Business*

*Business is, in the end, a moral matter.*

—Charles Handy

In March 2001, Jeffrey Skilling, the president and CEO of Enron Corporation, addressed an overflow gathering at the Goldman Sachs energy industry analysts meeting in Aspen, Colorado. A brash, young former McKinsey consultant, Skilling had played a key role in transforming Enron into a fast-moving corporate steamroller. Enron had become one of the world's biggest corporations, a dominant behemoth in the energy industry intent on crushing competition and changing the rules of the game.

Under Skilling and Enron chairman Kenneth Lay, Enron had moved away from the traditional energy supply business model and begun to trade energy as a commodity. Using technology and a smart, aggressive workforce, Enron had emerged, in Skilling's modest opinion, as the "new paradigm," the model of the twenty-first-century corporate juggernaut. By way of a videotape, he told the audience members that day that "the big oil companies are dinosaurs. The energy merchants and the telecommunications giants are going to take over the world. Because Enron has the systems

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and the people, there's no reason that we won't become the world's biggest company."

He added that the new winning strategy was an "asset light" strategy. You didn't have to own assets, you just had to control the assets, he stated. His implication was that if energy companies continued in their roles as traditional suppliers of gas and services, they would soon become obsolete. The future was for those who forsook capital-intensive fixed assets like pipelines and power plants and focused instead on creating markets. Inside Enron's take-no-prisoners workplace, 20,000 intensely competitive employees were pushing the proverbial envelope further and further. To those listening and watching the stock market, there seemed little that could slow Enron down.

The audience sat in stunned silence. This kind of hubris was more than a bit unusual in the energy industry. In the audience that day was Robert Catell, the chairman and CEO of KeySpan Corporation. Like his industry counterparts, Catell had been watching Enron's exploits and had grown worried that Skilling might be right. The whole financial world had been turned on its head in the past few years. Tiny start-ups with little more than a business plan filed initial public offerings (IPOs) and in a few short months had market capitalizations larger than that of General Motors. Prognosticators were crowing that the Internet would change business dramatically and forever. Stock options had spawned millionaires and billionaires on an almost daily basis. The old rules were being tossed out the window in favor of New Economy standards. How could KeySpan, a successful but conservative and traditional energy company, hope to compete with the likes of Enron?

KeySpan is a publicly traded \$6 billion, Brooklyn, New York-based energy company with 12,000 employees in New York and New England. It is one of the largest energy companies in the populous Northeast and the fifth largest natural gas distributor in the United States, but compared to Enron, it was a turtle plodding along in the dust of a very fast rabbit.

In early 2001, it was hard to be a turtle. All around, the world

seemed to have changed overnight. There were signs that the Internet bubble was finally about to burst, but no one was quite sure what the future held. Catell, however concerned by Skilling's view of the energy industry, refused to panic or to react impetuously. In his heart, something about Enron didn't feel right. The model was sketchy at the edges, replete with countless unanswered questions. It all looked too easy, too good to be true. Catell had been in the energy industry for more than 40 years, and he understood viscerally the bones of the business, having worked out in the streets of Brooklyn where the pipes are laid and customer expectations are born.

As the result of the merger of several utility companies, including Brooklyn Union Gas, a local company that had been a fixture in Brooklyn for more than a century, KeySpan was, if anything, the antithesis of Enron. It was a company deeply ingrained in the community, a place where one generation after another came to work and to which customers felt a deep, abiding loyalty.

Even if Catell had a moment's itch to emulate Enron, he knew that KeySpan was not that kind of company and he was not that kind of leader. His doubts were fleeting. He left the Goldman Sachs meeting with a resolve that KeySpan was already on the right road and that there was plenty to get done regardless of what happened with Enron. He had learned a long time ago that there was remarkable strength in staying a steady course and doing the right thing.

Of course, Enron's remarkable implosion is already the stuff of business legend. Within just months of that meeting, Skilling abruptly resigned and the collapse of Enron made global headlines. In the years since that meeting, so much has happened that Skilling's proclamation of Enron as potentially the world's largest company now seems like an empty whisper from a surreal past. In fact, in the aftermath of a series of cataclysmic events, both beyond and within the world of business, it is crucial to step back and consider where things are and where they might be going. The staggering events of September 11th, the continuing economic slide, the anxiety-provoking war against terrorism, the war in Iraq, and the widespread

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impact of corporate greed and malfeasance have rocked the business world in ways not seen since the Great Depression and the onset of World War II.

Sometimes, in the midst of such great trauma, there is tremendous value in seeking out the smaller, subtler, yet far more profound stories that continue to fuel the hope and inspiration that is the foundation of American business. This book tells one of those stories.

Though it is ostensibly a story about business, it is more than that. It is about a journey that circles along the arc of a company, through its leaders, its employees, its customers, and its core beliefs.

Remarkably, in this new millennium business environment, the KeySpan story is not about scandal, avarice, or the dramatic misplacement of trust and integrity (though the company has survived its own bout with executive greed and scandal). Instead, it is a story about relationships and attitudes, individuals and communities, risks taken in the name of possibility. It is about “enlightened self-interest” and the notion that leadership that embraces a set of higher values can simultaneously reap priceless goodwill as well as profits.

It is about two men whose career paths could not have been more different but whose lives converged and intersected in a moment of grace and serendipity. Within the staid and arcane world of an energy utility, a former engineer who rose through the corporate ranks all the way to the chief executive suite found an unlikely ally: a former priest who had lived a monastic life for 15 years before forsaking the Church to enter the very foreign and daunting corporate environment. Together, the pair has built upon long-held corporate values to fashion a different kind of workplace, a workplace where spirituality is woven into the fabric of daily life without religious overtones but loaded with meaning.

In most ways, KeySpan is, in fact, a corporate entity like most others. The company worries about making money and satisfying its stakeholders. Like other utilities, KeySpan has undergone wrenching change in the face of deregulation, a controversial merger, and a volatile business climate. It isn't always as profitable or fast moving as



its officers and employees would like. But something happens inside KeySpan that spawns an atmosphere that most companies quietly yearn for but struggle to achieve. Without fanfare, KeySpan has embraced a management philosophy that somehow balances bottom-line demands with a sense of caring and family. There is the palpable belief in the proposition that what is good for the soul is also good for business. Though it may sound like New Age folderol, the truth is evident throughout the company and illustrated by the actions of the CEO and the monk.

Robert B. Catell, chief executive officer at KeySpan since 1991, has overseen the transformation of a small Brooklyn gas company into one of the nation's largest and most successful energy companies. He is a soft-spoken, self-effacing leader, a 45-year KeySpan/Brooklyn Union veteran, whose gentle, common-man persona belies a tough, cerebral competence that has held the company together through more than a decade of turbulence.

Kenny Moore is the former monk with the title of "corporate ombudsman," a position created for him by Bob Catell. Kenny reports directly to Catell and roams the company freely, listening to the concerns of both employees and executives while "engaging the soul of the company," as he likes to put it. His role is to help foster corporate change in a time of difficult transformation and to infuse the agenda with a sense of spiritual connectedness. Though he now operates in concrete and glass towers rather than hallowed halls with stained-glass windows and wooden pews, he feels that his mandate remains much the same.

Corporate journeys are complex, interconnecting paths experienced from myriad points of view. For Bob Catell and Kenny Moore, the journey is about creating an environment and establishing a legacy that differentiates KeySpan in many ways. What is different about KeySpan is difficult to define. Perhaps it is a commitment to doing the right thing—turning over important conservation land to the state rather than opting for development; using social workers to help low-income customers sift through their financial burdens; encourag-

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ing a former monk to retain his role as a confidant, mentor, and teacher without the trappings of religion.

Perhaps it is the recognition that employees bring all their baggage to work. Sitting in front of you is not just a professional individual but that person's entire family, their biases, their strengths. Employees have chosen to come to this workplace, and thus it becomes a community in which people spend a majority of their waking hours. Somehow, under Catell, the company recognizes that it must reach people on not only a professional level but also on an emotional level and a personal level. With Kenny Moore's help, Catell has touched the people of KeySpan in a meaningful, even powerful way. Not everyone feels the touch or accepts it. There are skeptics, as there are in every organization. For some, it may seem too New Age, too uncomfortable.

But for most, the message is well received, even cherished. It crosses lines: men and women, operations people and white-collar executives, management staff and union workers. In a time of widespread disenchantment with corporate America, these people feel an undiminished pride in where they work, a sense of belonging and loyalty that has become passé in most organizations. In a time when CEOs are doing "perp walks" in handcuffs before news cameras, KeySpan's success is testimony both to the universality of the message and to the resolve and belief on the part of the CEO that the message is an essential ingredient in the makeup of the company.

KeySpan is not the most exciting company for which to work. It is, after all, a utility, an energy company that is dominated by an engineering culture. What attracts people to KeySpan is that at its core, in its Brooklyn heritage, is the feeling of family, like a gathering of aunts and uncles and cousins from Canarsie, Bay Ridge, Marine Park, and Flatbush. Its roots are humble, middle-class, unpretentious. And though its leaders are smart, savvy, and focused on profits and shareholder value, they are respectful of this quality that has endured difficult and trying transitions. This is the vision that Bob Catell has driven with passion and commitment since he

became CEO. This is what he is determined to hold onto even as the company grows, expands into new regions, and struggles with its own transformation.

You may not find any solutions to your own corporate angst in the KeySpan story. But the best lessons tend to appear in the least expected places, perhaps even a gas company in the heart of Brooklyn.

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## *The CEO*



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*I* can't remember the first time I met Kenny Moore. But when I got a chance to get to know him a bit, I realized that he had something more to bring to the company than traditional business skills. The fact that he had lived a monastic life in the priesthood for 15 years and had left to find his way in the world of business was intriguing. The fact that he had also survived a life-threatening bout with cancer, serious "terminal" cancer, and had recovered and returned to the company more energized than before also struck me.

But what really caught my attention, after a few meetings in which we got to know each other, was how strong his feelings were about people and how you can get things done by knowing people and working with people and listening to people. He expressed an intuitive sense of the goodness in people and the ability to connect and touch that goodness that rang true to me and the values I had been brought up with.

It was the early 1990s. I had not been the CEO of Brooklyn Union Gas for very long at that time and I was trying to figure out how I was going to make my mark on this company. What would I do differently? We had been this wonderful little local gas company for nearly 100 years. We had not only established a reputation as a good, reliable supplier of gas to our customers in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens, but we had become an integral part of the community. We were good corporate citizens. Customers loved us. Brooklyn loved us. Employees were proud to work for us, and it was a badge of honor to say you worked at Brooklyn Union. We were steady and solid, profitable and philanthropic, popular with regulators and politicians and union leaders.

But in the early 1990s, I began to see the nature of our industry changing. We were slowly but surely moving from a very tightly regulated monopoly to a much more competitive, unregulated environment. Changes were coming, and it would be up to me to lead the company head-on into this new era. We had a significant challenge ahead of us to maintain that close, what we called “family” relationship with our employees and customers and yet operate in a much more competitive marketplace.

I knew we had the business skills to navigate through these changes. But I believed that we needed something that would help our employees experience the changes—changes that could and would be hard and even traumatic—in a positive way. I wanted to find a way to capture what was good about the old Brooklyn Union and keep it alive in whatever kind of company we would become. I felt that Kenny could provide a mechanism to help me do that. In our discussions, Kenny talked about the employees and the passion. We discussed ways in which I could reach out through him and really capture that passion.

This was more than a business issue, though business issues will always lurk nearby when you are talking about a publicly held company. This was about spirituality and doing the right thing. It had nothing to do with religion even though Kenny was steeped in that tradition. I saw Kenny as a representation of the “soul” of the company, even if that sounds a bit corny. If I was going to lead this company through the next decade and into the new millennium, I felt strongly that we needed to build a company that had more than just a business perspective. I’d always felt that if I had the opportunity to become chief executive, I wanted to lead a company that had heart, that had an agenda that went beyond profits and losses and share price on Wall Street.

My feelings about our employees stemmed from lessons I learned early in life. I had been raised by my mother in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn. My parents had gotten divorced when I was very young and then my father died soon after. My mother raised my sister and me alone. We never thought of ourselves as

poor, but we had little money. What we had was a tremendous amount of love in our home. We also had stern guidance from my mother, who taught me early on about working and earning money and taking responsibility.

And my mother taught me a lot about people. She loved people and had many friends. Her friends were of all races and nationalities. Our apartment, small as it was, was always filled with fascinating people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds and even varied sexual preferences. I got a good dose of diversity long before that term became politically correct. She didn't care about race, creed, or color. What she cared about was whether you were a good person. She was quite outspoken and very strong-willed and remains so at age 96. Her behavior made a deep and lasting impression on me, and it had a lot to do with shaping my relationships with people. I honestly respect people, all kinds of people. I believe that everyone has something to offer and to be proud of. My mother instilled in me that people matter and that it is important to do the right thing.

In that regard, Kenny and I connected at the right time. I saw something in his dealings with people that went well beyond the usual human resources role. It seemed to me he brought a different perspective, a more human touch that warmed the cold business relationship for employees. I felt good in my meetings with him. The exchanges we had were frank, honest, and direct. He had no personal agenda that interfered with his ability to make a real connection with me or whomever he was talking with. There was something there, I thought, and if we could grow that inside the company, it would be a good thing. And that's when I decided we should create a special role for Kenny, a unique position, which we later formalized as the corporate ombudsman. Though he would still technically be part of human resources, he would report directly to me.

What I sought, more than anything, was to have Kenny serve as a conduit between me and the company population. We were going to be heading into turbulence, and I wanted someone out there who would provide insight to me, unfiltered and unfettered communica-

tion that I could trust. The CEO often gets filtered information. People tell him what they think he wants to hear. We have 12,000 employees in New York, New Jersey, and New England, and as much as I am out and around the company, I can't be everywhere and hear everyone. I wanted to know what people were really thinking and feeling. I said to Kenny, "You go out there and be my eyes and ears in the company." I wasn't looking for a corporate spy or informant. There would be no confidences divulged. I wasn't going to confront someone who offered a negative view.

Rather, Kenny would present the issues he encountered and offer suggestions on how I could respond to them. I knew there would be skeptics and naysayers who would openly question Kenny's role. I believed that Kenny could handle that and eventually convert them. Still, I am amazed how often he has won over the cynics. It isn't an easy role to fill, and it takes a special kind of human being to walk the line that he walks. His work inside the company has been quiet, unassuming, and astounding. He really has made a difference.

The past decade has been rewarding and profitable for me, for our employees and shareholders, and for this company. We have grown and spread ourselves into new businesses and new territories. We have encountered daunting obstacles along the way and overcome most of them to keep moving forward.

As an energy utility, we don't have the luxury to sit back and think about our future very often. We are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have to create the future while the present swirls around us.

Working together with Kenny, I have been able to hold onto the values I learned from my mother and from 45 years at this company. We've commingled our visions about profits and purpose. I wish we had a formula we could offer and a blueprint for success. We don't. This is our journey and our story. You might read this and decide to go out and hire a retired monk. Or better yet, you might just consider how simple it is to find the soul within your own organization if you just start looking.

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# The Monk



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*I*n 1982, after spending 15 years in a monastic community as a Catholic priest, I decided it was time to leave. Like many others who have made promises they ultimately could not keep, I came to personally understand the counsel of Tennessee Williams: “There is a time for departure even when there’s no certain place to go.”

I returned to live with my widowed mother in a one-bedroom apartment in New York City. In leaving the religious life, what I had hoped for were privacy, time for reflection, and more independence. What I got were cramped quarters, a protective mother, and more personal poverty than I experienced as a monk. My desire was to be on my own. But I still had not attained the freedom I sought. Eventually, a divine insight was presented: What I truly needed was a job and some money! This proved to be no easy task for one whose sole credentials were an advanced degree in theology, a deep spiritual life, and a propensity for burning incense.

My job search eventually brought me to Brooklyn Union Gas and a rising executive named Bob Catell. I accepted a position in the human resources department and prepared to enter corporate America and leave my religious traditions behind. Or so I thought.

Much to my surprise, the skills of the monastery had a place in the business world. Employee surveys increasingly confront executives with three major issues: nobody trusts their supervisors; employees don’t believe in senior management; and workers are too stressed out to care. Problems with trust, belief, and caring. In my monastic days, we referred to this self-same quandary as a crisis of faith, hope, and charity.

I began to discover that the problems confronting business leaders



were not only fiscal, they were also spiritual. And, as Divine Providence would have it, all this took on practical meaning when I came face-to-face with Bob Catell. He was a hard-nosed corporate executive with a soul; a person equally at home with corporate profit and with individual purpose; a businessman who longed to manage the “soft” side of the business as aggressively as he managed its hard side.

He was also a man with a mission. The staid world of utilities was being forced to transform itself into an industry of nimble, deregulated energy companies. That would require significant change. It would mean taking a company on a journey from security and complacency into an unknown future, fraught with uncertainty and danger, all with the positive prospects of a future promised land.

Like Moses of the Old Testament, Bob needed to move a large group of people out of their present homeland into a desert experience of pain and risk, holding out the hope of a future place flowing with milk and honey. The priest in me understood how formidable this challenge would be. The business side of me realized that Bob could not accomplish this salvific task alone. My background provided the language, mythology, and patience to assist a Moses-like business leader in this journey. Besides, I was the only one in the company who had a core competency for dealing with executives who believed themselves to be infallible.

What eventually surfaced was a compelling business need and a messianic CEO pushing forward to meet it. Recruited in the process was a former monk who had some odd skills to offer and divine connections to make. Over time, a relationship formed and grew.

However, that is not how it all originally started. During my first year at the company, I jumped at every opportunity to become competent in the business world and a traditional corporate man. I designed and implemented the company’s performance appraisal system and trained all of management in the evaluation process. I was successful and got promoted.

By the second year, I had firmly established myself in a corporate setting and had begun dating a wonderful woman in the company’s finance department, a bright accountant with an MBA. Love was

blossoming. Life was good. In early spring, a brief visit to the dermatologist revealed a fatal surprise: incurable cancer at its most advanced stage. For the next year I volunteered for an experimental treatment of aggressive chemotherapy and full-body radiation at the National Cancer Institute outside of Washington, D.C.

I survived and came back. I even got married to that lovely accountant. But I was changed. It was bad enough that I had 15 years in the monastery as my sole business training. I now had a near-death experience causing me to see the world from a radically different perspective. The doctors made it clear that I was not “cured.” They didn’t yet know how patients would fare with the experimental treatment. So even though I felt fine one day, I could be dead the next.

Armed with this information and having a new bride at my side, I gave up climbing the corporate ladder and decided to reposition priorities. I also wondered: If my career is truly over and I could be dead tomorrow, what did I want to do with my limited time? I kept recalling the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes: “Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us.” I began to take his advice to heart.

At work, I decided to spend more of my time being authentic and contributing to the corporate common good. I also spoke my mind, took more risks, and developed a greater sense of humor. One of the advantages of surviving terminal illness is you really don’t care about outcomes. At the end of the day, if I was still alive, I considered it a success. The monks refer to this as “holy indifference”—making sure your intentions are pure, then courageously moving forward.

I found myself in a large corporate bureaucracy, no longer concerned with career advancement, more interested in doing the right thing instead of being politically correct, and increasingly focused on coupling my new business skills with my old priestly ones. This is not your traditional recipe for business success, and certainly not behavior that you would expect to capture the eye of the CEO. Much to my surprise, Bob Catell and I came to connect. And when we did, it was just a matter of time before I was called in and told that I was being promoted, relocated to a larger corner office, and given a direct reporting line to the CEO.