



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.28 GETTING FIRED WITH A SMILE

As a leader in business, we sometimes hold ourselves back from actively contributing to others at work, out of the fear that our actions would not be accepted.

HAVE YOU ever met a business leader who was so authentic and “down to earth” that you just had to like him or her? That’s been our experience with Kenny Moore, a former Catholic monk who became Corporate Ombudsman and Human Resource Director at KeySpan, the largest distributor of natural gas in the Northeast area of the USA, with 13,000 employees.

Kenny has co-authored a book with the CEO of his company, Robert Catell, called *The CEO and the Monk: One Company's Journey to Profit and Purpose*. “Business Week India¹” fittingly summarised it with this review:

This is a corporate Akbar-Birbal story. Here, Akbar is a corporate emperor, Birbal a wise, retired Catholic priest. They combine to convert a gas company into an enterprise with warm soul and commitment. The most important lesson of this story is an ancient one: a court jester is necessary to provide wise inputs to an emperor and to keep him from straying onto the path of short-lived glory.

Kenny says, “The Divine's will is often revealed in the context of community with others, and in using our God-given talents to make the world better. Bosses, co-workers, and the economy will provide us with more than ample opportunities to practice kindness, forgiveness, and a note of hope to a sometimes beleaguered world.” He often comes up with creative ways to find and act upon those opportunities.

For example, in one article, “How to get fired with Pizzazz²”, Kenny reflected on the possibility of winning a large amount of money in a lottery. He mused that he might delay cashing in on his good fortune and “spend the next twelve months showing up at work the way I always wanted to, but was too afraid.”

Here are some things he would do “that would be both fun and meaningful” – for which he also speculated, “By the end of the year, the company in its infinite wisdom would surely terminate me. But not without a smile on my face.”

¹ You can find this book review at: <http://www.businessworldindia.com/sep2004/bookmark.asp>

² Pizzazz means “with exciting, attractive boldness”. You can find this article at: http://www.strategicconnections.com/article_getfired.htm

Waste time at the water cooler. *I'd spend an obscene amount of time just [standing] around, muttering compliments about my fellow employees. By focusing on the positive, I'm sure to be criticized for violating some hidden policy on corporate decorum. But who cares, I'm going to be fired anyway.*

Abuse the company mailroom. *I'd send lots of cards to co-workers: birthday, anniversary... Any chance to personally acknowledge, encourage and thank the many people who I work and play with on a daily basis. Particular attention would be given to those who irritate me. Learning to tolerate and forgive them would help me grow in tolerance and forgiveness of myself.*

Develop an attitude. *I would conduct myself in a way that gives testimony to the belief that people are doing the best they can, with what they have, every minute of the day. And that includes my boss and me too.*

Squander limited resources. *I'd spend [my time] mentoring some young employees. Teaching them the ropes, sharing all my corporate wisdom (this could be a short conversation...). It's mostly about forming relationships, learning to be playful and using our God-given talents to contribute to something larger than ourselves.*

Look good. *Make others look good, that is. Sometimes even do their job for them. I succeeded in my career very often by the support and performance of others. It would be a good time to return the favor.*

Kenny concludes the article by saying:

Having lived 12 months like this in a corporate setting, I would expect to be fired. But possibly if corporate America has truly embraced change, it might do the opposite: promote me... At least for now, I'll still keep dreaming.

Kenny shows his unique openness as a corporate leader by extending this invitation at the end of his articles³:

If you're thinking about writing me, give in to the temptation. I love getting mail ... and being influenced by what you have to say. Please E-mail me at kennythemonk@yahoo.com.

So, ask yourself: *What are ways I've been dreaming of how to contribute to others at work, but have been afraid to do so? How could I implement at least one of those dreams?*

³ To find other articles Kenny Moore has written, visit these links:

"Kenny Moore Held a Funeral and Everyone Came" –

<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/79/firstperson.html>

"Growing Old in HR – One Alternative" – <http://www.refresher.com/!knmhr.html>

"Become a Better Communicator by Keeping Your Mouth Shut" – <http://www.itstime.com/jun2005.htm>

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 3 – Spiritual-Based Leaders*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org