

Patrick Burke: Is Clarke's real goal to sell Kodak?

March 15, 2014 • 1 min read • [original](#)

Last week, Eastman Kodak Co. announced, to great fanfare, the successor for embattled CEO Antonio Perez, former upstater [Jeffrey Clarke](#). I was not familiar with Mr. Clarke or his accomplishments, so when I [read descriptors](#) like "brilliant business leader," "amazing business mind" and an "excellent resume," my curiosity was piqued. I decided that a closer examination of his qualifications to lead the 132-year-old transformed company was in order.

Before we attend to Mr. Clarke, a review of Kodak's businesses, post-bankruptcy, may assist in assessing Clarke's relevant professional experience to the principal board charge to drive growth. Based on the most recent [Securities and Exchange Commission filing](#) and management's [December 2013 presentation](#), the "New Kodak" is

determined to be a leader in commercial imaging. The two remaining divisions are Graphics, Entertainment and Commercial Film, and Digital Printing and Enterprise, totaling an estimated \$2 billion-plus in annual revenue. Management is betting imaging, printing and packaging will be the path to growth.

In-depth: [New CEO outlines growth strategy](#)

The announcement: [New Kodak CEO Jeff Clarke to focus on growth](#)

More: [Kodak CEO Jeff Clarke called brilliant business leader](#)

If one agrees that advances in the application of digital imaging technology are a critical element to Kodak's success, Clarke appears to be an odd fit for CEO. For the last 12 years, he has moved between four different employers, only staying longer than two years at one. That would be Travelport, an Internet-based travel conglomerate where he is credited with the IPO of Orbitz, a service that searches and makes reservations for air travel, hotels and car rentals. Though none of this experience is industry-related to the

Kodak business model, what is troubling are his lack of long-term commitments, and his decision to continue to live in San Francisco, not Rochester.



Patrick Burke(Photo:
File photo)

When I line up the facts, it leads me to one of two conclusions. The first is that the HVAC system at Kodak is pumping laughing gas into the boardroom, which I doubt, or that the board's real charge to Clarke is to sell the

company. The corporate Statue of Liberty play (say one thing with the intention of doing another), as successfully employed by Bausch + Lomb, could be the ultimate goal. Through bankruptcy, many significant barriers to a sale have been removed. If Clarke can demonstrate over the next two years even modest success in growing the business, investment bankers will be calling.

I hope I'm wrong. But following the distractions of the initial announcement, many questions remain. In any case, the best thing to do now is work to keep Kodak here by demonstrating our community's commitment to its and our mutual success.

Happy St. Paddy's Day (my birthday), and let's get to work.

More money Stories

-



Original URL:

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/money/columnist/burke/2014/03/15/patrick-burke-clarkes-real-goal-sell-kodak/6429819/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>