



Breaking The Brand

To Stop The Demand

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Regarding: Help save your peer group's reputation during this Vietnamese New Year

Dear

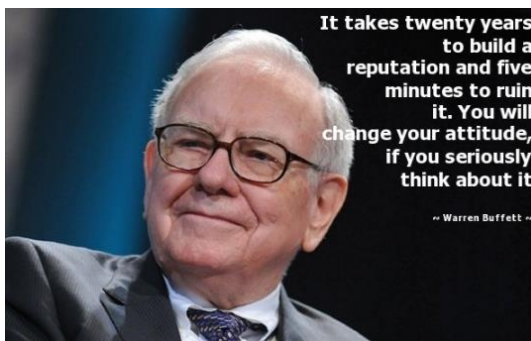
As someone who is at the forefront of business in Viet Nam and has influence in your local business community, we are contacting you to ask for your support over the upcoming Vietnamese New Year holiday. Our hope is that you will consider condemning the actions of giving or accepting the gift of rhino horn as a crude way of buying status and opportunities.

The Vietnamese New Year holiday is an important time, not only personally but also professionally. A time when people are reflecting on future commercial and career success. While we acknowledge that there may be a reluctance to be seen as critical of individuals in your peer group, this action of condemnation may just be what saves their reputation and future prosperity.



One of the most respected businessmen in the world, Warren Buffett, understands the critical importance of reputation on business success. His quotes about reputation, honesty and integrity are well known; we want to share just a few.

Research has also consistently shown that a company's value is linked to the reputation of its leader. One recent study quoted 60% of a company's market value is linked to its reputation and 49% of the reputation of a company is linked to the reputation of the leader.



Warren Buffett not only understands the link between reputation and company value, he also knows how hard it is to build a reputation and how easily it can be lost. All of this highlights that long-term opportunities are, in the main, dependent on being able to preserve reputation and integrity. When these are called into question it can limit professional prosperity and success; two of the top Vietnamese New Year wishes.

So, if there is someone in your peer group who you think may be tempted to give or accept rhino horn, as part of the Vietnamese New Year



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celebrations, the best gift you can give them is to remind them that it could do the opposite and bring bad luck to everyone involved, instead of delivering the business fortune they desire.

It is in these uncomfortable and difficult situations that authentic leaders step up and intervene. By condemning the practice of giving rhino horn these true leaders will not only help save the magnificent rhinoceros from extinction in the wild, but they will also help their peers to make the right choice. Your peers who give or accept rhino horn cannot also be seen as someone of integrity and honesty. Reminding them of this could help protect their reputations in the long-term.

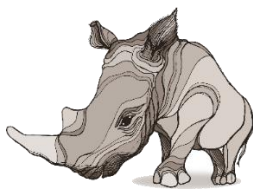
The current fashion of consuming rhino horn, be it for fun or status gain, is something that will be seen by more-and-more of Viet Nam's current and future business leaders as a practice that should never have happened. So again, we ask for your help to change attitudes towards the consumption of rhino horn in Vietnamese business circles.

Giving or accepting rhino horn this holiday doesn't only bring bad luck to the rhino it could bring bad luck to all involved, leaving your business associates vulnerable. Is that your wish for them at this Vietnamese New Year?

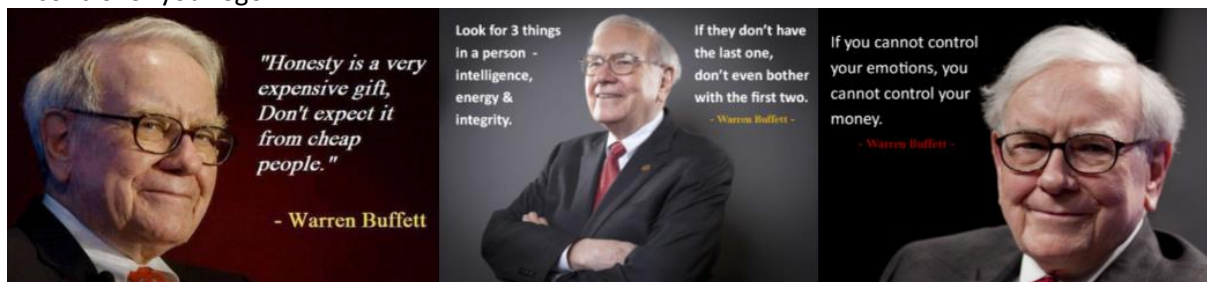
Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Johnson
Founder
Breaking The Brand Project



Additional insights from Warren Buffett on honesty, integrity and the negative impacts of not being in control of your ego.



THE GIFT OF BAD LUCK



The exchange of rhino horn as a gift is no longer a private matter. The world is watching and knows that Viet Nam's business elite is primarily responsible for the escalation in rhino poaching.

So, far from bestowing prosperity, the horn you so proudly give may well bring bad luck to all. Others in the global business community will hear of your disreputable actions that could leave you and your associates with a poisoned reputation.

Because you wanted to gain favours, a rhino lost its life, and a ranger may have died trying to protect it. This illegal chain of misery and death will ultimately reach you, the direct cause of all this suffering and bad luck.

Think again; there are many legal and ethical ways to wish good luck this holiday season.



*Giving rhino horn
could bring
bad luck to all.*

Victims of useless potions and empty gestures

By Dr. Lynn Johnson,
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An unborn rhino foetus removed from its dead and de-horned mother. This particular poaching incident also cost a wildlife ranger his life. It is not enough for certain businessmen in Vietnam to try to disassociate themselves from this killing spree by saying, "We don't do the poaching, we only buy the horn". This destruction is carried out to fulfil their personal desire for status, bestowed through obtaining a rare, expensive product—genuine rhino horn.

It is common for the wealthy to measure their own wealth and that of others by the luxury goods they own, but there is a stark difference between buying a Bentley or Rolex and obtaining illegal wildlife products. The drive to demonstrate status goes too far when it results in wiping out an iconic species, and in less than one generation to boot. Just how anxious can users of rhino horn be for their peers' acceptance to remain blind to the devastating consequences of their actions?

Humans are social creatures and we aim to conform to social norms to demonstrate that we are willing to fit in. However, this in itself cannot justify destructive behaviour, but all too often the gap between actions and consequences is too large in time or space for us to draw the link. Users of rhino horn are not a large group and consumption is a new fad, having only started in 2007. Although some of the people who buy and use this product are upheld as leading



The trade in rhino horn to Viet Nam is wiping out a species.



members of the business community in Vietnam, their actions in this regard are not what we look for in our leaders or even in our business partners.

Many businesspeople are delicate creatures. As someone who has made a living as a business coach for over a decade and worked with a multitude of executives, I know how fragile their egos can be. When they are struggling with their self-image, they often reach for 'badges of status', such as a corner office, luxury cars, and executive programmes at international business schools to help them feel on top of their game and demonstrate that they are still on the A-team.

As we work together during coaching

sessions, they build a stronger inner self-image. They learn to control their ego rather than the other way around, and become less needy of status symbols or reassurance. Ego blurs judgement and does not make for quality long-term relationships, professional or personal. As ego is corralled, people become more emotionally grounded, which gives them the capacity to have more empathy for the people and the world around them.

Our experience and intuition tells us that good leaders - true leaders - evolve, in part, into custodians. They look to make a positive difference in the world. They begin to consider the consequences of their actions, even the ones they are not directly responsible for.

As the Vietnamese economy has grown at an unprecedented pace, local businessmen have come by significant wealth. These men want to be seen as leaders and, given the recent Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, more Vietnamese businessmen will seek global opportunities. The TPP is not only about promoting economic growth and opportunities, it is also about fostering greater transparency and good governance.

Regrettably, many Vietnamese businessmen are notorious users of rhino horn, and are thus driving the current killing spree. More businesses around the world will look to the quality of Vietnamese corporate leadership, and future business potentially hinges upon the conclusions they draw.

Wild rhinos became extinct in Vietnam in 2010, lost forever on this current generation's watch. Will the world's remaining wild rhinos be lost on their watch too, because of their hunger for a status symbol, their drive to fit into the local business elite? In taking the next step from local to global business, it is critical for those involved to see that their behaviour—using rhino horn to gain favours—inspires repulsion rather than awe.

If they continue to serve their unethical cravings, all they will turn out to be is another generation of ordinary businessmen, who in a decade or two will be forgotten to all but a few family members and friends, if that.

But if a small group of influential men could work together to influence each other and those around them, to stop using rhino horns as a useless detox drink or a needless business gift, they will be remembered for a hundred and more years as the generation of Vietnamese businessmen that stood together and saved a 50 million-year-old iconic animal species. This would show quality leadership, true and transformational leadership. This could demonstrate that they are the type of people the world should want to do business with. They would become the generation known as the 'Rhino Custodians'—a far more captivating legacy. I hope they choose this path—for the world is watching. ■

