

4/21/2018

This email exchange should be read from the bottom up for context. Apologies for the tiny type face.

Subject: Re: Your endorsement of Ripley Davenport
From: Kent Madin (rett139@yahoo.com)
To: deblonville@gmail.com;
Bcc: [REDACTED]
Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2013 12:53 PM

Let's recap. Perhaps you think I should have handled the approach to you differently. Perhaps I should have mentioned nothing about the things I have learned about Ripley and my conclusions and played those card close. I could have been friendly, vague and complimentary to you, of course. I could have plied your ego with some nice things and said some vague things about Ripley that, because I was being so nice to you, you would believe that it was all good with Ripley. I could have mentioned how we are both Outward Bound alums and instructors, guides and adventurers with much in common. I could have let you run out as much rope as you liked, expanding on what a fantastic and quintessential explorer Ripley is. I could have done all this without lying to you. I could have approached you so that your ego and your pleasure at being recognized and asked for wisdom about Ripley would have blinkered you. I might well have trapped you into saying things on paper that you might have regretted.

I didn't.

I was straightforward, professional and honest with you. Realizing you might wonder at the history behind my request, I gave you links to examine which illustrated my position, links which anyone with an open pair of eyes could draw their own conclusions from. I asked you nicely and politely. You responded, not with requests for clarification or my credentials. No, you threatened to have me beaten up (along with childish digs about Montana being some kind of backwater. Really Earl? When you're Australian the last thing you want to do is get in a pissing match over who's more provincial).

As to reporting me to LinkedIn... yes, please do. That would be swell. As I understand it, your position is that failure to swallow, hook, line and sinker, whatever is written in the way of an endorsement is a violation. I'd love to see how LinkedIn deals with people who write floral endorsements and then go all huffy when asked if they could just clarify how they actually KNOW all these wonderful things about the endorsee. I have a feeling LinkedIn is pretty concerned about authenticity and accuracy as the currency that makes their service valuable. I can't wait to find out how they will handle this.

I am beginning to detect a trend among the rough, tough self-promoting explorers of the 21st century. They all have incredibly thin skin. What's the line about Lady MacBeth?

When you talk with Ripley ask him about his two advanced degrees, in Environmental Science and Conservation Biology.

Believe it or not, I am trying to give you the benefit of the doubt. Before you go all in with Ripley's fantasy, do your own research. Google me. Or if you prefer social media: <https://www.facebook.com/kent.madin.5>

From: Earl de Blonville <deblonville@gmail.com>
To: Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 11, 2013 10:38 AM
Subject: Re: Your endorsement of Ripley Davenport

I must find out some more about you. I'll ask Ripley. I'll be interested in his view. When you (or anyone else) just come in out of the blue slagging off another bloke to someone you don't know, have never met and have no business even calling, you just make yourself look like a jerk. That's you, old chap, creating that impression of yourself. As far as I can see, you have basically breached all the rules and etiquette of LinkedIn, and I think they should be apprised how you're misusing what is supposed to be a forum of trust.

On 11 June 2013 16:41, Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com> wrote:

Wow!
One minute we're at a bit of banter (and the kind of request that any user of LinkedIn might make) and now you're threatening to dispense Aussie justice to me on my home turf.
Let's recap.

According to everything I can find on the internet you're a respected Australian explorer, leadership coach, Ph.d candidate and more. You've endorsed someone on LinkedIn, the primary business network on the internet. I'm following up to ask more about the details behind your unstinting endorsement.

And for that inquiry, you just threatened that sometime, somewhere, friends of yours are going to come to Montana and "bust (my) smart-arsed fucking face to teach (me) a long-overdue lesson in humility". That seems like a thin-skinned and inappropriate over-reaction.

The fact is that I have not been able to find a single person who remembers Ripley Davenport mentioning being a desert explorer until 2009 when he put up his website to promote his 2010 walk across Mongolia and pursue sponsorship. Landlords, people who he was in business partnership with, fishing friends and more all report that Ripley was mum on the subject until it emerged full blown and redolent with exciting detail as the introduction to his Mongolia walk.

So, seeing your endorsement and remembering that you had previously made more sense than most on a Mikael Strandberg blog, I wrote to you to see if you have the kind of direct experience which might validate Ripley's claims. Do you or don't you?

It's long seemed to me that as regards LinkedIn endorsements, most reflect an inverse proportion between effusiveness and fact. The best way to find out is just to ask.

If you made that endorsement up, based on what Ripley has said about himself, just say so and we're done. You won't be the first person who, in the best tradition of mutual back scratching, embellished an endorsement. I'm a realist about that kind of mutual aid society in business.

A final word on Aussie justice. You're not going to send your thug friends to Bozeman to beat me up and we both know it. That was silly bombast (perhaps the Foster's talking, I don't know). But, if I do fall down or have any sort of unexplained accident, the police will be sure to look you up right away, thanks to your brilliant strategy of threatening me in an email. And as to address, I am easy to find. Tell your friends to use this thing we have in Bozeman called the internet and look me up. Or they can do it the old fashioned way and walk into City Hall or the Police Department and ask them where I live. They'll be happy to oblige, Bozeman's a small town. It's Montana.. we're pretty friendly out here in cowboy country.

What would a leader do? Would he reassess direction, particularly in the face of new facts? Would he be driven by pride or practicality? Would he recognize an error made or would he compound that error?

Kent

From: Earl de Blonville <deblonville@gmail.com>
To: Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 10, 2013 9:57 PM

Subject: Re: Your endorsement of Ripley Davenport

In Australia, when some idiotic sounding, self-important stranger jumps up and starts demanding information that is nothing whatsoever to do with them, as you see fit to do, we just tell them to go and get fucked. Those types usually get the message there and then, and it's all over.

But if, as in your case, the stranger remains persistent - presumably delusional or cursed with an inability to see how totally inappropriate their behavior is becoming - we consider two choices: either to bust their smart-arsed fucking face to teach them a long-overdue lesson in humility, as obviously they have been getting away with this kind of behaviour for far too long, or to pity them for being unable to help or control themselves.

Which approach would prefer? If it's the latter, then I will consider writing your behaviour off as being that of a sad but impertinent loser with too much time on his hands and not enough intelligence to monitor himself. But if it's the former, let me know your full name and home and work addresses so that a few of my rather interesting friends can fit a visit into their busy travelling schedules. Understand that they may not all be able to attend at once, but will visit sequentially. OK with you?

On 11 June 2013 01:20, Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com> wrote:
 I suppose.

Does the Mayor get to fly the flag of Hongwere on his car fender and is there a signet ring involved? If so, well then... the similarities are striking.

I'll see your FRGS and your Global Leadership Researcher and raise you an Honored Worker of Tourism Development (Mongolia) and a Paul Harris Fellow (Montana) both with snappy lapel pins.

But, chest thumping aside, in case the question was lost in all that humor.. let me rephrase: Given that "quintessential" doesn't just pop up every other sentence in daily conversation, upon what actual experience with Ripley Davenport do you base your effusive and lyric endorsement?

Re: The good work.. will do. "Leave no stone unturned", that's our motto. There's always new material popping up, like the images on Ripley's Flickr site.

Kent

From: Earl de Blonville <deblonville@gmail.com>
To: Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 10, 2013 3:30 PM

Subject: Re: Your endorsement of Ripley Davenport

'Honorary Consul of Mongolia for the Northern Rockies'
 Something like being Mayor of Globsville, Hongwere.

I like your sense of humor. Almost very original.
 You remind me of W.E. Bowman's style.
 Keep up the good work.

On 10 June 2013 20:49, Kent Madin <rett139@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. de Blonville,

I took note of your endorsement of Ripley Davenport posted on LinkedIn on May 24 of this year.

"**Ripley** is not your boastful hero, pushing the odds just for attention. No, in contrast to the rather plentiful and tiresome 'I-Was-There-First' types, **Ripley** is one of those rare individuals who's drive is pure curiosity; of the old stamp, when men struggled across deserts just to know what lay in some small valley of fragmented myth. I regard him as a quintessential explorer who shines, like brass, from hardest use. And believe me, he has known hardship: but that is for him to reveal. His inspiration is quirky, because he is authentic and original - not a pleaser but a seeker. He is as flawed and human as real explorers so often are, when you peel away the gloss of popular myth. Most of all, he is a wonderful human being and if you were lucky enough to travel with him, and could stand the rigours of doing so that Mother Nature imposes in her democratic way, then you would learn a thing or two about not only yourself, but about the timeless nature of desert exploration that has caught so many in its spell. I think **Ripley** is a keeper of the old magic. And for those would who hear his stories, and detect the inner landscapes they reveal, they should also listen to their own hearts, as he speaks of the dreams and drive that through the millennia brought us all to this point. His inner vision helps us to see who we really are, or could be, beyond the drudge of a daily suburban existence that for most passes as a life."

Given that you endorsed Ripley in several areas, Public Speaking, Navigation, Expeditions Logistics, etc. I am wondering if you can expand upon when and where you had the experience(s) with Ripley that provide the basis for your endorsements.

I've been doing research for an article about Ripley (and the whole sub-genre of "unassisted, solo explorers") and to date the overwhelming conclusion of that research would have to be that Ripley's story is self-fabricated with no actual documentation or corroboration of the majority of his claims; expeditions, military service, educational degrees. Most charitably, Ripley is a Walter Mitty. Most likely, Ripley is an incorrigible liar and con man, enthusiastically aided and abetted by his wife Laura. That's the range of conclusions my research supports.

The only "expeditions" I can substantiate are his 2010 walk across Mongolia which purports to have covered 1000 of the proposed 1700 miles. But that event's website and information has been taken down by Ripley and he has been unable to provide documentation of anything more than the first dozen or so days of 50+ days traveled. In 2011 he participated in a walk with clients, leading camels carrying personal duffel, across 1000 miles of the Gobi desert in 2011 with a support truck carrying water, food, etc and several Kazakh guides and a cook. The internet records of that event have also been taken down. Finally, Ripley and a companion attempted to walk the length of Death Valley last year, unassisted and hauling all their water and supplies on carts. They gave up after less than 24 hours in the field and 6 miles along public roads. I am trying to reconcile Ripley's documented track record of exploration that I have found with "quintessential explorer".

But as you will note in [Ripley's LinkedIn](#) listing, the claims of having crossed the [Namib Desert with camels in 1998](#) and [the Karakum Desert in Turkmenistan](#) in that same year, of living and studying with the Gadia Lothar of the Thar Desert in India and with the Tuareg of Niger, these have all disappeared along with the claim to being a [combat paramedic](#) and [special forces soldier](#) in the UK. And the two advanced degrees in Environmental Science and Conservation Biology are also unmentioned.

Since I have not heard of Ripley conducting an expedition with yourself and since I have no knowledge of Ripley having visited Australia, I am wondering how you gained the experience and insight which infused your endorsement with such poetry.

I know that last line may well get your back up. It's really not my intention to offend, but rather to be blunt and honest. As someone steeped in the principles of leadership you may appreciate that approach. I hope you will set aside any personal sensitivity and consider this new information and perspective and honor my request for further information with an open mind and willingness to reconsider even the most closely held belief.

It's not my intention to drag you into the minutia of the case for the fantastic house of cards that Ripley has built. Unless, of course, you'd like to see the facts in which case I can send you a link.

I just want to know how you know the things you have written about Ripley.

Sincerely,

Kent Madin
Honorary Consul of Mongolia for the Northern Rockies
Director, Boojum Expeditions www.boojum.com
Bozeman, Montana
Skype KentinBZN