BRIGHTEDGE CREATIVE *Building Brands with Purpose*

September 21, 2025

Ms. Trina Walters
Vice President of Brand Strategy
South Grove Coffee

Dear Trina,

I'm writing to you during what I recognize is an extraordinarily difficult moment for South Grove. The revelation about Sierra del Norte has created a situation that demands both immediate action and careful consideration of long-term implications. As your partners in building South Grove's brand story, we need to address how we move forward together.

The Current Reality

Let me be direct: BrightEdge cannot continue promoting South Grove as "Ethically Grounded" or "Brewed with Integrity" while Sierra del Norte remains in your supply chain. This isn't about judgment or abandonment—it's about a simple truth we both understand. Every day that passes represents real children doing dangerous work for poverty wages. We know South Grove didn't choose this situation, but now that we all know the truth, our choices from this moment forward define who we really are as organizations.

Your September 1 statement acknowledging the issue and committing to transition "as quickly and responsibly as possible" was an important first step. However, I need to share something with you candidly: across industries, that exact phrase has too often preceded years of delay while exploitation continues. I believe South Grove intends differently, which is why I'm proposing we work together to demonstrate what "responsibly" really means—not gradual change that prioritizes convenience, but urgent action that prioritizes humanity.

The Opportunity Before Us

Here's what I find genuinely exciting about this moment: South Grove has the chance to show the entire coffee industry what ethical leadership actually looks like. Not the polished perfection of brands that have never faced challenges, but the authentic courage of a company that discovered a problem and attacked it with transparency and urgency.

When Patagonia told customers not to buy their jackets while explaining environmental costs, sales increased 30%. When CVS removed all tobacco products overnight, they lost $2 billion in revenue but became trusted healthcare leaders. The lesson is clear: consumers don't expect perfection, but they desperately want authenticity. They're tired of vague corporate promises. They're ready to support brands brave enough to show the messy, difficult work of genuine change.

A Different Kind of Campaign

Instead of pausing everything, I want to propose something radical: Let's make South Grove's transformation the campaign itself.

Imagine replacing "Ethically Grounded" with "Becoming Ethical in Real Time." Document every step. Show consumers what it actually takes to ensure their morning coffee doesn't depend on child labor. Visit potential suppliers together. Share the true costs. Admit what you don't know yet. Make the difficulty part of the story.

This could include:

- **Week 1**: South Grove announces Sierra del Norte contracts will end by December 31, 2025, with weekly public updates on the transition
- **Week 2-4**: Live documentation of visiting potential ethical suppliers, showing consumers what verification really looks like
- **Week 5-8**: Transparent reporting on cost implications and why ethical coffee costs more
- **Week 9-12**: Introduction of new suppliers with their stories, their communities, their practices
- **Beyond**: Ongoing transparency about the challenges and victories of maintaining ethical supply chains

We could call it "The 100-Day Promise"—a public commitment to complete supplier transition with full transparency. Every Friday, South Grove reports progress. No corporate polish, just truth.

What This Requires

For this to work—and for BrightEdge to move forward as your agency—we need specific commitments:

1. A public announcement by October 1 stating the exact date Sierra del Norte contracts end
2. Weekly transition updates beginning immediately
3. New supplier contracts signed and verified by independent monitors within 100 days
4. Full supply chain transparency moving forward

I realize this timeline might feel impossibly aggressive. But consider: every additional month means hundreds of children continue laboring in dangerous conditions. The question isn't whether 100 days is comfortable for South Grove—it's whether those children deserve faster action. I believe you already know the answer.

The Harder Truth

Trina, I need to share something that might be difficult to hear. If South Grove chooses a prolonged transition without specific deadlines, BrightEdge will need to resign the account. Not because we don't value our partnership—we deeply do—but because continuing to promote South Grove's ethics while children labor in your supply chain would make us complicit in their exploitation. That's a line we cannot cross, even for a valued client.

But I don't want to resign this account. I want to help South Grove become the company that transforms how the coffee industry thinks about supply chain ethics. I want to create campaigns that MBA students study for decades as the moment corporate responsibility became corporate opportunity.

Your Leadership Moment

The regional coffee market is watching. Your competitors are probably hoping South Grove handles this quietly, slowly, without raising consumer expectations for the entire industry. But what if you didn't give them that comfort? What if South Grove publicly challenged every regional coffee brand to match your 100-day transition timeline? What if you made ethical sourcing the new competitive battlefield where South Grove has already claimed the high ground?

This isn't about managing a crisis anymore. It's about seizing leadership of an industry transformation that's long overdue.

Next Steps

I'd like to meet Monday to discuss which path South Grove chooses. If you're ready to commit to specific timelines and radical transparency, our entire creative team is prepared to pivot immediately to tell this powerful story of authentic change. If you need more gradual transition, I'll help coordinate a smooth handoff to another agency that might better align with that approach.

Either way, I want you to know that suggesting this meeting isn't a threat—it's an expression of hope. Hope that South Grove will choose to be the company your brand values already claim you are. Hope that we can turn this moment of crisis into a catalyst for industry-wide change. Hope that years from now, we'll look back on this as the moment South Grove didn't just save their brand, but helped save an industry's soul.

Trina, you and your team built South Grove on community values and sustainability. This is the moment those values get tested. The choice isn't between business success and ethical action—the evidence overwhelmingly shows that brands that take decisive ethical stands outperform those that equivocate. The only question is whether South Grove will lead this transformation or follow others who will.

I believe in South Grove's capacity to lead. Our entire team is ready to help you show the world what ethical business really looks like—not perfect, not polished, but genuine, urgent, and transformative.

Let's make history together.

With deep respect and genuine partnership,

[Your Name]
Project Coordinator
BrightEdge Creative

P.S. I've asked our creative team to hold all current campaign production. But I've also asked them to begin sketching concepts for "The 100-Day Promise" campaign, because I believe in South Grove's courage to do what's right. When you're ready to move forward, we can launch within 48 hours. The children in Sierra del Norte's fields have waited long enough for all of us to act. Let's not make them wait any longer.