

# SIZE MATTERS

WHY WE LOVE TO HATE BIG FOOD



Charlie Arnot




Springer

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Sowing the Seeds of Distrust</b>	<b>1</b>
	A Pivotal Year	1
	Watergate Becomes an Icon	2
	An Epidemic of Scandal	4
	Warning from Wall Street	6
	Accounting and Accountability	8
	Count the Cost	9
<b>2</b>	<b>Shattered Trust: Social License Revoked</b>	<b>11</b>
	Poisoned	11
	The Fallout	12
	Disturbing Footage	13
	Eating Right	14
	The Cost of Confusion	16
<b>3</b>	<b>From A&amp;P to Omni Shopping: (Big Boxes and Inboxes)</b>	<b>19</b>
	It's Always in Season	19
	Into the Box	20
	Virtual Cart	21
	Demand and Delivery	22
	Thrive Market	24
	Big Gets Bigger	25
	The Big Bias	26
	A Return to Innovation	27
<b>4</b>	<b>From Famine to Feast</b>	<b>29</b>
	Malthus Malaise	29
	Faulty Assumptions	30
	Green Revolution	31
	Tall Corn	33
	Gigi the Diva	35
	Saving People and the Planet	36

Borlaug Backlash . . . . .	37
Jekyll & Hyde . . . . .	38
Back to the Farm . . . . .	39
<b>5 How to Make Money by Doing What's Right . . . . .</b>	<b>41</b>
Cycle of Continuous Influence . . . . .	41
Freedom to Operate . . . . .	42
Social License . . . . .	43
Social License vs. Social Contract . . . . .	45
The Damning Bad Actor . . . . .	46
The Power of Shared Values . . . . .	47
Transparent Transformation . . . . .	49
Scale for Good . . . . .	50
Transparency Trepidation . . . . .	51
What Matters Most . . . . .	51
Answering the Wrong Question . . . . .	52
The Bias Against Big . . . . .	53
Building a Trustworthy Foundation . . . . .	54
Compelling Competency . . . . .	54
Effective Engagement . . . . .	55
Engagement on a Grand Scale . . . . .	56
The Challenge Ahead . . . . .	57
<b>6 Brands as Agents of Social Change . . . . .</b>	<b>59</b>
Demanding Change . . . . .	59
If the Shoe Fits . . . . .	59
Brands as Change Agents . . . . .	62
Chicken and Egg . . . . .	63
Shall We Dance? . . . . .	65
Contrasting Strategies . . . . .	66
Workers Unite . . . . .	67
More Information Please . . . . .	68
Brands Make a Mark . . . . .	68
Digital Engagement . . . . .	68
<b>7 Military, Social Media and Meal Time . . . . .</b>	<b>71</b>
Living Room War . . . . .	71
Taking Steps . . . . .	73
Food System Strategy . . . . .	74
Slimed . . . . .	75
The Tribe Has Spoken . . . . .	77
Not-So-Social Media . . . . .	79
Opening the Barn Door . . . . .	80
<b>8 Dinner Without Dogma . . . . .</b>	<b>83</b>
Food Tribes . . . . .	84
Shame on Shaming . . . . .	85

Moving to “Yes And” ..... 86

Working Toward Solutions ..... 87

The Other Side of the Equation ..... 88

Getting In The Habit..... 90

Golden Opportunity ..... 91

What is the Ethical Choice? ..... 91

The Food System’s Responsibility ..... 92

An Invitation ..... 93

## About the Author

**Charlie Arnot** is recognized as a thought leader in food and agriculture. He is highly regarded as both a writer and sought-after speaker who engages audiences across the globe. Charlie has more than 25 years of experience working in communications, public relations, and issues management within the food system. He is the founder and president of Look East, an employee-owned public relations consulting firm. He also serves as CEO of the Center for Food Integrity, an international non-profit organization dedicated to building consumer trust and confidence in today's food system.

His commitment to excellence, innovation, and integrity have positioned him as a trusted counselor to CEOs, government leaders, and executives, and a respected industry advisor on critical issues within the food system. Clients and food and farm industry leaders seek his unique expertise in applying the peer-reviewed trust model to help them build trust in their processes, products, people, and brands.

Charlie is frequently sought out by media for his insight on food and agriculture issues and has been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Time*, NPR, CNBC, the National Journal, Entrepreneur, Yahoo Health, Huffington Post, *Grist*, and dozens of trade publications globally.



# Introduction

There was a time not so long ago when public officials were admired, when institutions were respected, when executives were distinguished and big companies were celebrated, when America's military-industrial complex seemed invincible. It also was a time when few worried about who produced their food or how they produced it.

Then came the tumultuous events of 1968, followed by decades of financial scams, presidential resignations and impeachments, environmental disasters, sexual crimes by religious leaders, divisive wars all over the world, and debilitating partisanship on matters politic.

One casualty of this turbulence has been public confidence. Trust in our institutions and businesses has taken a beating. Americans are increasingly more skeptical, more demanding, and less forgiving. They are also less reticent. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other forms of social media have made it easy for them to tell their friends and neighbors about their skepticism and their unhappiness with a growing lack of civility.

Without taking specific steps to build and to maintain trust, there most assuredly is more trouble ahead for banks and other lenders; for local, state, and national governments; for newspapers and television networks; for providers of goods and services; for churches of all denominations; and for other businesses and organizations. Diminished trust also is impacting America's farmers, food processors and manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants, groups I have been privileged to work for and to work with.

This book focuses on food for two reasons. The first is because of lessons learned working with those groups, whose members include everyone from pig farmers to multinational food marketers. The second is because of the importance of food to our identity, culture, national security, and to a world whose growing population depends on a reliable, affordable, and nutritious source of nourishment. At the same time, I am confident the solutions offered here to build and to preserve trust will work for any public organization or private company.

The foundation is *social license*. Every organization, public or private, operates with a social license – the privilege of operating with minimal formalized restriction

based on maintaining public trust by doing what is right. If the public trusts an organization to do what is right, it will not call for restrictions through greater social control. However, once that trust is violated and social outrage ensues, the public demands more social control through regulation, legislation, or market action.

While social license may be intangible, make no mistake that it counts toward the bottom line. Losing social license and incurring more social control impacts more than a reputation. It costs dollars ... **BIG DOLLARS**. Unfortunately, the consequences do not impact just the bad actor. They can damage an entire sector, or an entire country.

Our goal is to prevent that damage from occurring.

Charlie Arnot  
April, 2018