Today’s Food System

- Safer
- More available
- More affordable

Consumers are more skeptical and concerned.

How did that happen?
50 Years of Violations of Public Trust
50 Years of Violations of Public Trust

LEHMAN BROTHERS BANKRUPTCY - 2008

Bears Stearns bail out
J.P. Morgan and N.Y. Fed provide funds to strapped Wall St. broker

MORTGAGE FRAUD FLOURISHED IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF COLLAPSING LENDING STANDARDS AMID LAX REGULATION.
- FINANCIAL CRISIS INQUIRY COMMISSION

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The Decline of Trust

The frequency and visibility of violations of public trust have been consistent enough to breed public skepticism about whether government, businesses and other institutions are worthy of trust.
Consolidation, Integration and Industrialization
Then vs. Now

**THEN**

--Authority is granted primarily by office

--Broad social consensus driven by white males

--Communication was formal, indirect (mass communication)

--Progress is inevitable

--“Big” is respected

**NOW**

--Authority is granted primarily by relationship

--No single social consensus, great diversity, many voices

--Communication is informal, direct (masses of communicators)

--Progress is possible

--“Big” is bad
The Biotech Challenge

- GMOs have become an icon for what consumers consider an “industrialized” food system.

- Concerns about GMOs are often not about the technology per se, but rather what the technology represents.

- It’s used as cultural shorthand, which makes this technology unique among other innovations.
Traditional Communications are Less Effective Today

Traditional Communication Model

Expert

Tribal/Network Communication Model

Consumer

Online Friends

Family

Neighbor

Friend

Family

Online Friends

Family

Blogs
The “Mom Tribe” Consumer Panel

What information sources have you used to come to your conclusions that GMOs are dangerous?

Heidi: “I’m part of a moms group. When there is a big consensus, I think ‘there’s something here.’ You don’t need doctors or scientists confirming it when you have hundreds of moms.”
Communicating Science

Why the hostility toward science?
“I think it's at least partly a communication issue. Trust is really important, because ... we [don't] have the time in our ordinary lives to get up to speed on ... nanoscience or quantum mechanics... Science and the public have separated so much that many people in the public consider science just another opinion.”
- Alan Alda
No, onions do not absorb bacteria. The idea that a vegetable would attract and suck into itself bacteria from the air is not even logical. The onion may turn black because it would eventually rot from both cell breakdown events and bacterial contamination if you left it out, not because it absorbs germs.

- Ruth MacDonald, PhD, RD, Chair and Professor of the Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition at Iowa State University

Total thumbs down on this article. Old wives tales endure centuries for a reason. I started leaving a cut onion on the counter when my son was 12 and neither of us had as much as a cold throughout until his graduation. Science doesn't have to "prove" anything to make me believe it works.

- Cindy Gable
Cycle of Continuous Influence

Regulators

Gene Editing

Branded Food & Beverage Companies

Consumer Influencers
What We’ve Learned about Building Trust
Trust research was published in the December 2009 *Journal of Rural Sociology*
MAMAVATION

Social License Challenge: Biotechnology

DANNON COMMITS TO TRANSPARENCY AND NON-GMO FEED FOR ALL ITS COWS

Farm War Over Sustainability: Groups Push Back on Food Claims About GMOs, Farm Practices

OMAHA (DTN) -- Farm groups defending biotechnology are making it clear they have drawn a line in the sand against companies that convert product lines to non-GMO crops in the name of "sustainability."

Spearheaded by the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance -- a group funded by farm trade associations and industry partners -- a coalition on Thursday announced a "straight talk" campaign to engage food companies about biotechnology and practices that should define sustainable agriculture. Farm groups also made it clear they intend to publicly call out food companies that criticize food produced with genetically modified organisms.

Farm groups have been trying for years to reverse the conversation and angst about biotechnology from at least some consumers. Yet food companies have increasingly opted to tap into that consumer ignorance on GMOs -- and avoid a future federal GMO disclosure law -- by reformulating products and promoting the brand as non-GMO. General Mills did so with Cheerios, as Hershey's has...
Trust Model (Sapp/Look East)

CONFIDENCE

VALUE SIMILARITY

COMPETENCE

INFLUENTIAL OTHERS

TRUST

SOCIAL LICENSE

FREEDOM TO OPERATE

Trust research was published in the December 2009 Journal of Rural Sociology
What Drives Consumer Trust?

Shared values are 3-5x more important to building trust than sharing facts or demonstrating technical skills/expertise.
Sustainable Balance

- Economically Viable
  - ROI
  - Demand
  - Cost Control
  - Productivity
  - Efficiency
  - Profitability

- Scientifically Verified
  - Data Driven
  - Repeatable
  - Measurable
  - Specific

- Ethically Grounded
  - Responsibility
  - Respect
  - Fairness
  - Truth

Value Similarity

Knowledge

Feelings
Belief

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science Question</th>
<th>Ethical Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>SHOULD</td>
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Don’t abandon science and facts

Lead with Shared Values to Build Trust
Unique Challenges
Introducing the Innovation of Gene Editing
The Innovation Continuum

Continuous Innovation

Little Effect on Utilization Behavior
Simple Change
Basic Principles are the Same

Improved Practices
New Method or Application but No Change in Basic Ideas or Principles

Discontinuous Innovation

Fundamental Changes in Utilization Behavior
Innovation
Change in Basic Ideas, Principles and Change in Beliefs of Users
Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process

PRIOR CONDITIONS
1. Previous practice
2. Felt needs/problems
3. Innovativeness
4. Norms of the Social Systems

I. Awareness
II. Persuasion
III. Decision
IV. Implementation
V. Confirmation

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DECISION-MAKER
1. Socio-economic characteristics
2. Personality variables
3. Communication behavior

PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNOVATION
1. Relative advantage
2. Compatibility
3. Complexity
4. Trialability
5. Observability

TIMING
1. External Influences
2. Internal Influences

Adoption → Continued Adoption
Later Adoption
Rejection → Discontinuance
Continued Rejection
Connecting with Consumers in a Post-Truth Tribal World
What Makes Information Credible?

Download Research Summary at FoodIntegrity.org
The Belief Spectrum

People’s assessment of what makes food information credible or not, is shaped by their relationship to the truth.
The Belief Spectrum

On the left of the spectrum are people who understand truth as objective: a knowable fact that can be best observed through the scientific method.

On the right of the spectrum are people for whom ‘truth’ is subjectively determined (regardless of whether they realize it). For them, what makes information credible is more about what “feels true for me” based on deeply held beliefs.

In the middle are people for whom truth is both objectively and subjectively determined. These consumers are often confused by the amount and the often contradictory nature of information, so they seek guidance from others to determine credibility.

People’s assessment of news credibility is shaped by their relationship to the truth.
Food news is symbolic of...

Complexity: They love it, because they know nothing is simple or black and white.

Ethical rationality: Seeing rational arguments in ethics, and what they consider being morally right – their opinion positions them on the “right” side of morality.

Confusion: It causes stress and anxiety and threatens one’s sense of being and self.

Underlying aspirations: It confirms their dreams and hopes, and makes an objective seem attainable – e.g. Ongoing happiness.

The ideological battlefield: It either prepares them when it confirms their ideas, or threatens them when it opposes.

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What makes food information credible?

Scientific:
Scientific evidence, reasoned argument, complex discussion, citation of scientific studies, tentative conclusions.

Philosopher:
Broadly held social and ethical opinions along with citations of scientific studies, discussion of environmental, social and/or political context of the study or findings, acknowledgment of bias or shortcomings, independence (from food/agriculture lobbies).

Follower:
Simple and clear messages, authoritative and official looking, actionable recommendations, personal or personified (i.e.: they can connect to the person giving the information).

Wishful Thinker:
Big and promising claims and answers to problems, personal testimony, connection to spirituality, challenges to the status quo. News that plays on their fear or worries is also effective.

Existentialist:
Information that validates their existing preconceptions about food, health, as well as the broader social/political landscape. News and information (often from niche sites) that is shared by their virtual communities of like-minded people.
Scientifics are the technical information pioneers in food news. They drive the standard of scientific claims that others evaluate. They are technical pioneers, but not the culture creators. Their lack of clarity and inability to simplify conversations limits their influence to Philosophers.

Philosophers represent the culture creator in the category.
How the culture of food news and information is changing.

The Scientific is the ideological one in the context of food news credibility. They take a dogmatic approach to deducing knowledge from information – outcomes are complicated, and often lie in grey zones. This isn’t relatable to mainstream consumers like the Followers, who are already feeling overwhelmed and anxious about the amount and complexity of information and news around food.
Philosophers assess evidence through a simple, clear ethical lens. This influences the Follower.

Followers fear doing the wrong thing, and jeopardizing the health of their families. They look towards Philosophers, and other Followers, for advice that’s simple to understand, and that feels right – because it’s ethically or morally the right thing to do.
Philosophers

Keys to Connecting:

• Less interested in reading primary research (scientific studies) and more interested in interpretations/analyses of research to understand it

• Want their views to be grounded in science, but applied according to their moral or ethical code

• Believe American regulatory bodies (FDA, USDA) are too closely linked to the corporate food industry and that the EU has more objective guidelines
Strategic Opportunities

- **Inputs: Guide Our Strategy**
  - Four factors that make our information relatable to the Follower.
    1. Knowing that the source is knowledgeable yet “I can understand them.”
    2. They clearly tell me what I should do, given my life’s situation.
    3. They themselves have similar responsibilities (family, community, maybe the environment).
    4. Their guidance just *feels* like the right thing to do – is ethically and/or morally sound advice.
Strategic Opportunities

• Inputs: Guide Our Strategy
  – Approach: Ethical rationality.
  – Opportunity to leverage other parents, farmers, wives and husbands to deliver ethically rational arguments.

(Academics who are relatable have the advantage of credible expertise – not a company or trade association – and the ability to connect.)
Strategic Opportunities

• Outputs: What We Deliver
  – Simple and easy to understand.
  – Visualizable arguments.
  – How-to or what-to-do.

Most important: You’re giving Followers the comfort of knowing that they are doing the right thing.

Permission to believe
Three-Step Formula for Evolving Beliefs

1. The messenger needs to be an expert Followers trust.
   (Relatability = shared values + competency)

2. The message should be unambiguous and deliver a simple solution.

3. The message should address a specific vulnerability of the Follower. Followers fear they will miss something or do the wrong thing, thereby jeopardizing the health of their families or themselves.
Why Aren’t They Listening?
Earning Trust in Ag-Biotech

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