



Stanford eCorner

Finding the Right Digital Ecosystem

Brian Murray, *HarperCollins*

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HarperCollins CEO and President Brian Murray talks about challenges and opportunities he sees on the horizon in the publishing industry. One of the primary issues, says Murray, is ensuring that the right digital ecosystem exists to continue to produce, market and sell books.



Transcript

Anytime there's a lot of change, there's a lot of opportunity, and so trying to figure out, where is the market going to go is really important for us. I think one of the biggest, like immediate challenge we have is, during this transition from print to digital we want to make sure that this digital world that's unfolding very quickly around us. We want to make sure we have the right sort of digital ecosystem for selling and marketing books. And so that means we want to have as many partners as possible to sell books through, we want to have as many marketing channels and we want to have - be able to offer to consumers the greatest possible choice in formats and price and in content that we can. So if you go back three, four years ago, there was really only one major eBook player for example and now we have four and I think we'll have six as time goes on. As we say, we'll have Apple came into the business and Google is finally organizing around there Myplay platform. There are going to be I think now four, five or six major distribution channels and partners for us in the eBook world. So building that making sure we have the right ecosystem for the future is one of the top, top issues. The second issue is during this time of changes, how do we get the right capabilities, the right people, the right skills and the right capabilities into the company? Publishers have done some things the same ways for decades and decades. And as the business transitions to digital there are so many new ways to do things.

As I said we have to rethink some of the old traditional rules. And we need to think about how do we market directly to consumers? We have to ask ourselves questions about the brand; should HarperCollins mean something? Particularly in a world of a lot of self-publishing. So trying to get the right people involved in those decisions, trying to challenge a very big organization of more than 3,000 people around the world to wrestle with these issues head on and to kind of anticipate where is the market going to be. There are the big, big challenges that we have.