



## Stanford eCorner

### Partners as "Frenemies"

Brian Murray, *HarperCollins*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2961/Partners-as-Frenemies>

As a powerful distribution channel and a growing competitor in publishing, Amazon plays a disruptive role in the publishing industry. HarperCollins CEO and President Brian Murray describes the "complicated relationship" publishers have with Amazon, who is a partner they work with and compete against. "The term 'frenemy' is a great term to capture what business is like today," says Murray, here in conversation with STVP Executive Director Tina Seelig.



#### Transcript

Amazon is the big elephant in the room, right, when we talk about book publishing. Yeah. I mean they had changed the entire landscape. And how do you think of them. Are they - do you love them? I mean are they your best friends because they're this incredible distribution channel? Where, what's the relationship? Yeah, it's a complex relationship. The term frenemy to me is a great term to kind of capture what business is like today. I mean we had - the situation with Amazon where they're a very large distributor, they're also a publisher. We have had this in the past, I mean Barnes & Noble was what Amazon is today, five, ten years ago. They were a publisher then too. So we've sort of been through this.

But Amazon is a really terrific company; they have achieved amazing success in a very short amount of time. So they are - they're a challenge. They're a challenge for us. We love working with them on some dimensions and we do and then there are other dimensions where we have to be very careful, because they're so good at whatever they set their mind to do. So it's a very complex relationship and we see that more and more in business today. We also - I mean Google is another one. Google is an unbelievable company. They're helping people discover our books through search and they're getting into the eBook business, but we've also had problems - in terms of them scanning all of our books. So there's another company, great - unbelievable on the one hand and very complicated on the other hand. So you can - you have to be a little schizophrenic I think today to work with some of these really big successful companies and figure out what are your policy positions and try to work with them with your left hand and then sometimes argue on with your right hand, so it's complicated and I don't know what else to do about it.

Is that your Facebook status with them? It's complicated. No, no, but it should be.