



Stanford eCorner

A Startup Acquires Superpowers

Kevin Weil, *Instagram*

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Instagram's Kevin Weil describes how a startup can independently build products for its customers and still enjoy huge benefits within the larger company that acquired it. Now owned by Facebook, Instagram leverages the parent company's infrastructure, sales operation and business network, says Weil, in conversation with Tina Seelig of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program.



Transcript

the relationship between Instagram and Facebook? It must be quite interesting. How integrated is it and how independent are you? - Yeah, we're very independent and we get a ton of value from Facebook, and those two things don't seem like they mesh immediately but it's the best of both worlds, and I've never seen anything like it. Mark Zuckerberg and Kevin Systrom deserve a lot of credit for how they have set this thing up, because it really is the best of both worlds. So we rely heavily on Facebook for things like infrastructure. They have data centers around the world, they have scalable systems that we can just begin using if they meet our needs. And that means we can go faster. We leverage their sales team, so if you're an advertiser, you can use the same interfaces you're already using to advertise on Facebook, to advertise on Instagram. If we need business development contacts around the world, Facebook has teams around the world that we're able to use. And so we get all of that value. But then from a product standpoint in terms of what we build, in terms of how we evolve Instagram, we're totally independent.

So we do what's right for the Instagram community, Facebook does what's right for the Facebook community. And as a result, we get to be this tiny company that has super powers from being a part of Facebook, but we get to move fast and build what's right for our product, which is not always the same as what's right for Facebook or for WhatsApp or for Oculus, or the other things that are a part of overall Facebook. So it works really well. Sometimes you end up doing the same thing, sometimes you end up doing different things, and in the same way that somebody else within Facebook wouldn't tell us, "Oh no, we're building that, you can't build it." We don't tell anyone else that either, so we work pretty independently, but we look for ways that we can help each other if there are opportunities.