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When to Work with Rivals

Sometimes you need to join forces
with your fiercest competitors. 48



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"We're a 160-year-old company that aims to be around for another 160."

—DEANNA MULLIGAN



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Rivals and Friends

HBR Now

Leading through uncertainty



Harvard
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Review

Clockwise from the top left: Adi Ignatius, guest Walter Isaacson, Octavia Goredema, and Josh Macht

WHEN THE WORLD went into lockdown last spring, my colleague Josh Macht and I decided to launch a series of live video interviews with experts who could offer perspective on these strange days. We called it *HBR Quarantined*, and to distribute it we made an unusual choice to partner with LinkedIn.

LinkedIn is best known as a professional networking site, but it also publishes articles on management topics—competing with us for readers. At the same time, HBR has 11 million followers on LinkedIn, which drives traffic to our site. Is LinkedIn our friend, our rival, or both?

We ask ourselves a similar question whenever we run articles by authors who write books for other business publishers, or partner with competing media organizations on events. We bet this question comes up in your business, too. Under what circumstances does it make sense to team up with a competitor?

More than 20 years ago, Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff coined a word to describe these sometimes

awkward partnerships: *co-opetition*. In “The Rules of Co-opetition” (page 48), they offer principles for making deals with rivals.

Done right, co-opetition works out well for both parties. Our first season of *HBR Quarantined* attracted nearly 800,000 viewers; in October we renamed it *HBR Now*; added a cohort, Twenty Ten’s Octavia Goredema; and scheduled 11 more episodes. You can find them at hbr.org/video.

This issue also marks a milestone: Two colleagues, executive editor Sarah Cliffe and senior editor Gardiner Morse, are leaving HBR after a combined 40 years of service. If you’re a longtime reader, you’ve probably profited from some of the hundreds of articles they’ve brought to life. Please join us in expressing gratitude to them.

ADI IGNATIUS
Editor in chief