Amazon.com (2015, LBS)

- *Full Name of the Case:* Amazon.com: Staying a Step Ahead
- *Teaching Note(s) Available?* Yes
- Case is available through Harvard Business Publishing (product #: W19506-PDF-ENG)

Amazon is an American company founded in 1994. One of the largest e-commerce companies in the world, it is also known for its other businesses, such as the AWS cloud computing platform, and the Whole Foods grocery chain. Amazon has utilized a "get big fast" strategy and is perhaps the best-known contemporary example of a serial business model innovator.

This case traces Amazon's early history, as well as its growth through continuous business model innovation (BMI) in the 2000s and early 2010s. A major theme of the case is how Amazon's entrepreneurial leadership, culture and mindset (embodied by the "for Amazon it's always Day One" philosophy) are at the heart of its relentless drive for innovation, experimentation and entry into new business areas (such as cloud computing services, consumer electronics or digital content creation).

Therefore, we recommend the use of the case for **Chapter 3** (innovation mindset, leadership actions towards BMI, cognitive practices and processes that drive BMI), but it can also be assigned to discuss issues that are prominent in **Chapter 6** (e.g., obsessive focus on customer needs, development of a BMI capability), **Chapter 7** (tolerance for failure, willingness-to-experiment, or as the case puts it "willingness-to-be-misunderstood"), or **Chapter 10** (importance of fit between business model, organization and strategy; preventing inertia). In other words, Chapters 6, 7 and 10 present secondary use scenarios for the Amazon.com case.

Students might find the case interesting because Amazon is such a powerhouse, which has consistently managed to innovate from its early years as a "modest" online book marketplace. Few companies have been able to maintain the true agility and mindset of a startup when they reach the size Amazon has—and yet the company continues to lead in innovation. How has Amazon managed this?