

Amazon entices authors as fight with Hachette drags on

July 9 2014, by Glenn Chapman

Amazon wants to put money in authors' pockets while the online retail titan battles with Hachette over terms of selling books handled by the publishing powerhouse.

Hachette told AFP that it had received the proposal on Tuesday, and fired back with a call for Amazon to "withdraw the sanctions they have unilaterally imposed" on the publisher's titles.

Amazon is offering to give Hachette authors all revenue brought in for digital copies of books—rewarding writers instead of making them casualties of negotiation tactics wielded in the contract dispute.

A letter sent to Hachette writers in recent days by Kindle vice president of content and independent publishing David Naggar reasoned that the idea promised to deliver "a big windfall" to authors while motivating both companies to reach accord.

"If Hachette agrees, for as long as this dispute lasts, Hachette authors would get 100 percent of the sales price of every Hachette e-book we sell," Naggar said in a copy of the letter posted at tech news website GigaOm.

With all money from book sales routed to authors, Amazon would go back to pre-dispute levels of inventory and resume pricing discounts as well as pre-orders for coming Hachette titles, according to [terms](#) set out in the letter.

French publishing powerhouse Hachette showed no sign Tuesday of going along with the idea.

"We believe that the best outcome for the writers we publish is a contract with Amazon that brings genuine marketing benefits and whose terms allow Hachette to continue to invest in writers, marketing, and innovation," Hachette said in an email response to an AFP inquiry.

"We look forward to resolving this dispute soon and to the benefit of the writers who have trusted their books to us."

Seattle-based Amazon told AFP that the offer to authors is sincere and contended that Hachette was letting authors suffer to improve its bargaining position.

"What they're really making clear is that they absolutely want their authors caught in the middle of this negotiation because they believe it increases their leverage," Amazon said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"All the while, they are stalling and refusing to negotiate, despite the pain caused to their authors."

Authors call on readers

Big-name authors last week called on readers to help them get out of the crossfire in a battle between Amazon and Hachette.

An open letter to readers drew scores of signatures including those of Lee Child, James Patterson, Hilary Spurling, and Scott Turow.

"We feel strongly that no bookseller should block the sale of books or otherwise prevent or discourage customers from ordering or receiving the books they want," read the letter that bestselling author Douglas

Preston has been circulating.

"It is not right for Amazon to single out a group of authors, who are not involved in the dispute, for selective retaliation."

Hachette and online retail colossus Amazon are clashing over terms of a distribution contract for works handled by the publisher.

Hachette has maintained in public statements that it wants to make peace with online retail titan Amazon, but on terms that "value" the role of authors and their publishers.

The open letter maintained that tactics being used by Amazon include "boycotting" Hachette authors by refusing to accept pre-orders for titles, ending price discounts and slowing deliveries.

"Without taking sides on the contractual dispute between Hachette and Amazon, we encourage Amazon in the strongest possible terms to stop harming the livelihood of the authors on whom it has built its business," the letter reads.

"None of us, neither readers nor [authors](#), benefit when books are taken hostage."

Amazon has acknowledged it was maintaining less inventory from Hachette and was no longer taking pre-orders from the publisher.

"Negotiating with suppliers for equitable terms and making stocking and assortment decisions based on those terms is one of a bookseller's, or any retailer's, most important jobs," Amazon said earlier this year.

Amazon maintained that the face-off with Hachette affects a small percentage, along the lines of a dozen out of every thousand, of the

Kindle-maker's book sales.

Hachette Book Group is a subsidiary of French company Lagardere.

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