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Andrew Hoffman

The Challenges of Siting a New Headquarters: Amazon Courts New York City

In January 2019, Lane Bradford,ⁱ Amazon's director of economic development, sat pensively as she scrolled through yet another op-ed bemoaning Amazon's decision to choose Queens, New York, for an additional headquarters. Since the November 2018 announcement, the backlash had been unexpectedly fierce. She shook her head, still in disbelief that after such a rigorous decision-making process and intense due diligence that she and her team had not seen this coming, or at least not to this degree.

Bradford remained convinced that the New York City borough of Queens, and Arlington, Virginia, were the best locations for splitting Amazon's new second headquarters, for a myriad of economic reasons. That said, choosing a location with an overwhelmingly business-friendly environment had been a top priority. Now, given the seemingly unending protests against a decision that she and her team had been so proud of only months before, she was beginning to doubt whether Amazon could be successful in New York.

Bradford recalled the first time she walked into Amazon's Seattle headquarters when she started with the company back in 2016. Amazon was rapidly growing and that trajectory had only continued (see **Exhibit 1**). In the 12 months preceding the end of Q3 2018, Amazon had become one of the largest retailing companies in the world and unequivocally the largest online retailer, with net sales of \$134.5 billion in North America alone (see **Exhibit 2**).

When Bradford was assigned to the project team to find the ideal location for Amazon's second headquarters, she talked with founder and CEO Jeff Bezos about why the company had chosen Seattle as its first headquarters. He reminded her that when he launched Amazon.com in 1994, the company only sold books online. Bezos told Bradford of three primary reasons the company had chosen the Washington state location. First, there was an ample supply of talented software engineers in the area. Second, the location was close to Roseburg, home of the largest book distribution warehouse in the country. Finally,

ⁱ Lane Bradford is a pseudonym.

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