

Amazon

"Day 1 always"

FOUNDED 1994, Bellevue WA	EMPLOYEES ~1.5M globally	REVENUE \$638B (FY2024); AWS ~60% op. income	KNOWN FOR E-commerce, AWS, logistics, customer obsession
FORMAT Screen → phone round → full loop (4–7 interviews)	CORE METHOD Leadership Principles — all 16 covered across loop	BEHAVIORAL DEPTH Follow-up probing on every story	WRITTEN CULTURE 6-pager or written case for senior roles

WHO THEY ARE

Amazon was founded in 1994 as an online bookstore and now operates as a structural pillar of the global economy: the world's largest e-commerce platform, dominant cloud provider (AWS over \$100B annual revenue), media company (Prime Video), logistics network, healthcare operator (One Medical, Amazon Pharmacy), grocery retailer (Whole Foods), and advertising rival to Google and Meta. Total revenue exceeds \$500B annually, with AWS generating more operating income than the entire retail division. Every business runs on the same operating system: the 16 Leadership Principles, which are the actual decision-making framework, not motivational posters. Customer obsession, frugality, bias for action, and "Day 1" thinking govern all hiring, promotion, and strategy decisions, regardless of company scale.

WHY PEOPLE WANT TO WORK HERE

Amazon attracts candidates seeking ownership of hard problems at a scale no other company matches. Decision-making is pushed down: junior employees own their areas, write their own documents, and drive recommendations independently rather than await direction. AWS specifically draws candidates interested in cloud strategy and enterprise infrastructure during the largest technology transition in IT history. The learning velocity is among the highest in corporate life due to business breadth, customer-obsession culture, and the expectation that everyone thinks like an owner. Alumni consistently report their Amazon tenure as the best business education available: demanding, relentless, and accelerating skill development in ways most roles cannot match.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

Amazon's interview process is structured entirely around Leadership Principle evaluation. The standard path runs: recruiter screen, phone interviews, then a same-day "loop" of 4 to 7 back-to-back interviews. Each interviewer is assigned specific LPs to probe, and the panel collectively covers all 16 across the loop. Every question uses STAR format (Situation, Task, Action, Result) with heavy follow-up on specifics: "What exactly did you do?", "What was the specific result?", "What would you do differently?" Surface stories that cannot withstand scrutiny will fail. Strategy and business development roles often include a case component (analytical structuring and recommendation) or a written "6-pager" submitted in advance or presented at loop start. Written reasoning is weighted equally with verbal communication.

WHAT THEY'RE REALLY EVALUATING

Amazon evaluates Leadership Principle alignment above technical skills or experience. Every story maps to LP evidence, and candidates who cannot demonstrate clear, specific examples across all 16 LPs will not receive offers. Ownership is the LP that disqualifies most candidates: Amazon requires evidence that you personally drove outcomes, not that you were on a team that did. The distinction between "I" and "we" is critical. Interviewers probe until they isolate your specific contribution, and candidates who conflate personal work with team accomplishment score poorly. Data orientation is mandatory. "Dive Deep" means cold knowledge of metrics: specific project numbers, quantified outcomes, and data that informed decisions. Qualitative stories without data points do not resonate.

STANDOUT QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time you made a decision with limited data or incomplete information. How did you proceed and what was the outcome?
2. Describe a situation where you identified a customer problem that others had missed. What did you do about it?
3. Tell me about the most significant project you've delivered. What were the obstacles and what specifically did you do to overcome them?
4. Give me an example of a time you disagreed with your manager or team. How did you handle it and what happened?
5. Tell me about a time you had to prioritize ruthlessly under resource or time constraints. How did you decide what to cut?
6. Describe a time you took ownership of something outside your formal responsibility. Why did you do it and what was the result?

INSIDER TIPS

- Prepare at least 2–3 specific stories for every Leadership Principle (all 16 of them). This is not optional. Amazon interviewers are assigned specific LPs and will probe for evidence. If you can't produce a concrete, specific story for 'Frugality' or 'Have Backbone,' you will fail that portion of the interview. Use a spreadsheet to map your stories to LPs.
- The follow-up questions are the key test. Don't just prepare the top-level story. Prepare to go three levels deeper on every element. What exact metrics? What was the decision-making process? What would you do differently? Interviewers probe until they find the edge of your ownership. Know your stories cold.
- Use 'I' not 'we.' This is the single most common mistake in Amazon interviews. When you say 'we built X' or 'our team did Y,' interviewers cannot assess your LP alignment. Reframe every story around your specific actions, decisions, and contributions. It's not about being self-promotional. It's about giving the interviewer the evidence they need.
- Know Amazon's businesses in depth, especially the one you're joining. Customer Obsession means knowing who the customer is, what their pain points are, and how Amazon's product or service serves them. Walking into an AWS interview without understanding the enterprise cloud competitive landscape, or into a retail strategy role without knowing Amazon's margin profile and logistics model, is a basic preparation failure.