

< Back **How to Ace Amazon Behavioral Interview**



^  Anonymous User Last Edit: 9 hours ago 2.6K VIEWS

110

Unlike Behavioral interviews at other companies, the behavioral interviews at Amazon are based off of the 14 leadership principles mentioned here. Here's another resource that I found useful: [link](#). In this article, I will give you some commonly asked behavioral questions and how to go about answering them using the leadership principles. Please be mindful that these questions served as the base for many other behavioral questions, so if you know how to answer them, it shouldn't be too hard to tweak them into answering other questions.

Be professional

Examples:

- it's a pleasure to be here and I am very excited about this opportunity.
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview today.
- I am very excited to have the opportunity to be interviewed here in Amazon.

Show your curiosity

- research the company before interview
- come up with two or three reasons you want to work for the company
- mission statement, product and service information, principles's backgrounds
- check company financials through US securities and Exchange commission

Know your stuff

use STAR

- situation
- task
- action
- results

Leadership principles

Random Infos about Amazon

- Top Internet Retailing Company
- Our vision is to be earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online
- product lines
- kindle e-readers
- Amazon Prime
- Echo
- Fire tablets
- media
- use independent, third-party shippers

Situations

I used the following projects when answering the questions. You should have couple of your own as well.

- news recommendation service
- collaborative feature with code editor
- email communication improvement
- Hubert three way matching
- news prediction service
- code executing service

Example Questions:

Why Amazon?

Amazon is a top internet retailing company with a strong focus on customer experience and obsession. Its motto- work hard, have fun, make history, and it's vision, earth's most customer centric company, inspires me. I'm a person who respect hard working and care a lot about customer experience, so the culture of Amazon attracts me a lot. Furthermore, the growth of this company is pretty impressive, it's not only an online retail shop but also has a wide range of products like Alexa, Kindle, fire tablet and TV, Amazon cloud service, etc. Hundreds of thousands

of talented engineers are working passionately here, building innovative system and solving problems at unprecedented scale. Therefore, this is a place where I can learn a lot, and use my skills and experience to make things happen with a team.

Why choose this position?

The job I have applied is the software development position in Amazon Books, I am interested in this position because:

First of all, Amazon Books uses innovative technology to merge physical and online worlds into one unique and delightful shopping experience. The concept is really cool and pioneering. I am really excited about learning and using new technologies to create new exceptional experiences that firmly obsess customers.

Secondly, I'd like to work with solutions from a full-stack point of view, by engaging with requirements, frontend, middle tier, backend, storage, and all the other stuff, I can understand problems and solutions thoroughly, and thus scale and optimize them with the best practices.

Thirdly, I'm happy to work in an environment with a lot of challenges so that I'll never be boring. In Amazon, I can take ownership of the projects I am truly passionate about. I am sure I can take the challenges and provide successful solutions.

Introduce yourself

- My name is X. I've been working on software design and development related work for past two years. My experience includes communicating and analyzing user requirements, authoring functional requirement documentation and workflows, building wireframes and interactive prototypes, and then helping implement web applications within a team. The web applications I helped design and develop all meet to user needs very well and also have great user experiences and elegant UIs. The modules and features I've developed includes document metadata and status management, news tag prediction and recommendation, online collaborative coding platform, etc. I'm especially passionate about working on solutions from a full-stack standpoint, because by understanding user requirements as well as overall system architecture thoroughly, I can deliver products with both great performance and easy-to-use experience. I am also happy to learn new technologies and incorporate them with what I've been doing. Keeping learning and being curious always refreshes my mind with better designs and solutions.

The biggest mistake you made and what did you learn from it? (earn trust, customer obsession)

The biggest mistake I've made happened when I took on and led a project for the first time. I got a requirement from the client about updating parts of a certain workflow. So I documented the requirements, worked on them with the team, and released the update to the demo system on time, however, the client tried and didn't like it.

We diagnosed the feedback and system immediately, It turned out that we paid a lot of attention on the changes the client requested us to do, but didn't do much evaluation on other features that are impacted by the change.

I apologized to the client immediately and asked if we could have an extended deliver date. Luckily the client agreed and also showed understanding. Then I called a meeting with all the team members, talked about the feedback, then we walked through the whole workflow step by step together, evaluated all the possible operations that user might take on each step and then tailored the change we were gonna make accordingly. Throughout this process, the team members understood what happened, why the client was not happy, and they also brought up a lot of good opinions. Instead of just telling the team to make changes again, I earned their trust by sharing the feedback with them and working out a solution together.

We then released a tentative version to the demo system before the deadline, walked through it with the client and collected feedback provided. Finally, we delivered the update to the production successfully, our client was very happy and used it every day without any trouble yet.

Most challenging project?

The most challenging project I've done was an online collaborative coding platform, it's like Leetcode but with collaborative feature. The most challenging part was to incorporate collaborative features with the code editor, that is, user in a same coding room can see the real-time cursor movements and typing actions of the other users.

It was challenging because I was supposed to come up with the solution and implement it by myself, and I have never developed something like this before.

So I started with composing a visual solution first, the work I've done included researching online collaborative products, listing core features I needed, building wireframes, and designing UI. With the visual solution, I had a good understanding on how the application would work. Then, I googled and read a lot of system design solutions for products with similar features, like Google doc, online chatting room, etc. With what I've read, I was able to draft out my own solutions and selected corresponding technologies.

I implemented it successfully within the given time, and my solution received a positive feedback because it is not only working well, but also visually pleasing. Throughout this process, I learned that it is important to be curious and keep learning, try to read as many technical blogs or articles as you can, the more you read, the better you'll ace a problem or design. The feeling of ownership is very important, some other students just gave up with the excuse "I don't how to do it"

Couldn't finish tasks before deadline?

deliver result, ownership

CUSTOMER OBSESSION: Walk us through a time when you helped a customer through a difficult process and what that looked like.

leaders start with the customer and work backwards. They work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust. Although leaders pay attention to competitors, they obsess over customers.

case 1

Last year in Telamon, I took on and led a project of developing a web application for our Telecom engineering team, in order to help engineers build and manage detail specifications easily for their Telecom installation jobs. The detail specification building process was sort of complex,

involving a lot of data entry and field data collection, and the requirement documentation provided to us was brief and totally in text description. Therefore, it is challenging for me to come up with an intuitive and engineer-friendly design.

In order to understand the process thoroughly, I made several appointments with the engineering team, going through the specification building process with them step by step in detail. Then, I did some field observations, looking at how engineers use their ipads and computers in the field and in the office, when and how they input the data to complete a detail specification. Based on what I've learned and observed, I was able to come up with data schemas, draft a working prototype, and bring it to the engineers to collect feedback.

It turned out that the prototype was very helpful, it saved us around 10% time when implementing the web application. After the production was released, the engineers tried and loved it immediately. They said they took less time building a specification now with less error. The customer was obsessed with our professional process and result, and start to have more business with us.

case 2 (customer obsession and ownership, highest standard)

In Telamon, once I led the team to implement an AP processing service for one of our client - Hubert Corporation. We provide a customized AP processing system as well as a team of AP clerks to help Hubert process their invoices. Since invoices from different vendors might require different ways of processing and our client didn't have a full instruction for that (they usually process invoices based on their knowledge and familiarity), we had to spend time emailing back and forth discussing about instructions whenever there was a special invoice processed incorrectly.

I looked at the invoices reported and thought we could do better in managing different invoices, vendors and corresponding instructions, and thus reducing the communication effort put by the client and us.

I first created a shared matrix and recorded all the invoices and instructions provided, and asked our AP clerks to update it as long as there was any new invoice feedback from the client. Then based on the analysis of the matrix, I created a checklist listing certain type of error-prone invoices and asked our AP quality managers to check on these type of invoices every day. Further, I programed and applied notifications for several type of invoices with special instructions in the system, so that our AP clerks didn't have to watch out for them all the time.

After several weeks of running the service, I scheduled a meeting with the client and reviewed the matrix with them, they were impressed by it. And they even used the matrix as the instructions on their side. After a month or two, we barely got any email about incorrectly processed invoices from the client. We obsessed our client with our great quality and attitude to insist on the highest standards.

OWNERSHIP: Give me an example of when you took a risk and it failed.

Leaders are owners. They think long term and don't sacrifice long-term value for short-term results. They act on behalf of the entire company, beyond just their own team. They never say "That's not my job".

case 1

I'd like to talk about one of my projects at BitTiger. BitTiger had a bootcamp course for project managers and I was hired as the lead developer to help implement the idea driven by the project managers teamed with me.

Our task was to improve BitTiger's current communication channels between teachers and students, and integrate them more with its official web portal.

Since I was the person who was going to lead another developer to build the product, it was important for me to understand the user needs and the decisions made by the project manager thoroughly. The best way to do so was to actively take part in the decision making process from the very beginning. Therefore, for most of the activities hosted by the project managers, I asked to join them, like, taking notes while the project managers were interviewing with teachers and students, coming up with suggestions while they were discussing about user personas and stories, offering help while they were building wireframes, and joining discussion when they were creating and prioritizing tasks.

I was able to implement the product quickly because I totally understood what the project managers wanted. We didn't need to spend time communicating the requirements again. With the time saved, I was able to add more customized features making the product easier to use. On the demo day, we had a great presentation and received very good reviews.

case 2

the communication feature is not easy to use, only remind the client you received a new message and log in. The client didn't log in to the system very often. Sometimes the client just email back to me saying what happened.

I took the ownership to support this project, I designed a new process by delivering the content to the kitchen designer and bring it to the client to discuss. The client agreed. After delivery, our customer support team has reduced around 70% support request for this project.

INVENT AND SIMPLIFY: Tell me a time when you created an innovative product.

Leaders expect and require innovation and invention from their teams and always find ways to simplify. They are externally aware, look for new ideas from everywhere, and are not limited by "not invented here". As we do new things, we accept that we may be misunderstood for long periods of time.

case 1

question board, BitTiger need to manage a lot of things, like notification, link to the live course, questions, communication. We are overwhelmed at the first about inventing the process, thinking about a lot of ideas like group by different tabs, create with different categories. But I decided to keep it simple and stupid, we create the post for all purpose, but group it by weeks. All important notification on the top.

Care more about look and feel rather than a lot of features

case 2

The project we did for Hartson Kennedy was to help process their drawing and purchase order. The customers usually order countertops in their stores and kitchen designers then do the drawings and generate PO paperwork, and send to us. However, the kitchen designer only uses fax machine, but we didn't have fax machine.

Instead of just purchasing a fax machine and assigning a person to handle the scanning everyday, I googled and did a research online first. I found a service that can receive the fax via email. I created a distribution list and registered it as the receiving mailbox.

With the simplified process, we don't have spend money and time dealing with fax machine and scanning. I invented and simplified the fax receiving process and saved money for our company.

ARE RIGHT, A LOT: Tell me about a time when you observed two business opportunities to improve ROI, and how did you determine that they were connected.

Leaders are right a lot, they have strong judgment and good instincts. They seek diverse perspective and work to disconfirm their beliefs.

tell me about a time when you are wrong

tell me about a time when you had to work with incomplete data or information

make a decision, but also consider the opinions of the other people

case 1

we have a indexing team in china that helps enter the data on the invoice, I designed the indexing panel for them. Before making the decision, I decided to talk to the staff who are doing the data entry. Ask them to try and record the time and provide feedback. It turned out that they have some very good point of view, like amount match, required text-box color. And I changed my design and improve 10% processing time.

case 2

once I argue with the manager about issue the corporate email, I want to register emails from MS and Gmail for business use because Telamon email sometimes blocks, and we have to contact Telamon IT which are not very responsible. The manager disagree at first, he said the corporate email is more professional. I collected the issue happened, and the impact on the client, feedback from them, average time IT reach and solve the problem, it turned out that we cannot bare it. then the manager agrees to Switch as long as we can get a good domain name. We then applied a domain based on coporate and the name of our department. Everyone is happy.

LEARN AND BE CURIOUS: How do you find the time to stay inspired, acquire new knowledge, innovate in your work?

Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. They are curious about new possibilities and act on explore them.

case 1

I recently learned how Redux architecture and how it work

actions, global status, dispatch actions

case 2

how large company deploy their front-end

how to cache

HIRE AND DEVELOP THE BEST: Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a poor performer on your team.

Leaders raise the performance bar with every hire and promotion. They recognize exceptional talent, and willingly move them throughout the organization. Leaders develop leaders and take seriously their in coaching others. We work on behalf of out people to invent mechanisms for development like Career Choice.

case 1

for the data entry team in China, they didn't care much about the system before. When I led the project, I will invite them to join the meeting, tell them I we develop the system, teach them how to test and ask them to feel free to give me feedback if they any idea. they are the direct users of the system.

finally these employees are very helpful for testing new features, and improve the efficiency of the indexing.

case 2

When I transferring the projects from one person to another, I will co-work with them for a while, making sure the things they completely get the idea.

INSIST ON THE HIGHEST STANDARDS: Tell me about a time when you could have stopped working but persisted.

Leaders have relentlessly high standards - many people may think these standards are unreasonably high. Leaders are continually raising the bar and driving their teams to deliver high quality products, services and processes. Leaders ensure that defects do not get sent down the line and that problems are fixed so they stay fixed.

case 1

hubert three way matching features, we have implemented the feature successfully. But I found the processor took long time to compare the amount of receipt, Purchase order, and invoice, calculate the tolerant percentage, identify any mismatches. I took the initiative to add exception handling features, instead of finding mismatches by eyes, I add a box to input and compare the amounts by the program.

it turned out the efficiency has improved a lot.

case 2

client give us the ftp, and overwrite data everyday, sometimes if there is holiday, we may miss one or two load. I write a program to fetch the file and archive the data by date, so that we'll always have the backup if there is any issue happened.

<http://www.codejava.net/java-se/networking/ftp/java-ftp-file-download-tutorial-and-example>

THINK BIG: Tell me about a time when you proposed a new business.

Thinking small is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Leaders create and communicate a bold direction that inspires results. They think differently and look around corners for ways to serve customers.

case 1

augmented reality to find store

case 2

ambient building

BIAS FOR ACTION: Describe how you would handle a busy situation where three people are waiting for help from you. Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking.

case 1

the other engineer and I discussed for a couple hours, figured out what we disagreed on, and I suggested that neither answer was necessarily better. She agreed. I said that unless she had any new info, I'd rather we just pick mine, and we could always come back to the decision later if we learned something new.

example??

FRUGALITY: Tell me about a time where you thought of a clever new way to save money for the company.

dd

case 1

for most of internal tools, we'll google first instead of developing by ourself.

case 2

USL, this project is a little hurry, we don't have enough resources for that. Average of processing one load takes around 4.5min, and we watch all the steps, automatically whatever we can, and reduce the process time to 2 min finally.

EARN TRUST: Tell me a time when you earned trust of a group.

Leaders listen attentively, speak candidly, and treat others respectfully. They are vocally self-critical, even when doing so is awkward or embarrassing. Leaders do not believe their or their team's body order smells of perfume. They benchmark themselves and their teams against the best.

vocally self critical

The biggest mistake I've made happened when I took on and led a project for the first time by myself. I got a requirement from the client about updating parts of a certain workflow. I listed the requirements, developed with the team, and released the update to the demo system on time, however, the client tried and didn't like it.

I diagnosed the system immediately, It turned out that we paid a lot of attention on the changes the client requested us to do, but didn't do much evaluation on other features that are impacted by the change. A solid evaluation and design was necessary in this case because all the features in the workflow were closely connected to each other, and even a small change might cause butterfly effect.

I apologized to the client immediately and asked if we could have an extended deliver date. Luckily the client agreed and also showed understanding. Then I called a meeting with the dev team, walked through the whole workflow step by step together, evaluated all the possible operations that user might take on each step and then tailored the change we were gonna make accordingly. We then released a tentative version to the demo system before the deadline, walked through it with the client, and collected any feedback provided.

Finally, we delivered the update to the production successfully, our client was very happy and used it every day without any trouble yet.

DIVE DEEP: Tell me about a time when you had to dive deep into the data and the results you achieved.

trust but verify

you believe the person but check the facts anyway

Leaders operate at all levels, stay connected to the details, audit frequently, and are skeptical when metrics and anecdote differ. No task beneath them.

case

HAVE BACKBONE, DISAGREE AND COMMIT : Tell me about the most difficult interaction you had at work.

Leaders are obligated to respectfully challenge decisions when they disagree, even when doing so is uncomfortable or exhausting. Leaders have conviction and are tenacious. They do not compromise for the sake of social cohesion. Once a decision is determined, they commit wholly. disagree with boss?

If I have different idea with my manager or boss, I will try to collect data or make a prototype trying to convince him. If I have tried my best and he still disagree, then I would respect his decision and start committing for that.

when we released the service for US Logistics. The client complaint that some invoices were missed. I checked around and found that Telamon Network blocked some of the emails sent by the client. I talked the problem to the network administrator and they couldn't change the email restrictions due to the policy.

Therefore, I brought this problem up to my manager and suggested to register another business mailbox provided by gmail or microsoft. The manager disagreed at first because he thought it was unprofessional if we didn't use our own corporate email domain. I thought solving this problem was more important because our client would lose the trust on the quality of our data. In order to convince him, I showed him the data of email missing rate and the impacts on our client, and also I registered a good domain name composed by our company and department name, so we could still be professional on that part.

Finally, the manager was convinced and agreed on my suggestion. We barely have any missed emails after we switched our mailbox. And because of the good result, we started to use the domain for other projects gradually.

DELIVER RESULTS: Tell me about a time where you overcame an obstacle and delivered results.

leaders focus on the key inputs for their business and deliver them with the right quality and in a timely fashion. Despite setbacks, they rise to the occasion and never settle.

what you'd do after you realized you couldn't hit the date?

First, I'd check every possible way that could possibly make me hit the date, like using after-work time, weekends, or holidays, asking for help or suggestions, finding alternatives or simpler solutions, etc. Since I am the owner of the tasks, it's my responsibility to deliver results on time. It's my fault that I underestimated the workload when I took the tasks.

There was one time that we couldn't finish the troubleshooting of a bug on time, the system should have sent out auto emails at 7:00 am but sometimes it failed. Before solving the problem, I will check each morning and manually trigger emails to the client.

If I still couldn't hit the date, I would look at features, pick out a few with highest priority that I could finish, and then discuss about the problem with the project manager. Of course, I would apologize first and then try to discuss about the best solution to minimize the impacts. Once the project manager agrees, I would notify all the people that could be impacted by the delay.

P.S.

If you are an new grad and enjoyed this article, then be sure to read my other article on how to get an Amazon New Grad Offer: <https://leetcode.com/discuss/interview-experience/750227/how-to-get-amazon-new-grad-offer-north-america/627276>

Thanks.

behavioral

amazon

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uuTracy ★45 5 hours ago

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Dirk41 ★284 3 hours ago

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longtimecoder ★11 Last Edit: 9 minutes ago

After working for decades & interviewing hundreds of people, all your answers sound so canned to me. Very dramatic & any experienced interviewer will smell out BS in no time. Be yourself & share what you have executed in real life (need not be project in a software company itself) Leadership is a trait & it will show both inside & outside the organization. I dont believe Amazon hires leaders as people fake it. Even Bezos knows it. But he probably prefers to hire people who put effort to learn his principles.

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vincent_gui ★19 16 minutes ago

If you are not the original author, this is plagiarism !!!

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pavithraradhakrishnan2 ★1 6 hours ago

Thank you

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noSuchThing_ ★4 Last Edit: 8 hours ago

Thanks for sharing, This is really helpful!

Do you have a article for the technical interview prep/question part?

Do they ask CS fundamentals like Operating System basics, Database management, Networks & stuff ?

And also, For Amazon, In the interview, do they have language restrictions?

Is Java preferred or required?

▲ 0 ▼  Show 1 reply  Reply



kumarvipin2908 ★0 Last Edit: 8 hours ago


Really helpful

▲ 0 ▼  Reply



ShaneLee ★1 9 hours ago

This is really helpful! Thanks for sharing!

▲ 0 ▼  Reply



di_b ★95 9 hours ago

Amazing! Thanks a lot for detailed answers! I used to always look up for how to answer these questions better. This is definitely going to my important links pocket..

^ 0 ▾ ↩ Reply



amit_ltc ★2 9 hours ago

Two words.. Bookmarked and Thank you !! (that's actually 3 words ;)

^ 0 ▾ ↩ Reply

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