# What Makes You Unique?

# Why are you the best person for this job?

# Tell me a little bit about yourself.

My name is Erica Ingram, and I recently attended Lambda School, where I completed the full-stack web development track in approximately August 2020.  I learned an incredible number of skills like JavaScript, HTML, CSS, Node, Express, React, Redux, Python, Express, Git, SQL, Bootstrap, NPM/Yarn, and Jest among other things.  I worked with cross-functional international teams during build weeks to develop software projects.  On the side during my time there, I learned Bootstrap, GraphQL, Cypress, Tailwind CSS, Typescript, more advanced VB, animation in both CSS and React, Java, and Azure.  I learned how to make a Cortana bot. For eight weeks after the core curriculum, I did what I would call an apprenticeship where we helped continue development on a live project, and received eight weeks of computer science instruction following that.  I also have been and am currently reading Intro to Algorithms on the side.

Prior to Lambda, I owned a court transcription service for over a decade, where my love for programming really got started when I began developing software for my company in VB.  For nearly all of 2020, I've been attending school 40 hours a week, team-leading weekday evenings 16 to 20 hours a week, and operating my business in between.  It’s the busiest I've ever been and frankly I’m not looking to keep it up, but when I want to accomplish something, I do what it takes to make it happen, and this is what it took to make becoming a software developer happen.  Being a court transcriber for so many years has helped me develop skills like being thorough and methodical.  Developing a process to follow is one thing that made me so successful at court transcribing, and I believe I can bring that great advantage to my next venture.

# Why did you decide to get into *track* and become a *role*?

Two reasons; I love learning, and my entrepreneurship has left me feeling unchallenged.  Once I developed such a great process, the work wasn’t very challenging, and if I continue down the path I’ve planned, it will be even less challenging as time goes by.

Second reason is, I’m a problem solver and I love challenges.  As a solo entrepreneur, I needed a website and VB software to process work product, but didn’t have capital to hire a developer, so I learned to code instead.  A few macros to solve a given problem here and there turned into a complete software package.  There’s a lot of details to attend to because you’re every department, and it can be easy to miss things, so having software you can rely upon to solve your pain points and make your workflow efficient and complete from end to end is crucial, which I leaned into when creating my company’s software.  The software gave me back 25 hours of my life per week, and since I implemented it by far my most frequent customer compliment is how thorough I am.  I’m very excited to bring my resourcefulness and problem-solving skills to my next venture.

# Tell me about the most recent project you worked on. What were your responsibilities?

The most recent project I worked on was my Labs project. Labs is an eight-week-long portion of Lambda where all the students are assigned to a project and it's as close to on-the-job as you'll probably get in school. You are required to come up, plan, develop, deploy, and entirely complete at least two product release canvasses. The point of Labs is to model and experience continuous deployment as if you were at a real company. Some Labs projects are started from scratch; ours was not. So our project, Swaap, was started a few Labs cohorts ago, and so our team's overall goal was to continue development as opposed to starting something from scratch. My role on the team was as web developer, and so my responsibilities were to assist in every portion of Swaap's continuous development and deployment. This included adding on to the product vision document, assisting the team in creating release canvasses, reflecting on our work in weekly journal entries, selecting which release canvass we would work on and in what order, any planning required for any portion of the project, making decisions regarding how we would implement various features and bug fixes. Fixing bugs and coding new features was not the biggest part of the project, by a long shot. We managed our project on Trello using Agile methodology. The previous team didn't do any testing, but I was responsible for all testing done on Swaap so far, mostly consisting of testing the landing page.

# Describe a time you were able to improve upon the design that was originally suggested.

I improved on NASA's media library search while building my clone of it. For example, when you visit images.nasa.gov, you'll see there's only a textfield and a checklist of media types to search with initially. You then receive another option of searching by year once you've completed one search. That timeline option is in the left-hand side of the search results.

Mine is improved because I went ahead and put the timeline option up top with the rest of the search and there is no left-hand sidebar to take up room for search results. In addition, on the NASA site, each search result has a tooltip and I put that same info in a short caption below each thumbnail as opposed to doing a tooltip for purposes of accessibility.

I've added two animations in the form of a rocket flying across the top and an astronaut floating at the bottom.

# Tell me about the project you are most proud of, and what your contribution was.

Well, it's frankly not my best coding, but the project I'm most proud of is my Access database. With this database, I used text-analyzing software on over 10,000 transcript pages to produce autocorrect entries in Word to improve typing speed and accuracy.  It’s its own language more or less at this point.  I used VBA to automate creation of those entries regarding proper names and nouns.  As a court transcriber, I consistently produced twice the number of transcript pages over average due to VBA automation.

In addition, my company provides completely unique features such as authority hyperlinking via CourtListener, .gov sites, and the like as well as tables of authority for free with every transcript via VBA automation.  No other transcriber provides it and most attorneys would charge for that as work product, but since I automated it, I was able to provide it for free and frequently served diverse low-income customers who can’t necessarily even afford an attorney.  Due process is extremely important, and because I deal with life or death matters sometimes, I appreciate how important it is to be fair minded and have an equal process that treats everyone the same.

# Describe your production deployment process.

Generally speaking, I have a repo; I open up a new branch, push changes to the repo on that branch, do testing on the new code to ensure quality. Then you put in a pull request to merge it with staging, where you test out the changes live before merging it to master. There are some checks and balances along the way to ensure nothing gets deployed that shouldn't, such as having multiple reviewers or a team lead look it over before approving it. Different companies have their own specific processes and you should follow your company's as much as humanly possible.

# Give an example of where you have applied your technical knowledge in a practical way.

I used text-analyzing software on over 10,000 transcript pages to produce autocorrect entries in Word to improve typing speed and accuracy.  It’s its own language more or less at this point.  I used VBA to automate creation of those entries regarding proper names and nouns.  As a court transcriber, I consistently produced twice the number of transcript pages over average due to VBA automation.

In addition, my company provides completely unique features such as authority hyperlinking via CourtListener, .gov sites, and the like as well as tables of authority for free with every transcript via VBA automation.  No other transcriber provides it and most attorneys would charge for that as work product, but since I automated it, I was able to provide it for free and frequently served diverse low-income customers who can’t necessarily even afford an attorney.  Due process is extremely important, and because I deal with life or death matters sometimes, I appreciate how important it is to be fair minded and have an equal process that treats everyone the same.

# How did you manage source code?

For my labs project, I would make small commits, make appropriate comments describing things like why something was done a certain way, upload it to github according to Lambda's specified git flow. If there was a code format, I would follow that. The branches are named according to guidelines dictated by Lambda. It gets merged to staging and then master according to the git flow dictated by Lambda.

# What did you do to ensure quality in your deliverables?

I did most of the testing on my Labs project for our team. I wrote tests for every item you see on the Swaap landing page. We used Cypress, and testing is how we ensured quality.

# When is the last time you downloaded a utility from the internet to make your work more productive, and what was it?

In March of this year, after I found out Microsoft made Teams free to everyone for this year because of the pandemic, I immediately dug right in and moved all of my project management as well as to-dos and calendars over to Teams for work, personal, and school.  I manage my whole life with Teams now.  I mainly use the planner, onenote, files, github, and calendar features and am working on implementing others like the Wiki.  There’s nobody on my teams except me, but it’s still a great product to use for my purposes.

# How to Describe Your Current Job Responsibilities?

Currently, I do a couple things. I work as both a team lead at Lambda School for a part-time evenings cohort, where I am like a cross between a project manager and a teacher's assistant. I'm there to do things like mentor students, grade their projects, have 1:1s twice a week with each student which included code review, hold stand-up a couple times a week with seven students, tracked attendance, and used a slackbot via slack workflow builder to manage tasks, information, and reminders. Secondarily, I operate my own court transcription business outside of school and team-leading. I wear every hat in my business, so I do all invoicing, all marketing, all administrative work, and all actual transcript production as well as delivery, and I made software to do some of those things for me so I could focus more on actual transcript production and customer interaction.

# Tell Me About Yourself

Name: Erica Ingram

What Lambda School is:

a nine-month technical training program, specializing in web and computer science fundamentals, with a focus on group project work that mimics the product development lifecycle.

Your track, and what skills you've built as part of that track and how you applied them in projects (focus especially on those that mirror the language of the job description):

I complete(d) the full-stack web development track in approximately August 2020, where I learned an incredible number of skills like JavaScript, HTML, CSS, Node, Express, React, Redux, Python, Express, Git, SQL, Bootstrap, NPM/Yarn, GSAP, and Jest among other things and worked with cross-functional international teams during build weeks to develop software projects.  On the side during my time there, I learned (FILL IN HERE) GraphQL, Cypress, Tailwind CSS, Typescript, more advanced VB, animation in both CSS and React, Java, Azure, and C#.  Every day during core curriculum, we completed a new project to cement our learning before moving on to the next lesson and building on the previous lessons.  For eight weeks after that, I did what i would call an apprenticeship where we helped continue development on a live project, and eight weeks of computer science courses following that.  Also, I always have side projects going.

What you did before Lambda School (if professional & relevant):

Prior to Lambda, I owned a court transcription service for over a decade, where my love for programming really got started.  I used text-analyzing software on over 10,000 transcript pages to produce autocorrect entries in Word to improve typing speed and accuracy.  It’s its own language more or less.  I used VBA to automate creation of those entries regarding proper names and nouns.  My company provides completely unique features such as authority hyperlinking via CourtListener, .gov sites, and the like as well as tables of authority for free with every transcript via VBA automation.  No other transcriber provides it and most attorneys would charge for that as work product, but since I automated it, I was able to provide it for free and frequently served diverse low-income customers who can’t necessarily even afford an attorney.  Due process is extremely important, and because I deal with life or death matters sometimes, I appreciate how important it is to be fair minded and have an equal process that treats everyone the same.

As a court transcriber, I consistently produced twice the number of transcript pages over average due to VBA automation.

Close with summarizing 2-3 key professional attributes that you are excited to potentially bring to the job at \_\_\_\_ company.

For nearly all of 2020, I've been attending school 40 hours a week, team-leading weekday evenings, and operating my business in between.  It’s the busiest I've ever been and frankly I’m not looking to keep it up, but when I want to accomplish something, I do what it takes to make it happen, and this is what it took to make becoming a software developer happen.  Being a court transcriber for so many years has helped me develop skills like being thorough and methodical.  Developing a process to follow is one thing that made me so successful at court transcribing, and I believe I can bring that great advantage to my next venture.  I also love learning, and one of the reasons I went to Lambda was feeling unchallenged.  Once I developed such a great process, the work wasn’t very challenging.

# What Are Your Strengths?

Name the strength:

I'm a problem solver.  I love overcoming obstacles and challenges and I am extremely resourceful and adaptable.

Give an example of a time when you used that strength.  Describe what the need was, and describe step-by-step what you did to meet that need.

My biggest example of this is my company’s database.  Doing all this transcription requires an inordinate amount of unpaid administrative time and effort, which I did not have to spend on unpaid tasks, being the only one at my company.  Something I read while completing Microsoft Learn learning paths really hit home for me; to spend as little time as possible on things that don’t directly provide the customer value.  I have wanted to work at Microsoft for a very long time, but I read that and instantly knew that Microsoft is where I belong.  I lived this concept in my database.  Everything I created in my database was geared towards automating repetitive tasks, of which there are a ton in my business.  It manages my tasks and schedule, invoices, emails, production workflow, generates extremely professional company correspondence, and interacts with Wunderlist, PayPal, OneNote, CourtListener, Office libraries, and others to do so.  I only enter case information for a case anywhere once, something most transcribers can’t say.  I offer probably the lowest court transcription rates in the area, all due to VBA automation, and now the benefit from that automation directly benefits my customers, whereas, for other court transcription companies, they charge as much as $1 or $2 more per page because they simply can’t compete.

End with a statement that acknowledges an area in which this strength would be useful in the job that you’re applying for, and how you plan to use your strength to bring value to that task.

Many of your customers are made up of people like me as an entrepreneur, and how I’ve run my business over the years aligns with your mission and values.  I help people achieve more, and I know I can do the same for Microsoft.

# What Is Your Greatest Weakness?

Well, because of personal issues, I have found it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. And before the tech boom here in Seattle happened, I did yoga, ran five miles a day, played video games with my husband, sewed, made candles, had plants I took care of, collected graded hockey cards, and other things. But when the tech boom happened, my income stayed the same and the expenses certainly did not, so not having any family support and being the type of person who makes things happen, I had to work more, and that meant giving up my hobbies. It does have a negative impact on my focus and motiviation, but the bills had to be paid regardless of whether I wanted to spend time with my spouse or do something for myself. That's actually one of the reasons I attended Lambda and really want to work at Microsoft; working at Microsoft, with the environment you foster, will allow me to spend time with my family, have a work-life balance, and get more done in a much shorter amount of time. After doing what I've done to make ends meet, 50 to 55 hours a week is a walk in the park. Having most of my evenings weekends back would do wonders for my creativity and health.

# What Is Your Management Style?

Lead by example; attitudes start at the top and subordinates model their leaders' behavior. You want your subordinates to do certain things, to act certain ways, and the best way to make that happen is to set yourself as the example you want them to emulate. Treat people how you want to be treated. As a manager, you're there to be their cheerleader and help them advance and be the best they can be, grow as much as they can because, as everybody knows, a rising tides lifts all boats, and, as the manager, you're the tide. Show people what excellence looks like and empower them to do the rest. They won't disappoint you.

# Where Do You See Yourself in 5 Years?

What skills or experiences do you have that will add value?

Being a solo entrepreneur helped me develop several skills that would make me a valuable asset at Microsoft.  First and foremost, I’m a problem solver.  Back when I first started developing my database, after doing many transcripts slowly and encountering lots of unpaid administrative tasks which I felt did not deserve the time I spent on them, I was basically faced with the proposition that either I solve my problem or deal with it for the entirety of my business.  I had not enough time, not enough capital to hire people to do the tasks, and needed a solution badly because it was not a sustainable position.

So it made me very resourceful and adaptable, because if I didn’t solve the problem, there was nobody around to solve it for me, and solve it I did.  I read Getting Things Done by David Allen, a book near and dear to my heart, and used concepts from that book to create my workflow process.  I now produce double what most of my colleagues produce in terms of page count, and I make less mistakes while doing it because automating document creation takes some human error out of the process.

Being in court transcription made me appreciate the importance of being thorough and methodical, as every court jurisdiction in the country has different formatting requirements for transcripts and they must all be 98 percent plus correct.  If they aren’t correct, they get sent back and I lose my approval status, the ability to do transcripts for that jurisdiction.  In addition, these are often life and death matters for which I am producing transcripts, so the importance of being thorough and methodical cannot be understated.  If I get something majorly wrong in a transcript and no one catches it, it could mean someone goes to prison for many years or it could cost a company millions.

What types of additional roles and responsibilities are you interested in exploring? (must be relevant to job or industry at hand)

I want to learn everything I can, all the things, as I am a voracious reader, and court transcribing has only made me a faster reader.  I believe in leadership setting an example for people around them.  You be the role model, you be the leader, show yourself as an example, and people naturally respond to it and respect that, but people don’t just give you that kind of respect.  You have to be the example for others.

What skills will you learn at this job that will help you attain those new roles and responsibilities, or help you advance in your longer term career goals?

In this position, I would learn new technologies I don’t already know like Typescript, C#, and Java in addition to learning how to develop software in a large organization, such as learning how to manage projects in such a setting and leading people to achieving company goals.  I also want to learn more about software design patterns and more about computer science and will approach it in the style I’ve learned at Lambda by completing small projects to learn the core concepts and syntax of each language.

Name certifications or education that you are pursuing that will add to your skill set (if applicable)

The education at Lambda School made me realize how perfect of a fit software development is for me as a career.  It challenged me more than I’ve ever been challenged before, and I was extremely successful at it.  I would further that by continuing my education via platforms like Frontend Masters as well as the many Microsoft certifications currently available.  I will never stop learning.  As I said previously, I will approach it in the style I've learned at Lambda, doing small projects to learn and grasp concepts in the given language.

Explain how you will be able to prioritize work if you are also planning on continuing your education:

Like anything, it’s about balancing priorities, and as I said before, I’m really into the GTD system.  Prior to Lambda, I used to work 80-100 hours a week to pay rent and was exhausted all the time.  After using GTD to balance my priorities, I cut down my work hours to 40 to 60 while making the same income.  I used that extra time to develop my company’s database, and after that attend Lambda School.  I would apply these principles to work, my personal life, and learning like I have for all these years.  I also completed several side projects while doing all this, and I did it by using GTD to develop my priorities, putting in an hour or a couple hours each day on the given side project, being diligent and persistent, and eventually achieving my goal.

# Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?

Well, I haven't left my last job yet. I have already ramped work down almost as much as possible with my business as it currently stands. My plan is to finish my selling to-do list and meeting with an advisor to sell it, because I'm going to start putting it in a sell position as soon as I get my tech job resolved, wherever my Lambda education takes me.

# Why Do You Want to Work Here?

What are the company’s mission/values/services, and how to you personally relate to them?

Microsoft’s mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more, which I live every day in my court transcription business.  I have a diverse customer base that doesn’t necessarily know about case law or what rules, regulations, and statutes are online.  Many of them have to check their email at the library because they don’t even own computers, so my transcripts allow non-lawyers to look up and read case law or other authority that they might not otherwise be able to access or that would be extremely difficult for them to access.  Two clicks, and they’re able to read authority cited in the transcript so they can craft arguments they wish to make to the appeals court.  In this way, I empower every customer I have to achieve more with the services I provide.

What is it about their product or the projects you would be working on that excite you?

Being a court transcriber, the Microsoft product that excites me the most is Office.  You can achieve so much with it for such a small cost.  It allows businesses to do things at a low cost that might be very expensive otherwise.  You practically can’t run a business without it, because every business needs the ability to produce professional consistent documents.

What similar skills and experience do you have that has prepared you with the knowledge to do this work?

Both my journey as an entrepreneur and my experience at Lambda have prepared me to work at Microsoft by instilling in me confidence that I can face and overcome challenges.  My experience at Lambda taught me how to use my problem-solving skills to develop quality software and provide solutions to everyday challenges people face.  I am diplomatic and fair minded, as being a court transcriber requires you to treat everyone equally and be emotionally detached from the work.  I’ll bring my thoroughness and methodical nature to Microsoft.

# Why Should We Hire You?

## What are the company’s mission/values/services, and how to you personally relate to them?

Microsoft’s mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more, which I live every day in my court transcription business.  I have a diverse customer base that doesn’t necessarily know about case law or what rules, regulations, and statutes are online.  Many of them have to check their email at the library because they don’t even own computers, so my transcripts allow non-lawyers to look up and read case law or other authority that they might not otherwise be able to access or that would be extremely difficult for them to access.  Two clicks, and they’re able to read authority cited in the transcript so they can craft arguments they wish to make to the appeals court.  In this way, I empower every customer I have to achieve more with the services I provide.

## What is it about their product or the projects you would be working on that excite you?

Being a court transcriber, the Microsoft product that excites me the most is Office.  You can achieve so much with it for such a small cost.  It allows businesses to do things at a low cost that might be very expensive otherwise.  You practically can’t run a business without it, because every business needs the ability to produce professional consistent documents.

## What similar skills and experience do you have that has prepared you with the knowledge to do this work?

Both my journey as an entrepreneur and my experience at Lambda have prepared me to work at Microsoft by instilling in me confidence that I can face and overcome challenges.  My experience at Lambda taught me how to use my problem-solving skills to develop quality software and provide solutions to everyday challenges people face.  I am diplomatic and fair minded, as being a court transcriber requires you to treat everyone equally and be emotionally detached from the work.  I’ll bring my thoroughness and methodical nature to Microsoft.

# Why are you applying for this position?

My values align greatly with Microsoft's core values and, for that reason, I really want to work here. I know I would fit in and shine here. But given how much I want to work here, I applied for the position where I think I would fit best because I want to give Microsoft my best work, and this is where I think I could do that.

# What motivates you?

I'm passionate about due process and helping people less advantaged than me with due process. I love finding ways to provide more services for the same price to underresourced folks like I used to be. Fairness is not a one-off thing. It is achieved only through a rigorous process, and I'm passionate about making that happen in everything I do.

# Why are you a good fit for this position?

My values align greatly with Microsoft's core values and, for that reason, I really want to work here. I know I would fit in and shine here. But given how much I want to work here, I applied for the position where I think I would fit best because I want to give Microsoft my best work, and this is where I think I could do that.

# What are your weaknesses?

## Name the weakness/growth area:

I haven’t taken as good care of myself as I should health-wise since I’ve been so busy.

## What specific steps are you taking to overcome this growth area?

I started off just doing yoga five days a week, and then graduated to running up to several miles a day down on the waterfront.

## What positive results have you seen because of your effort?

I’ve seen a lot of positive results health-wise, including weight loss and just general overall well-being, better ability to manage emotions.

# What interests you about this position?

My values align greatly with Microsoft's core values and, for that reason, I really want to work here. I know I would fit in and shine here. But given how much I want to work here, I applied for the position where I think I would fit best because I want to give Microsoft my best work, and this is where I think I could do that.

# Tell me about how you dealt with a tough challenge.

That's easy. Tough challenges are my jam. I opened a business over a decade ago which I am still operating. I published a book in my early twenties and have been published on the front cover of several large gaming magazines. I moved to Seattle with $150, a guitar, and a bus ticket, and I'm still here. My husband's from Newfoundland and my family didn't support our marriage; do you know how tough it is to bring someone to the States without family support? Pretty tough. So how do I deal with tough challenges? I stay persistent and meet them head on.

# Tell me about a time when you had a conflict or disagreement with someone at work.

Being a court transcriber, I deal with a lot of different personalities and have dealt with my fair share of argumentative pro ses and lawyers.  What will happen is, somebody said something during a hearing they don’t like, that won’t help their case, or they think I misheard something.  It happens.  Now, I’m bound under penalty of perjury to produce a true and correct transcript.  So I have to make sure it’s accurate, whether I was wrong or right previously and, frankly, no matter if the customer wants me to change it or not.  So how I dealt with it each and every time is to go back, listen to the audio portion in question while reviewing the transcript, and changing it if it’s incorrect, also refiling the transcript with the court.  I will tell them something to the effect of, thank you so much for bringing my attention to this issue, that I've had a chance to re-listen to the audio portion in question and review the transcript, and have made the following changes.  Then I will describe all the next steps that will happen in terms of court filing/process and, if they have any further questions or concerns, to please not hesitate to contact me.  Then I follow through on the steps I told them I would take, and after I've done the steps, let the customer know I've done so.

If I deem it correct as is, I tell them something to the effect of, thank you so much for bringing my attention to this issue, I’ve had a chance to re-listen to the audio portion in question and review the transcript and I’m comfortable that I transcribed what happened correctly, that if they had any further questions or concerns, to please not hesitate to contact me.

The result has largely been returning customers, because I know to admit when I made a mistake and when I didn’t, and most of my customers respect that greatly.  I might make mistakes, but I'll always face them head on, fix them to the best of my ability, and try my best to learn and grow from them.

# What challenges do you find at work that make it difficult for you to get your work done?

Loud noises make it difficult to concentrate, where sometimes the recording is very quiet and demands heavy concentration to actually listen and hear what’s being said. I don’t run into it too much now, but how I handled that before was to do what I do with everything else and just solve the problem and move on. This meant finding curtains for my apartment windows, which are single pane and span the width of my apartment. They used to let all manner of noise in and heat out. In addition, they are huge, wall to wall, windows, and a standard size didn’t fit them. It took me a while because I had to budget for it and our budget has always been very tight, but I eventually found appropriately priced curtains which blocked out almost all road noise as well as helping keep my heat bill down every month by $20 or $40.

# Tell me about a time when your manager dropped a huge job on your desk as you were headed out the door. How did you handle this situation?

I keep myself organized with a couple of tools, incidentally all Microsoft tools, including my database, OneNote, and Microsoft ToDo. I use GTD to set priorities. With Microsoft ToDo, I set up recurring tasks for things like side projects, team leading, code reviews, school work, sort them all into separate lists, and add them to “MY Day” each morning. Then I have the “My Day” list of tasks to achieve for the entire day. If something is a must-do, I mark it ‘important’ and make sure the 'important’ ones are what I work on first. Everything else comes after those are done or as time allows during the day in between accomplishing ‘important’ tasks.

My database generates tasks on Wunderlist for me and prioritizes them according to an algorithm I specifically wrote for it, so Stage 1 is more important and comes before stage 2, which comes before stage 3, and that comes before stage 4. I have a price quote form in Access which I use to give price quotes, and one of its features is to tell me if I'm available or not for that particular job, and this prevents me from taking too much work on.

# Describe what you do in your current position.

Currently, I do a couple things. I work as both a team lead at Lambda School for a part-time evenings cohort, where I am like a cross between a project manager and a teacher's assistant. I'm there to do things like mentor students, grade their projects, have 1:1s twice a week with each student which included code review, hold stand-up a couple times a week with seven students, tracked attendance, and used a slackbot via slack workflow builder to manage tasks, information, and reminders. Secondarily, I operate my own court transcription business outside of school and team-leading. I wear every hat in my business, so I do all invoicing, all marketing, all administrative work, and all actual transcript production as well as delivery, and I made software to do some of those things for me so I could focus more on actual transcript production and customer interaction.

# Tell me about a time you went above and beyond for work.

Whenever the situation called for it; but one example would be that I am the only court transcription company that cites and hyperlinks authority in transcript, like case law, rules, regulations, statutes, et cetera. Other companies don't have the bandwidth like I do and don't spend the money developing the technology to do it because there's no incentive. They don't get increased pay for it and there's a cap on fees you can earn, so as far as they're concerned it's simply a money sink and they don't do it. I am very passionate about accessibility and for some of my customers there is a ton of value in that hyperlinking. Some of my clients are pro se and/or can't afford a lawyer for things ranging from a traffic ticket to family law where child custody is on the line to bankruptcy to civil matters, and do you know how hard it is for just regular people to find cites and understand what a judge is talking about? Pretty difficult. Some of them are barely able to even make it to a regular library, let alone a law library, and my services help make that whole process a LOT more accessible. They can craft stronger arguments and be in the best possible position to go up against possibly actual attorneys who know a lot more than they do about the context of an authority.

# Tell me about a time you reached a goal at work

Well, this is actually kind of a fun one; my business has always been hampered by lack of capital and ability to pay other people to do the transcription before getting paid out myself. So I often turn away work I can't do because I can't afford to float someone else while I wait to get paid. It's unfortunate, but that's the reality. So I haven't done this since I started at Lambda, but I used to set day goals for myself where I would try to say yes to the right work to maximize the money I made in a day for the least amount of effort. My page rates are determined by turnaround; the quicker the turnaround, the higher the rate.

So what I'm getting at is, I went to a huge amount of effort to be able to take as many jobs with very short turnaround times as possible, which requires an extremely fine-tuned and efficient production process to pull off, which would increase my salary without really increasing my workload. To do this, you must hit all your points, regularly, no missing deadlines, no procrastinating. You need to execute. But eventually I would set goal amounts for myself and see if I could beat that amount the next day or not. I did that all the time while running my business.

Recently, when I did my team-lead training they asked every TL to come up with a measurable goal for their time being team leads. So my goal was to read every piece of literature the school offers on leadership, and there was about 40 or 50 articles, blog posts, and other pieces of content. It took me most of my time as a TL, but I did actually reach that goal as well. Doing that gave me a ton of perspective and insight on being a leader; validated some things I already do, too.

# What are your salary requirements?

Something within the range of market rate for the skills I bring to the table.

# What are you passionate about?

I'm passionate about due process and helping people less advantaged than me with due process. I love reading court documents and finding ways to provide more services for the same price to underresourced folks like I used to be. Fairness is not a one-off thing. It is achieved only through process, and I'm passionate about making that happen in everything I do.

# How did you hear about this job?

Through the Lambda match program/Microsoft careers website.

# How do you deal with pressure?

I usually don't let circumstances and people make me feel pressured. Feeling pressured is something you decide, consciously or not, and like, I've worked over a decade in an industry where I have regular sometimes extremely strict deadlines, like hours, and everything has to look and be exactly correct because somebody's either life or liberty is at stake and you have to perform under pressure. Best way to handle it is to realize 'feeling the pressure' will often make you less productive and put it aside so you can do your best work. Exercise helps regulate a lot also.

# What are you most proud of?

My resourcefulness and adaptability.

# What’s your dream job?

Working in a tech position at Microsoft.

# Why are you changing careers?

I really enjoy solving problems and my current position leaves me very bored and unchallenged because my business runs like clockwork and there aren't many challenges to work out these days. I want to be in a career where I constantly learn more and get to solve problems more often or regularly even.

# Are you open to relocating?

Yes.

# Tell me about a mistake you made.

Something I struggled with early on in my career for several years was overcommitting and not saying no enough because of my insecurity about income. I would then get overwhelmed and be late on a transcript by a few hours or a day. In court transcription, sometimes this is a very big deal, sometimes it isn't. But how I fixed it was to just force myself to not act on my own insecurities, not say yes to everything. I just stopped. I made software to help me figure out what I could handle and then adhered to what the software told me I could handle by saying no. The person or contractor I've worked with the longest in my court transcription career has said many times and would probably say so today that one reason she enjoys working with me so much is because I am forward and honest and admit when things are going wrong, for better or worse for me. I don't sugar coat things and I own what I do, and I have several customers who respect that so much that they stay with me because they know exactly what they're getting from me and they know I'll communicate openly and honestly even if the result doesn't reflect well on me, such as being a few hours late on a transcript.

# Walk us through your resume.

My name is Erica Ingram, and I recently attended Lambda School, where I completed the full-stack web development track in approximately August 2020.  I learned an incredible number of skills like JavaScript, HTML, CSS, Node, Express, React, Redux, Python, Express, Git, SQL, Bootstrap, NPM/Yarn, and Jest among other things.  I worked with cross-functional international teams during build weeks to develop software projects.  On the side during my time there, I learned Bootstrap, GraphQL, Cypress, Tailwind CSS, Typescript, more advanced VB, animation in both CSS and React, Java, and Azure.  I learned how to make a Cortana bot. For eight weeks after the core curriculum, I did what I would call an apprenticeship where we helped continue development on a live project, and received eight weeks of computer science instruction following that.  I also have been and am currently reading Intro to Algorithms on the side.

Prior to Lambda, I owned a court transcription service for over a decade, where my love for programming really got started when I began developing software for my company in VB.  For nearly all of 2020, I've been attending school 40 hours a week, team-leading weekday evenings 16 to 20 hours a week, and operating my business in between.  It’s the busiest I've ever been and frankly I’m not looking to keep it up, but when I want to accomplish something, I do what it takes to make it happen, and this is what it took to make becoming a software developer happen.  Being a court transcriber for so many years has helped me develop skills like being thorough and methodical.  Developing a process to follow is one thing that made me so successful at court transcribing, and I believe I can bring that great advantage to my next venture.

# What Are Your Hobbies?

Yoga, running, playing video games with my husband, sewing, crafts, taking care of my plants and pets when I get them, collecting graded hockey cards, and traveling.

# What Are Your Career Goals?

My career goals are to work here at Microsoft and move up within the company according to your promotion structure. More broadly, I'm a voracious reader and my goal is to learn everything I possibly can about tech related to whatever I'm doing and constantly better myself via education.

# Do you have any questions for me?

What's the process to get books I need to keep learning?

What's your working hour policy?

What's the process from finishing a feature/bugfix to shipping to production?

What's the process from creating a new repo to shipping to production?

What was the biggest accomplishment of your team/department yet?

How do you enforce/achieve quality of code?

How do you support juniors?

How do you evaluate the work of your employees?

How do you deal with overtime?

What does success look like in this role? What does going above and beyond look like?

# What do you know about our company?

## Overview of company products/services/mission (and specific project you’re working on, if applicable):

Microsoft’s mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more.  To that end, Microsoft offers several major products we’ve all worked with for decades like Windows, Office, and more recently Azure cloud services as well as Xbox and related gaming products and services, and Surface.

# When/how/why was it founded:

Microsoft was founded on April 4, 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque, New Mexico.  Four years later, they moved up here and have been headquartered here ever since.  It was originally started to bring personal computers to the masses.  In 1985, they began offering the Windows operating system to the public.

## What is the company’s business model?

Their revenue streams come in several ways; some of Microsoft’s products are pay up front such as Surface or Xbox, some are pay as you use like Azure, and some are subscription based like Office.

## Major company milestones:

Last year Microsoft became the third company to hit $1 trillion in valuation.  Q4 2019 commercial cloud revenue increased 39% year-over-year to $11.0 billion and was their strongest commercial quarter ever.

## What sets this company apart from its competitors?

There are many things that set Microsoft apart from its competitors; their products are more user friendly.  They also have a different business model than their competitors, as Microsoft hasn’t relied on ads nearly as heavily as their competitors have.  This is because Microsoft, simply put, offers superior products and services.

# Really dig deep and fully explain your "Why?" of starting Lambda School. Imagine what your future will look like. This can take any format that will be useful to you in the future:

I want a six-figure remote developer job. I'm pretty poor, I've got \*a lot\* of bills to pay, but I really love doing this stuff. I've gotten a taste of it from doing my company's website as well as database, where I had to learn VBA and MySQL, and I love doing that stuff. I haven't been able to because I'm not making enough money to take time off, but when I have time, I'm also working on a speech recognition engine that interacts with my database. I got one kind of working from a form in my database, but it was using PocketSphinx, which has too small of a vocabulary for what I need, and haven't transferred it to regular Sphinx yet. I would love to someday finish that. My database needs some things I don't have time to do yet, and I'd love to also polish that off and maybe sell the business with the software. It's pretty good stuff for the right buyer.

I just now would like to learn enough to get paid by other people to do this kind of work. My life is very low right now, and I have an opportunity to totally change it here. My family's goals are hampered by our finances and doing this will totally solve that problem, but having done coding in the way I have, I also know I will love actually doing it. I've lived in the same apartment since around 2001-ish, I don't have family to lean on, and since Seattle blew up with all the tech stuff, it has become difficult to pay rent and save any money to move out. In addition, the shutdown earlier this year hurt my business significantly and I have only a month or so ago recovered from it.

I also feel like I've conquered my current work, hit my ceiling, and to grow I need to move on to something more challenging. I don't hate what I'm doing, but it feels mindless and I don't get as much satisfaction in it as I used to. Also, the content I type is regularly very negative/bad. It's important work, but listening to story after story of worst-case scenarios takes its toll. Plus, my industry isn't like a lot of other industries. When a client comes to me, they've lost their case at least once and many resent having to spend the money on a transcript, so although most attorneys are nice, many, many pro se clients I've had are fairly toxic.

My spouse and I want to start a family, but we can't in the financial state we're in right now, and I'm getting up there in age in terms of family planning. Having a remote developer job would let me keep the freedom I have in my current business, but with all these additional bonuses, and have time to spend with my family, go on vacations, et cetera.

Also, my spouse's family lives very far away and it would be very nice if we could own a house where they could visit, and if we had enough money to visit them more than once every five years.