**Amazon Leadership Principles**

**A complete guide for 2024 — Part 3 of 7 of the main series**

[[](https://medium.com/@rogernem?source=post_page-----1a96387dcace--------------------------------) Roger Nem](https://medium.com/@rogernem?source=post_page-----1a96387dcace--------------------------------) 14 min read May 9, 2024



Amazon Leadership Principles — Credits AWS

💡 This article is **Part 3** of the series “**How God has helped me crack the Amazon Interview in 2024**” and it summarizes the [16 Amazon Leadership Principles](https://www.amazon.jobs/content/en/our-workplace/leadership-principles) and provides guidance on what to do to pass the related behavioral interviews.

## [How God has helped me crack the Amazon Interview in 2024](https://medium.com/@rogernem/how-god-has-helped-me-crack-the-amazon-interview-in-2024-3419e4a7b21b?source=post_page-----1a96387dcace--------------------------------" \t "_blank)

### [My path to an Amazon Offer — To Christ be all the Glory!](https://medium.com/@rogernem/how-god-has-helped-me-crack-the-amazon-interview-in-2024-3419e4a7b21b?source=post_page-----1a96387dcace--------------------------------" \t "_blank)

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**This is the most crucial aspect of the Amazon interview process**, as it will shape everything you do when crafting your resume, updating your LinkedIn profile, and conducting yourself during the interview process.

We’ll delve into each of Amazon’s Leadership Principles in-depth and explore how they form the foundation of Amazon’s success and are essential for any aspiring candidate.

When Amazon interviews candidates, they seek a combination of both functional skills and leadership skills, which applies to every potential new hire.

There are numerous resources available on how to excel in the functional aspect of interviews. It’s imperative to be proficient in your role and ensure that your knowledge about your job is up-to-date.

Specific Amazon leadership principles are assigned to each interviewer in the process. These interviewers aim to assess how well you embody the type of leader Amazon is seeking.

My recommendation is to have at least two stories based on your work experience for each Leadership Principle. I personally prepared three stories for each principle following the **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esults format or S.T.A.R. for short, totaling 48 stories, each lasting around 15 minutes, and often I was asked for a fourth story.

As mentioned earlier, Amazon Loop Interviews are exceptionally challenging. They aim to gauge how you perform under high pressure, and unfortunately, this is where many candidates struggle.

# ****Grasping Amazon Leadership Principles****

Amazon Leadership Principles provide insight into how Amazon **operates**, **nurtures leaders**, and **succeeds with talent**. Each principle shapes behavior intentionally.

Amazon centers its business around **customers**, emphasizing **speed**, **agility**, and **innovation** to meet evolving market needs. It aims to establish a leadership standard for the long term.

The Amazon Leadership Principles are the organization framework and backbone for [Amazon’s culture](https://www.aboutamazon.com/workplace).

Amazon employs the 16 Amazon Leadership Principles daily to shape how the workforce thinks, acts, and communicates in all endeavors.

**NOTE**: On Jul 1, 2021, Amazon introduced two new Leadership Principles (**“Strive to be Earth’s Best Employer”** and **“Success and Scale Bring Broad Responsibility.”**) reflecting the company’s evolution. This is the first addition to the list since 2015, when “Learn and Be Curious” was included as the 14th principle. The new principles were introduced just before Jeff Bezos stepped down as CEO, passing the reins to Amazon Web Services chief Andy Jassy.

1. [Customer Obsession](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#f9a0)
2. [Ownership](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#f751)
3. [Invent and Simplify](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#e174)
4. [Are Right, A Lot](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#4a3f)
5. [Learn and Be Curious](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#ee19)
6. [Hire and Develop the Best](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#4bb5)
7. [Insist on the Highest Standards](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#903d)
8. [Think Big](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#62fe)
9. [Bias for Action](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#cef9)
10. [Frugality](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#15cd)
11. [Earn Trust](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#d4d2)
12. [Dive Deep](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#13e7)
13. [Have Backbone; Disagree and Commit](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#191d)
14. [Deliver Results](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#bcb7)
15. [Strive to be Earth’s Best Employer](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#62e2)
16. [Success and Scale Bring Broad Responsibility](https://medium.com/@rogernem/amazon-leadership-principles-1a96387dcace#98c1)

# Customer Obsession

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.

The first principle, Customer Obsession, stems from Jeff Bezos’ unwavering emphasis on understanding customer desires. He is famously quoted as saying, “There are two kinds of companies: those that work to try to charge more and those that work to charge less… We will be the second kind.”

**Every significant decision at Amazon revolves around the customer**. It’s not just about anticipating their reaction, but also about what genuinely benefits them.

What Amazon is seeking is your consideration and care for the customer. **They expect you to demonstrate customer obsession in your responses**. Ideally, you should understand who your customer is, their needs, what they truly expect from you (beyond your specific tasks), and focus on addressing their needs, not just completing tasks.

# Ownership

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”.

Ownership at Amazon encourages employees to take ownership of their ideas and initiatives, rather than waiting for direction from management. It also entails taking responsibility if something goes wrong, as it often requires individuals to accept accountability before meaningful change can occur.

Because everyone at Amazon is considered an owner and shares a sense of responsibility, **the phrase “That’s not my job” should never be uttered**.

# Invent and Simplify

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.

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**Amazon is deeply committed to innovation** and frequently pioneers endeavors that have never been attempted before. They firmly believe that there is always another solution.

The other aspect of this principle is the concept of simplification. Amazon advocates for the **simplest solution** because it is easier to maintain, iterate upon, and cheaper to build.

**It’s about embracing simplicity in all aspects**, as it facilitates faster and more cost-effective innovation, which is why these concepts are intertwined in this principle.

“Invention is by its very nature disruptive. If you want to be understood at all times, then don’t do anything new.” ― Jeff Bezos

# Are Right, A Lot

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

This principle is not about striving for perfection. Amazon empowers its leaders with a significant level of autonomy to take initiative and get things done independently. They value action and decisiveness. However, Amazon also expects its leaders to exercise good judgment and instincts, while also being willing to question their own decisions and be open to opposing viewpoints.

While **Amazon appreciates individuals with strong instincts, they highly prioritize individuals who are open to being wrong**. In Amazon’s view, right and wrong are determined by understanding the objectives, evaluating the available options, and comparing their merits.

At Amazon, the correctness of a decision is not determined by seniority or assertiveness. Instead, they emphasize the importance of valuing every perspective and opinion. Furthermore, **Amazon sees disagreement as valuable** because it provides an opportunity to reassess one’s viewpoint and consider alternative perspectives.

# Learn and Be Curious

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

What worked yesterday may not work for long. Code will need to be replaced, designs will change, and customer demands will evolve.

Recognizing the inevitability of change, Amazon places a **strong emphasis on everyone being open to learning new things**, inventing new solutions, and exploring new opportunities.

**Amazon values individuals who are open and eager to learn**. They expect their leaders to embrace new ideas and approaches, as they believe that continual learning is key to progress and innovation.

# Hire and Develop the Best

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 role in coaching others. We work on behalf of our people to invent mechanisms for development like Career Choice.

Managers are tasked with hiring for their teams, while individual contributors participate in interviewing candidates. However, everyone shares the responsibility of ensuring that the right candidates are selected.

**Amazon prioritizes providing attention and guidance to top performers** to enable them to deliver their best work. Investing time in top performers is seen as the most valuable use of a leader’s time, ensuring that exceptional talent receives the support they require.

Moreover, it is incumbent upon every individual to contribute to the growth and development of others within the organization.

# Insist on the Highest Standards

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.

This principle is closely linked to the ownership principle. As owners, would you settle for low quality? Would you feel proud or embarrassed about the quality of your work?

Similarly, Amazon expects its leaders to take ownership and uphold standards that everyone, including themselves, should strive to meet. This means **never being content with the status quo**.

Amazon’s objective is not merely to meet requirements or goals, but to continually enhance. Their aim is to never accept mediocrity or view anything less than a flawless product as acceptable.

# Think Big

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.

Leaders at Amazon never believe that the company’s vision is big enough, innovative enough, or that their standards are high enough.

During interviews, if you’re asked for an idea, simply offering the first small idea that comes to mind isn’t sufficient. Instead, **you should aim to present bold and ambitious ideas**.

**Amazon is constantly seeking visionary thinking** and wants to ensure that its leaders are willing to think beyond immediate circumstances and embrace larger possibilities.

# Bias for Action

Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking.

Amazon strongly believes that making a decision, even if imperfect, is far better than making no decision at all. They prioritize action and learning through implementation and measurement, rather than relying solely on surveys, tests, or projections.

**Amazon seeks leaders who are proactive**, bold, and willing to take calculated risks, understanding that it’s essential for progress. In areas where the right answer is uncertain, Amazon emphasizes the importance of making a choice and moving forward, rather than waiting for all variables to be perfectly defined.

This philosophy, known as Bias for Action, aligns with Bezos’ approach of taking intelligent risks based on the best available information, rather than waiting for complete certainty before acting.

# Frugality

Accomplish more with less. Constraints breed resourcefulness, self-sufficiency and invention. There are no extra points for growing headcount, budget size or fixed expense.

Amazon retail is renowned for its commitment to low prices and relentless pursuit of efficiency. This principle is fundamental to Amazon’s success, as it **focuses on delivering maximum value for minimal cost**. At Amazon, nothing is considered to have a fixed cost, as there is always room to streamline processes, reduce expenses, or find alternative solutions.

Amazon constantly innovates to solve problems in a more cost-effective manner, which often results in faster, easier maintenance, scalability, and other benefits.

It’s crucial to remember that Amazon expects you to understand the following:

* It’s normal and expected not to have enough time or resources.
* Having too much to do and too little time is acceptable.
* Not accomplishing everything you want on a project is healthy, as trying to do everything is inefficient.

The principle of Frugality, which **emphasizes doing more with less**, has been instrumental in Amazon’s success, especially during economic challenges in the industry.

# Earn Trust

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 odor smells of perfume. They benchmark themselves and their teams against the best.

The often overlooked aspect of this principle is being “vocally self-critical.” During interviews, candidates may find it challenging to convey that they aren’t flawless all the time while trying to highlight their strengths.

**It’s critical for leaders to acknowledge when they’ve made a mistake** so they can rectify it promptly. This fosters trust among colleagues and enables swift correction of future errors.

For instance, **could you share a time when you made a significant mistake at work?**

Amazon expects its leaders to consistently acknowledge their capacity to enhance processes and outcomes.

* It was someone else’s decision? Then you failed to influence them.
* It was someone else’s error? You failed to notice the mistake fast enough.

When explaining a mistake, start by acknowledging your own before addressing other errors.

Effective leaders at Amazon approach situations dispassionately, focusing on fixing processes rather than assigning blame. They prioritize long-term solutions over short-term fixes.

As an interviewer, it’s essential to consider how you handle mistakes, both your own and those of others. Amazon places great importance:

* Fixing problems rather than assigning blame.
* Emphasizing honesty over storytelling.
* Respecting colleagues, as collaboration is a long-term commitment.

Amazon’s “Earn Trust” leadership principle fosters workplace trust by promoting transparency in both communication and actions, akin to humility.

Employees are encouraged to honestly communicate their roles within teams, while managers are expected to provide candid feedback during performance evaluations. This mutual transparency cultivates a culture of trust, emphasizing that trust is a reciprocal process.

# Dive Deep

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

Amazon places significant emphasis on leaders actively monitoring their responsibilities and being capable of auditing their areas of ownership. If something appears unclear or amiss, leaders should possess the curiosity and initiative to investigate and resolve the issue.

This doesn’t imply that leaders should claim expertise in every aspect of their or their teams’ work, but they should refrain from telling stories in which they lack basic knowledge of obvious details. Amazon values leaders who are curious and skeptical.

Jeff Bezos was renowned for his practice of sending emails containing just a ‘?’ to team leads when he observed discrepancies or issues.

# Have Backbone; Disagree and Commit

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.

Amazon does not consider it acceptable to do something simply because “your boss said so.” Actions are taken based on decisions made with the data available, and the commitment to those decisions.

Disagreements based on data are welcomed, as are examples of gathering data to support arguments. However, it’s important to avoid getting stuck in a cycle of continual disagreement without reaching a resolution.

Success is achieved when everyone is working together as a team. “I told you so” attitudes are not tolerated. Instead, leaders are expected to provide data, make decisions collaboratively, and accept the consequences as a team.

Amazon seeks leaders who can discern when disagreements are necessary and when they are not. They understand what issues are worth arguing over and what are not. They know when to escalate matters and when it’s time to move forward and focus on implementation.

Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder, and CEO provides a great example of how to do it. In his 2015 letter to shareholders, he wrote: “I’m constantly surprised by the number of decisions made in large companies (and small ones) without meaningful input from engineering or product management. Companies that make these decisions risk building products that are irrelevant to customers because engineering and product management are disconnected from the people using (or perhaps even purchasing) their products.”

# Deliver 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.

Employees at Amazon are consistently expected to deliver value. It’s crucial for them to understand that

* they’re not merely completing tasks; rather, they’re focusing on inputs that drive the business forward.
* they’re not just delivering registration forms; they’re providing pipelines for acquiring new customers. These pipelines have measurable outcomes such as conversion rates and potential customer contacts.

Focusing on the business itself rather than simply completing tasks is both more challenging and more beneficial. While it’s understandable to occasionally miss deadlines, it’s important not to become complacent about it.

The principle doesn’t demand “perfect quality,” but rather “right quality,” which may sometimes mean accepting a lower level of quality than desired.

In line with the frugality principle, we often lack the time and resources to achieve things exactly as we **envision**, so we strive to accomplish them in the **most efficient and effective way** possible.

# Strive to be Earth’s Best Employer

Leaders work every day to create a safer, more productive, higher performing, more diverse, and more just work environment. They lead with empathy, have fun at work, and make it easy for others to have fun. Leaders ask themselves: Are my fellow employees growing? Are they empowered? Are they ready for what’s next? Leaders have a vision for and commitment to their employees’ personal success, whether that be at Amazon or elsewhere.

At Amazon, work revolves around focused delivery and project-based tasks within a fast-paced culture that prioritizes success over social cohesion. However, amid the relentless drive to deliver value for customers, leaders must also prioritize their colleagues.

Success isn’t solely measured by delivering results; it also involves caring for employees’ well-being, satisfaction within their teams, fulfillment in their daily tasks, and opportunities for career growth. By nurturing leaders who prioritize their employees while upholding high standards, Amazon can cultivate future leaders and foster growth.

Investing in people yields long-term benefits. **Amazon seeks leaders who mentor and manage with a focus on long-term development**, not just immediate success.

# Success and Scale Bring Broad Responsibility

We started in a garage, but we’re not there anymore. We are big, we impact the world, and we are far from perfect. We must be humble and thoughtful about even the secondary effects of our actions. Our local communities, planet, and future generations need us to be better every day. We must begin each day with a determination to make better, do better, and be better for our customers, our employees, our partners, and the world at large. And we must end every day knowing we can do even more tomorrow. Leaders create more than they consume and always leave things better than how they found them.

This leadership principle underscores the heightened accountability Amazon leaders bear for the significant impact of their choices.

Amazon seeks leaders capable of transcending business objectives to ensure the company acts ethically and responsibly, even when it conflicts with potential business gains.

Effective leaders must navigate issues that may not be easily quantifiable. Amazon expects its leaders to weigh non-financial consequences of their decisions and assess what is morally right in a holistic manner.

# ****Summary****

From its humble start as an online bookstore to its current stature as a global leader, the Amazon leadership principles have served as a guiding light for its remarkable expansion. Similar to other renowned leadership assessments like the Korn Ferry Leadership Test, the 16 principles of Amazon leadership form the foundation of the company’s every action, playing a significant role in its culture.

Having gone over the Amazon leadership principles, it’s your turn to contemplate their significance and consider how you can effectively convey your strongest qualities during the interview.

Can you provide examples showcasing Amazon’s customer obsession, a value they hold in high regard? And how do you plan to demonstrate to the interviewer that you embody Amazon’s bias for action?

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