

***How to excel during an Amazon interview***

**Rule #1:**

***Leadership Principles***

Know Amazon’s Leadership Principles <http://www.amazon.com/Values-Careers-Homepage/b?node=239365011> ) and know how to respond to these questions using the STAR format (Situation, Task, Action, and Result).

**Situation:** Describe the problem or challenge you encountered.

For example: *We had a financial application that handled financial transactions for the organization that processed payments and returns for us. The technology stack we were using was java for our server side application, Spring MVC, Oracle backend and RESTful Services. Calls into corporate informed us that it was not able to be accessed by our offices nationwide.*

**Task:** What was the task at hand or the solution you came up with to engage the situation.

*We had to investigate what was causing this problem by working with our development team, systems engineers and networking team to isolate the issue.*

**Action:** How did you execute? Did you get others involved, execute alone?

*In working with the other teams, we focused on ruling out basic assumptions first such as physical and network connection issues with our networking team, then we focused on development team and found that the latest release that we had deployed had been tested for functionality but there was no regression testing that had taken place due to time constraints on the release date. This particular error led to a new release in our software that failed to run properly. We were able to simulate our last release in a virtualized environment and utilized both manual regression testing and automated testing framework called mokito to isolate the bug and fix it. The overall time it took to address this issue was 3 hours.*

**Result:** What was the overall outcome and how did it impact the business/client?

*The end result was not only that we could get the company application back online and resume financial transactions, but that we were able to put in documentation in place, and create a system to where all new code is loaded into our virtualized environment and performs end to end (load/regression/integration) testing before new functionality/enhancements are released. In doing so, I was able to move our org to a test driven development environment that has decreased downtime by \_\_\_%*

The questions will not be proposed such as “Tell me when you displayed customer obsession.”, but rather phrased in a way that will target that specific principle. You may hear something such as “Tell me about a time when you simplified a process to cater to a client.” Now this one may cover 2 principles, such as “invent and simplify” and/or “customer obsession”. In this scenario, I would be sure to cover both bases to be on the safe side.

**Rule #2:**

***Ask clarifying questions.***

Some of our questions are vague by design. Whether it is an OOP Design question, or binary tree question, we want to know how methodical you are. Are you able to define use cases and clarify requirements before you start to execute on a solution.

**Example of a good response:**

Question: Can you tell me how a binary tree works?

Sure. Binary trees are typically used to define a labeling function on a node, which associates a value to each node. They are used implement binary search trees and binary heaps and are used for efficient searching and sorting.

**A better response would be:**

Question: Can you tell me how a binary tree works?

Clarifying response: *A binary tree, or a binary search tree? Is the tree balanced or unbalanced?*

**Rule #3:**

***Be prepared.***

Don’t miss the opportunity to brush up on some things. Feel free to do a self-analysis (aka SWOT analysis) to understand what could de-rail your interview, and what you could do to prevent that. What are your strengths, and how can you best highlight those? What are your weaknesses and how can you brush up on those areas? Preparation is key in your success in moving forward with us.

At the end of the interview, which may be 5-10 minutes left, the interviewer will ask if you have any questions. Make sure you research who you will be speaking with and prepare questions that are tailored to them.

**Rule #4:**

***Don’t lose track of time***

When working on a solution, remember that you will have a specified time to design and code your solution. Be thorough to understand the requirements, but also know that you will have to come up with a complete executed solution in the time allotted.

**Rule #5:**

***Learning comes from failure***

Chances are you will be asked about a project or process that did not turn out right, or something that you did wrong and how it affected your team/business/client. This can be very uncomfortable for most people, as this topic can expose flaws. However, even Jeff Bezos has admitted to spending billions on failures (<http://www.businessinsider.com/amazons-jeff-bezos-on-profits-failure-succession-big-bets-2014-12> ) The most important thing is what did you learn, how did you grow, and how did it make you into a better professional today? Don’t hesitate. Take the question head on with a smile and let them know that you are better today for it.

***Good Luck!!!***