
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Inside the head of Jeff Bezos



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgina

And I'm Georgina.

Neil

If you've ever done shopping online, then you may well have used internet giant, Amazon.

Georgina

From its origins as an online bookstore, Amazon has grown into grocery deliveries, TV and music streaming and even space exploration, making its founder, Jeff Bezos, the richest person on Earth.

Neil

Amazon is so successful it affects how many of us live our lives, so in this programme we'll be taking a look inside the brain of Jeff Bezos to find out how he thinks.

Georgina

When Jeff Bezos's friends talk about him, three words they often use are: invention, risk-taking and long-term vision.

Neil

These are qualities which Bezos admired in his grandfather, Lawrence, who from an early age taught Jeff that by careful thinking, any problem can be solved.

Georgina

As a boy, Jeff and his grandfather repaired an old, broken down truck. When interviewed today, Bezos sometimes compares Amazon to that truck: very heavy, but impossible to stop when it rolls downhill... which is exactly what accidentally happened one day!

Neil

But do you know how the story ends, Georgina? That's my quiz question. What happened when the young Jeff Bezos's car accidentally rolled downhill? Was it:

- a) Jeff jumped in and pulled the handbrake?,
- b) Jeff's grandad lost a thumb? or,
- c) Jeff's hair fell out?

Georgina

Well, Jeff Bezos is bald so maybe it's c) his hair fell out.

Neil

OK, Georgina. We'll find out later. As a company, Amazon has been remarkably strong: it survived the dot com crash of 2000 and saw profits jump during the Covid pandemic as more and more people started shopping online.

Georgina

Retail analyst, Natalie Berg, thinks Amazon's success is due to its customer strategy as she explained to BBC Radio 4 programme, 'Seriously':

Natalie Berg

Jeff Bezos applied this concept to Amazon by relentlessly focusing on customers, by **putting them at the heart of** the businesses... that would attract more customers, more **traffic** to its site which would in turn attract more sellers, which would mean a greater selection for customers, which again would enhance the **customer experience**.

Neil

Natalie thinks that Amazon **put** customers **at the heart of** their business – in other words, they make customers the most important part.

Georgina

This improves Amazon's **customer experience** - a customer's total perception of their experience with a business, which includes such things as the quality of service and support if something goes wrong.

Neil

Customers can write reviews on Amazon's website and happy customers mean more web **traffic** – the number of people visiting a particular website.

Georgina

In the difficult years following the dot com crash, Jeff Bezos started Market

Place where other sellers compete with Amazon's own products. More sellers brought more customers which in turn brought down prices.

Neil

Then in 2013, Bezos bought The Washington Post. And in 2019 he launched his space exploration company, Blue Origin, to explore mineral resources on Mars.

Georgina

Most recently, Jeff Bezos has set his sights on even bigger things – saving the future of the planet!

Neil

Bezos chose Tom Rivett-Carnac of the environmental group, Global Optimism, to help Amazon meet Climate Initiative goals aimed at slowing climate change.

Georgina

Here is Tom Rivett-Carnac telling David Baker, presenter of BBC Radio 4's, *Seriously*, about his conversation with Jeff Bezos:

Tom Rivett-Carnac

It did seem to me that it was a **legacy** issue for him, that he wanted to be **on the right side of history**.

David Baker

And you don't think it's just **greenwashing** in the end?

Tom Rivett-Carnac

How do you define that? Would you define **greenwashing** if you said somebody got into this issue 'cos they wanted to improve a reputation of company or an individual? Actually, that is fine. Right? As long as they do something meaningful and deliver a major outcome.

Neil

Protecting the planet is part of Jeff Bezos's **legacy** – the achievements of his life that will continue after he dies.

Georgina

In other words, Bezos wants to be **on the right side of history** - judged to have acted correctly or morally by future generations.

Neil

Ultimately though, it's real action on climate change that counts, not just **greenwashing**. Do you know this new expression, Georgina?

Georgina

Well, I know that 'whitewashing' means trying to hide the truth about something.

Neil

Right - so **greenwashing** means trying to make people believe that your company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.

Georgina

Well, with so many achievements already behind him, I'm sure Jeff has made his grandparents very proud... which reminds me of your quiz question, Neil.

Neil

Ah yes, I asked Georgina what happened when the car Jeff Bezos and his grandad, Lawrence, were fixing accidentally rolled downhill.

Georgina

I thought it was c) that Jeff lost all his hair. Was I right?

Neil

No, you were... wrong, I'm afraid Georgina. The correct answer was b) - that his grandfather lost his thumb.

Georgina

OK, Neil, let's recap the vocabulary, starting with **customer experience** - a customer's feelings about their experience with a business.

Neil

If you **put something at the heart of** things, you make it the most important part.

Georgina

Web **traffic** is the number of people visiting a website.

Neil

Your **legacy** means all your life achievements that will continue after your death.

Georgina

Someone who is **on the right side of history** will be judged positively by future generations.

Neil

And finally, **greenwashing** is when you pretend that your company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.

Georgina

That's all for our peek inside the brain of Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man. Join us again next time when we'll be discussing another trending topic. Bye for now!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY**put (something) at the heart of (something)**

make something or someone the most important part of something else

customer experience

a customer's total perception of their experience with your business; also called 'CX'

(web) traffic

the number of people visiting a particular website

greenwashing

to make people believe that your company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is

(be) on the right side of history

judged to have acted correctly or morally by future generations

legacy

achievements in someone's life that will continue after they die