

Interviewer: Great. Can you tell me about how you found your work with Amazon?

Interviewee: Through Indeed.com.

Interviewer: What is your job with them right now?

Interviewee: I'm not even sure how to answer that. I deliver packages, but it's on an independent contractor like level. [crosstalk 00:02:15] guaranteed anything.

Interviewer: Yeah, and you work with Flex right now specifically, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: As a contractor, do you have a specific manager or somebody that you talk to if something goes wrong?

Interviewee: No, you would just email Amazon Flex Support.

Interviewer: Oh, it's an email? There isn't a phone number or anything, either?

Interviewee: There is when you're actually delivering, you can click Help, and there's a number there. But other than that, if you have issues with the app or something else, then you have to email them. There's no contact number.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Have you had to email them before? Is there a long wait for the response?

Interviewee: Yeah, the response time varies. Sometimes it's a couple hours, sometimes it's two days.

Interviewer: Oh wow. So, sometimes, if it's an emergency or something, you just have to wait, and there's nothing you could do?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's rough.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How long have you worked with Amazon?

Interviewee: I've only been doing this for three weeks.

Interviewer: Oh, you just started.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have other jobs that you do at the same time?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Are they all similar with delivery work? Are they different kinds of work?

Interviewee: No, I'm a respiratory therapist.

Interviewer: Okay, so how do you schedule your week around these two jobs?

Interviewee: As a respiratory therapist, I'm actually casual, so that means I get to basically make my own schedule. I do have an hour commitment at the hospital, but it's only 24 hours a month, so I can really just do what I want. And then I just do Amazon Flex on my days off. Or if there's a day I wanted to work where maybe didn't have a need at the hospital, then I'll just do Amazon Flex.

Interviewer: Do you end up doing that for a full day, or is it part-time?

Interviewee: It's usually in four-hour blocks. Some days I'll do one block, some days I'll do two.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you get to choose sort of what neighborhood you end up in, or does it get assigned to you?

Interviewee: No. So when you accept the block, all you see is a timeframe and the amount of money they'll pay you, and you don't find out where you're going until they give you your packages.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. And then do you always go to the same warehouse or location to pick up packages or does that vary, too?

Interviewee: Yes, I go to the same one. There's actually two right in the same area here, but I've only ever used the one.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Okay. When you started, did you have some kind of training or something you had to do before you started the job?

Interviewee: They do have videos on the app you're supposed to watch. That's the extent of it.

Interviewer: Okay, and it just checks off that you... whether you watched it or not, it just checks off that the video played, I assume.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: There's no quiz or anything at the end?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No. Okay. Did you have to sign some kind of contract while you were doing this?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No. What was the application process like?

Interviewee: Basically, you just fill out your name. I think you have to give them your Social Security number, birthday, things like that, your personal information. Then you take a picture of the front and back of your driver's license. And then it takes about five days, and they do, I guess, some sort of a background check on you and make sure everything's legit, then once it is, they just open the app up to you.

Interviewer: Oh, neat. Do you feel like you had to develop any particular skills to do this job?

Interviewee: Not really. I mean, you have to know how to use a smartphone pretty well. You have to know how to use navigational apps like Google Maps and things like that. So somebody who's not very tech-savvy, wouldn't do well at all.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is there any kind of data that you end up having to log or any kind of tasks that you record while you're doing this?

Interviewee: I do keep a track of my mileage because that's tax-deductible.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Yeah. Does Amazon ask for that or no? You just do that for yourself?

Interviewee: They do not. Yeah, I just do it myself.

Interviewer: With each package is there like a I picked it up check? I took it to the door check? Anything like that?

Interviewee: Yeah, so when you get your packages, you have to scan every single package, and that adds them to an itinerary for you, and it displays them on a map. When you arrive at the house, you've got the click... Their navigation knows if you're within, I guess, so many feet or the range of the delivery address. Once you enter that space, you click I Arrived, and then you scan the package again, and then it gives you a list of options where you left it, like did you give it to a person? Did you leave it at the front door? If you leave it unattended, like at the front door, for example, you have to take a picture of it, and then you swipe to finish.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. The scanner and everything, that's all done through your phone?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Neat. With the map, does it tell you do it in this order, or does it say here's the map, figure out which ones you want to do in what order?

Interviewee: It will give you an order. Sometimes it seems really random, but I think what it is is because certain packages need to be delivered by a certain time. Let's say you had 10 packages, and two of them have a time deadline, but the other ones don't, it'll make

you go to those two first. But there's nothing forcing you to do that. You can see them on the map, and you can make your own route, which is usually what I do.

Interviewer: I see. Okay. With the neighborhoods that you've ended up driving in, have you known them pretty well, or have you had any places that you had to figure out while you were driving?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's pretty much places I haven't really been to.

Interviewer: Oh really? Okay. So you're seeing lots of new spaces.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So with Amazon, how many hours do you try to work for them per week?

Interviewee: I'd say at least 20.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it's five blocks as you had called them?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. They do max you out after 40 hours. I actually did 50 last week, and then you just won't see any more offers available until, I guess, so much time has passed so that you haven't done 40 hours in a week.

Interviewer: Oh. Did you sign up for more? How did you end up doing 50 if they try to block you from it?

Interviewee: I don't know. I really don't know, to be honest. Because that's what I heard from other people that they'll stop you at 40, but I definitely did 50.

Interviewer: There you go. Then did you notice that it wasn't offering you blocks for a bit?

Interviewee: Yeah, after I did the last ones on Monday. Then come Tuesday, it wasn't offering me anything. My husband has the app as well, but he hadn't done as many blocks, and he had a lot of offers.

Interviewer: Oh wow. So you said something must be wrong, something's going on.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Are you able to see them now, or you haven't been able to see blocks still?

Interviewee: No, I am now. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Cool. You mentioned that it's kind of we'll pay you this much for this four-hour block of time and this number of packages. Is it pretty consistent how much you earn an hour, or does it vary a lot?

Interviewee: It varies. Usually, they'll start out a four-hour block at \$80. But if you wait, especially the early morning blocks, like 4:00 AM or the evening blocks, 5:00 PM, those will end up going up sometimes to \$30 an hour or more. It's like if you get them last minute, then I guess if they don't have enough drivers, then they'll just increase the rate.

Interviewer: Oh. Do you try to do that, ever?

Interviewee: Yeah, I usually do. I'll just wait. Because I have another job, so I don't really have to do this. I just do it to make extra money.

Interviewer: Yeah. Does your husband have a strategy? Does he also do that, or is he more planned in when he'll go?

Interviewee: Yeah. He will. He will do that too because he works more than I do full... He works full-time, so he does Flex a little less than I do.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. I guess you've only been there for three weeks, but has anything changed since you started working with them? Like any of the technology or the rules or anything?

Interviewee: So far, no.

Interviewer: So far, no. Have you had to test any new software? When they add features and stuff, do they ever ask you to test any of that?

Interviewee: No, I haven't been asked anything like that.

Interviewer: Okay. How does this job compare to other jobs you've had before?

Interviewee: Honestly, it's wonderful. I like it better than even my regular job because I'm out on my own, doing my own thing. The blocks, the hours are... They range all kinds of different hours so you can pretty much work whenever it's convenient for you. Whereas at the hospital, it's in four-hour increments, and it is what it is. You're on your own. You're in your own car, doing your own thing. Nobody bothers you at all. It's like having no boss, and they pay you twice a week. They pay Tuesdays and Saturdays, so it's like every couple of days, more money just going in your account. It's really great.

Interviewer: Yeah, that sounds like it would be nice. Predictable. It's more predictable than some other stuff, right?

Interviewee: Right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So with this, you kind of mentioned earlier, but do you think about yourself as an employee of Amazon or a freelancer for Amazon, or is it sort of like running a small business?

Interviewee: I would say more like a freelancer. I definitely don't consider myself an employee because there's really no guarantees of anything. And from what I read, I'm on some Facebook groups, they'll deactivate your account at the drop of a dime. You won't even know why. So I don't think it would be good to rely on it and consider yourself an employee in this position. It's fun. It's an easy way to make extra money. That's how I look at it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think you'll still be doing this particular work in a couple of years?

Interviewee: I hope so.

Interviewer: Yeah. Are there other kinds of jobs you'd like to have in the future?

Interviewee: Not right now.

Interviewer: Not right now?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: I have a couple of questions now about the future of work and specifically automation and machines. Do you worry about things like self-driving cars?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No. If you were told that Amazon was going to try to automate part of this job by having some self-driving cars do the delivery, would that make you interested or would you be nervous?

Interviewee: I wouldn't be nervous, so I guess that would be interested.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you imagine Amazon doing something like that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, actually, I missed one question that I wanted to ask you, which was, so I found you through a Facebook group. How did you end up finding the Facebook groups? Have they been helpful to you?

Interviewee: How did I find it? I found the group just through the search on Facebook. I figured there were probably groups out there. And then has it been useful? I would say yes because there's a lot of people that have been doing this for ranges of amounts of time, and people seem to know a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah. Have you ended up asking for advice there with an issue with Amazon? Have you posted there instead of emailing Amazon before?

Interviewee: No. I did post there the other day asking because there's... Remember I was saying there's two distribution centers right next to each other where I live?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So I asked people about the one I haven't been to because I heard they give you a lot more packages, but then I was wondering if maybe they keep you more local. So I did ask that question on there, and I did get some feedback that was kind of mixed.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you don't feel like you have an answer yet?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: It's still a mystery. Yeah. Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Awesome. Thank you so much for talking to me. I'm going to stop the recording device now.