

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

Interviewee: I found my work with Amazon via indeed.com, it was under a sub company that works for them. So I wanted to make that clear real quick. I was working at Amazon, but I was also working under another company, like a delivery courier service for them.

Interviewer: Oh cool. I'd love to talk about both of them. That's really helpful. Okay, so were you working with Amazon first and then you started with the courier company?

Interviewee: No, I started with them first and then they just kind of ... I don't know, Amazon kind of took over the payment for them instead.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: I know how that worked. Because at first when I applied to that, they're like, "You'll be delivering for Amazon." And I'm like, "Oh cool." And they said, "Well, it's going to be \$15 an hour." I'm like, "That's great. That's fine." That was fantastic. I was making really good money there for awhile. And they had us working on ... even those hours weren't grinding and terrible. And next thing you know, within a couple of months, they're saying, "Hey, so Amazon took over our payments and so we'll be now paying at an hourly rate of like \$141.75.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Interviewee: Yeah, so a good chunk of our group, because we had this massive group, we were the biggest one in there to deliver for them, practically walked out.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And they also increased a lot of our delivery loads and just ... oy vey, it got kind of nightmarish.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. How long ago did this happen? Like, what was the timeline of you working in the first thing and then it changing and then ... yeah.

Interviewee: I do believe I was working for Amazon around 2015, 2016. I could check my resume at the time. That was right around the time I had lost my mother, so around, I want to say, July through August, I was working that job back to back with my landscaping job, and then landscaping job ended and I did that most of the ... like, full part time I guess, or full time, in a way.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And so they would have us deliver from six o'clock in the morning or like seven once the vans were loaded. We'd have to load our own vans, sorry, and then we would have to get back by hopefully five or six o'clock.

Interviewer: Wow. Because they wouldn't pay you for more time than that, right? Is that what you were saying?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow. Were you usually able to do it in that time? That sounds like a lot of work.

Interviewee: Pretty much. Like, they would allow you like an hour. I think an hour, thirty minutes to an hour of lunch, and then you got to make sure you keep going. The biggest thing was, if you went to an apartment complex, at the time, not a lot of people had Amazon lockers. They didn't have those. So there was one instance where I went to deliver to an apartment complex. They had two buildings. I parked right in front of a leasing office. The manager walks up to me, I'm like, "I'm sorry, sir. I'm parking in the fire zone, my apologies. I will get this done as soon as I can." And he's like, "Yeah, no problem." "Well, sir, per the request of most of the recipients of their packages, they are requesting that I leave them with you in the leasing office, may I go ahead and release these packages to you?" "Absolutely not." "Sir, again, I'd like to state, this has been requested by the customers to be released today, at least [inaudible 00:06:06] looks like a lot of stuff in this area." "That's not my problem, sweetheart. I'm not Amazon. And what I could do is give you the code to the buildings and you can go ahead and leave it throughout the building." And I'm like ...

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Okay. So I contacted Amazon. I'm like, "Hey. So I'm at the site, and, again, a lot of these recipients are saying do not leave outside their doors due to a lot of theft issues, and the person won't let me take it to the leasing office, should we try back another day when I get there earlier, on like a Saturday?" "No. Go ahead and attempt delivery, and if you are able to hide the packages, then you can do so, or try to leave them at the door." I'm like-

Interviewer: Where?

Interviewee: You're kidding. That took a lot out of my day. They had to do what's called a rescue, where another worker will have to take a good chunk of your packages to get them done. I'm like ...

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Amazon, this manager, they both screwed me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Wow. And there's nothing you could do about that. Yeah, you're stuck. Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah, and if you deliver anything, they'll get you to do it the next day, and thus the customers are like, "You told me that this was the same day delivery, or Amazon Prime, [inaudible 00:07:32]." So I'm getting-

Interviewer: Yelled at. Oh man.

Interviewee: Like, [inaudible 00:07:36] for nothing. So I'm like, "Come on."

Interviewer: Yeah. So with this one, when you had to talk to someone about this issue, could you call a human, or what did you have to do to file the issue?

Interviewee: We would get assigned these things, these modules called rabbits. They're like the GPS, and they also get in reach of the customer service. So I would talk to a human, and nine times out of 10 it would either be someone who's also working from home, or someone from the actual company.

Interviewer: Wow. So it's also someone who's like, "I wish I could help you but ... "

Interviewee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: They were like, "Let me go ahead and contact my higher up to see what they want to do", because they've been taught certain procedures on their side. So it was, what, nine times out of 10 it would be okay, but most of the time it was like, "Um, no?"

Interviewer: Yeah. And I guess when you run into a more serious problem, like the one you described, where it's like, how does this end, what is the solution, it seems like it would take many layers up to try to figure out what to do, and even they don't have that much control over it, right?

Interviewee: Nope. I think one of the worst ones ... I wouldn't say worst, because, well, I didn't know I couldn't do it at the time, but usually they'd have you set certain route, to a certain area, and for me in [state], I was up in the northern, north area, like [incorrect town], sorry, [town 1], [town 2], I want to say [town 3], but, like I've said, really up there, like orchard plains, and one of them had me go to [town 4], and I'm like, "Whoa, that's way out there. Okay."

So I'm driving and it's the last stop and I'm like, "Okay." And I get a call from my dispatch, it was like, "Hey, we're seeing that you're kind of going way out there. Where are you going?" I'm like, "[town 4]." "Why are you going to [town 4]?" I'm like, that's what it said to go. They put this on my route." "[Interviewee name], you're not supposed to go to [town 4]." "Well, why was it on my truck?" "I don't know. But if you can turn around." "I'm sorry, I'm already there. Is that okay?" It's like, "Fine. Go ahead and deliver the package, but I'll make sure to tell Amazon not to put you out there when you're not supposed to, because we have a set route and the GPS reads where you're going. So if you're not on the route, that could really hurt you. And I'm like, "Then next time make sure that all these don't go to outside the route, please?"

Interviewer: Yeah. Wow. It seems like it would know to not do that. I'm surprised that that happened.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, that was only one time though. Thank God. I'm sorry, I'm over talking, you haven't been asking questions-

Interviewer: Oh, no, this is great, no. So with your job, is this a full time, 40 hours a week you work for Amazon, or do you have other jobs that you do at the same time now?

Interviewee: So I no longer work for Amazon. This was years ago. I had to split due to a lot of the physical, I don't want to say physical, toils, like ...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I developed sciatica as well as, what was it, [inaudible 00:11:09], so my knees would actually go out of place.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah. It was a lot of getting in and out of the van. The benefit was I lost 60 pounds, but ...

Interviewer: Yeah, but all this other stuff.

Interviewee: Unfortunately ... oh, yes, I'm sorry?

Interviewer: No, no. I said, but all this other stuff added up. That's not great. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, because we lost a good chunk of our workers, they had to give us two routes, so I would either be in [town 5] and then I'm like, "Okay, I'm in [town 5], that's done", I would then go to like [town 6], I'm like, "Oh boy." And just, it would double up. And they didn't really have a lot of insurance options for couriers. If they weren't of Amazon, then they wouldn't count, but I don't think they had a lot of insurance offers for us because we were of another company working under them. They're like, "Well, you've got to figure out your own thing", and because we're part time, you don't get the insurance anyway. I was part time at the time. So they would call me in saying, "Hey, can you work on Saturday? We'll offer you an extra \$25", and I'm like, "This is my day off, you've had me work back to back to back for like a good couple of weeks at a time, I can't do this." But they're like, "Amazon's offering it, so we just need to get this stuff done." If there was a massive thunderstorm, there was a hailstorm a while back that [state] had massive damage everywhere, hoo boy, we had to bring in most of our packages. And a good chunk of our vans got damaged. But Amazon said, like, "Hey, can you get it out the next day?" It's like, "We have to repair this van."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: "Well, can you use your own cars?" "No, we're a courier service. We have vans issued to us. We're not going to use our cars to do so, because those who have used their ... they have people who come in with their own cars, give them a set amount of packages to go, and they're done, they don't ensure that they won't be broken into and have the

packages stolen, because that has happened to a good chunk of people. And I don't remember if they got docked pay for it. But I know a couple of those freelance workers were like, "Yeah, someone broke into my car and stole packages." And then Amazon would fault them for it. And I'm like, "Are you serious? That's not fair." And, like, there were some issues that I'm like, "Amazon, what the heck?" But yeah, I'll stop there, [inaudible 00:14:01].

Interviewer: Yeah, of course. So, okay. So you had vans through your courier service that were not provided by Amazon. I guess with all the tracking and GPS and stuff, did you have to use your phone or did you have a separate device for that?

Interviewee: Both. They had devices called rabbits, and the rabbits would track, yeah, they would track, they would scan the packages and make sure it gets to your location. So it's like a GPS, and once you arrive and you make sure it's the person you're delivering to or have someone sign for it, and you scan it and you release the package. And one day servers were down for everybody. These rabbits [inaudible 00:14:41] servers, and everyone had to download the app onto their phone and then use it to get it to scan that way. But what would happen, instead of scanning it with like a infrared, a beam, you would have to take a picture of it and they would get sent to their servers right there. The problem with it was it used a lot of battery power, so you couldn't really take it in and out of the car, and you had risk of dropping it or your data got eaten up alive because it wouldn't run on wifi.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, so ...

Interviewer: Was that for one day, or how long did it take them to fix it?

Interviewee: Three days.

Interviewer: Wow, a really long time.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And what sucks is ... now, I can't say that's bad for the company, because that makes sense. If you drop one of those things and you broke them, they would dock \$155 from your paycheck.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: [inaudible 00:15:51] three of those at once, not at the same time, but in separate instances. So I would go from like, 400, \$500 checks, to 200, 300 because of how much they docked from it, and I'm like, "Oh my god, no."

Interviewer: Wow. Yeah, wow, that's scary. Yeah. That's a lot of money.

Interviewee: They were not forgiving.

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: And what was it? Oh my God, there was another one I can think about. Oh yeah. It was great for a while, Amazon wasn't too keen on parking tickets. So I tried not to. I had an instance where I had park in a non parking zone. I don't know where to park, it was downtown [city], [inaudible 00:16:34] help us all. And so when I got back there was, of course, a ticket on my van that was for 200, I think, \$280.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And luckily, we could [inaudible 00:16:46] to Amazon, they paid for it. And there was a lot of cases where other drivers, they kept getting hit with parking ticket issues. So after a while, instead of Amazon paying for it, they're like, "Yeah, no, if you get a ticket, you're paying for it."

Interviewer: Hmm. Interesting.

Interviewee: I'm like, yeah, everyone's like, "Wait, I can't pay for this. What the heck? I thought you guys were going to take care of it." Like, "Yeah, no, we're not doing it anymore." So a lot of [inaudible 00:17:13] our drivers ... ugh, my words got killed there for two seconds. A good chunk of our drivers also left because of that, because it's like, I don't know if it was because they're lazy, but again, they couldn't afford paying a good chunk of the payments, those parking tickets.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So, yeah. It was a lot.

Interviewer: So I wanted to ask, when your job transitioned from being that you worked for a specific courier service to working for Amazon, did you have like a new contract or agreement or something that you had to sign?

Interviewee: Surprisingly, no. Which is the weird thing. I was like, "If we're working under you now, you would think that would happen." But no, it did not.

Interviewer: Hmm, oh, interesting. Okay. And did the technology that you use end up changing a lot, you say you had the rabbit? Was it always the same device and things?

Interviewee: My apologies. Your phone was having like a weird warbly thing, could you repeat-

Interviewer: Oh, sorry, yes. So when your job changed from being the courier service to being Amazon, was it always the rabbit or did the technology change that you were using?

Interviewee: It was still the rabbit, and they gave us these post-it notes to say, "Hey, we attempted delivery, please contact this instead of this, or contact me." Nine times out of 10 they would have us give them our phone number. And I'm like, "I don't feel comfortable with someone calling me mad about not getting their package", but they're like, "Well, if you

can do that, but if not, tell them the customer service number and we'll call you instead."

Luckily, there was only one incident where I had one of the receivers call me in a huff, like, "Well, why didn't you deliver the package here? You just left it out in the open." I'm like, "Sir, I do apologize, as it seemed like you had a dog that you did not state on your delivery notes for the driver to be wary of, I could not put it back there for risk of the dog chewing up and destroying it. So I did try to hide it as best I can. Not out in the open, but the best I could. So actually, sir, you said you looked everywhere on the porch, right?" Like, "Yeah, I looked everywhere on the porch, where was it?" I'm like, "Sir, if you look over there in the very left corner behind a flower pot", and he's like, "I looked, I didn't ... oh." "Yeah, I left it in the corner behind a flower pot as best as I could to make it inconspicuous from other people from taking it." "Well, um, okay, well, thanks. Sorry for calling you in a huff." I'm like, "Yeah, no problem [inaudible 00:20:09], it's okay, you have a great day." Oy vey.

Interviewer: Yeah, I bet. So you also mentioned that with all the drivers kind of leaving, did Amazon try to refill those roles with more of what you refer to as the kind of freelance folks, like the Amazon Flex Prime Now folks?

Interviewee: Yes and no. They would depending if one of their ... what they call the packers, there was the receivers, the people who work more in the packaging department. They can say like, "Hey, do you want to deliver instead to them?" And sometimes they will leave that part, they'll come work with us instead. And I'm like, "Well, why didn't you just stay with them? They said, "Well, they gave me an option, I could stay and still load vans with packages and stuff like that, or I could deliver with [inaudible 00:21:00]. And I was like, "So I was just making sure, that was an option, right? You could choose to do that?" "They said it was an option, but it didn't really feel like one, so kind of mandatory?" Like, "Are you serious? Do you know how to do this?" It's like, "No." "All right, fine. I'll train you. Come on." So we would have occasional people we would train from their packaging plant in the warehouse to deliver instead.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. What did you have to do to train them? What would you show them to do?

Interviewee: So we would have them come with us on a route and show them how to make the delivery. We were like, "Okay, so you drive to the site, you make sure you're in the area, because on the phone you have to be within a certain radius for the GPS to pick up your location saying that this is the delivery area. If you're anywhere out of there, you cannot deliver, you can not make the delivery, and sometimes the frickin device would, even if you're there, would be like, "You're not in the spot, you're not there", so you're trying to finagle and turn it on and make sure it's reading where you're at, which was frustrating. And then you're like, "Well, make sure this matches the name and the address of the person you're talking to, and once it's been confirmed that this is the person you're delivering to here in the area and you're able to leave it in a safe place, scan the package and then put it down somewhere inconspicuous so you can hide it. Make sure you find somewhere, like to the side, and then make sure you leave a post-it note saying we attempted delivery, or you left the package in a certain area that they can find it, you know?"

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And then they're like, "Okay, I guess that's not too bad." But we still get occasionally, like, "Hey, can you rescue me? I'm falling behind. I am not able to get to this area in time." So it varied.

Interviewer: Yeah. And was there other information you had to record on the device when you were making a delivery?

Interviewee: Definitely. Oh yeah. I remember I got chewed up by this person, but this was their fault. They did not tell me that their daughter was sick, they were home alone, and they had a dog. So I'm knocking on their door, I'm able to be told to ring the doorbell three times, so I rang it three times and I clearly saw that no one's home, so I was about to leave the package. [inaudible 00:23:17], apparently he was home, [inaudible 00:23:19] and he just walked out with his kids, like, "What is wrong with you? Why on earth would you ring my doorbell so many times? Don't you see I have a kid home and I have my dog going nuts now?" And I'm like, "I'm sorry, sir", "Why would you do that?" And he just kept going on and on.

I'm like, "First of all, watch your tone. I do apologize for my own professional behavior right now, but I'm going to come back to you like this. One, I did not know you had a sick child, that was not stated for me on my device, because that's your job to put it there as a warning, like, "Hey, I have a child home, I have a dog that barks, do not ring my doorbell." That's usually your thing to do. Two, I don't really appreciate you talking to me like this. So next time I'll make a note, if you have any packages, to leave them on your front door, wherever everyone can reach and see. Is that fine?" "Yeah, whatever. I don't care. Just never do that again." "Duly noted. So then I would make a note, like, "Do not knock on this person's door. Just drop it off in front of the door. Whatever happens, happens, per his permission. And three, you have a wonderful day." And I took off and just walked off there.

So we're supposed to get information from the recipient for saying, "Hey, slight warning, I got a child, or do not knock on my door, I got a dog, da da da da da." And then they were like, "Well, can you make a note of saying where I want you to do deliver to or how I want you to deliver it from now on? Make a note on there, and then it would go for other drivers like, "Oh, okay, make sure for another driver, another note, do not knock on this person's door, or they have a really big terrifying dog or insert X here." So it would kind of be like a trade off, I guess, or a word of mouth thing. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's up to both the sender and the driver to make notes back to back, saying to another driver, "Do not deliver or here's the instructions for this person", but because he didn't do that, no one else did it, I'm kind of left in the dark, so I'm like, "Well, [inaudible 00:25:17]."



Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Luckily, that one [inaudible 00:25:19] Amazon's like, "We took care of that customer, we heard that he yelled at you, da da da, we made sure to make him make note that he should make sure to tell us how things are in his household." "Thank you", but no one got docked pay for it, thank God, because of that one time, but, yeah, it's really like a, I guess ... you know the word symbiotic?

Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. So while you were working with them, did you have to test any new features or software?

Interviewee: Surprisingly no.

Interviewer: No? Okay. And then I guess it sounds like you were in an interesting place with employment with Amazon and indirectly through something else. Did you think of yourself as an employee of Amazon or was it sort of like you were freelance working for Amazon or how did you think about that relationship?

Interviewee: I thought it was more for Amazon than the courier service, because nine times out of 10 my courier service wouldn't really be much of a hassle, so much as Amazon dictated a lot of our pay, a lot of the rules we had to follow under, a lot of limitations of what we could do and how they wanted us to do it. So I felt more like I was working for Amazon than the courier service.

Interviewer: Yeah. And when did you end up leaving this job?

Interviewee: I left in September of 2017? No, yes, I do apologize. I can check my Indeed right now.

Interviewer: That's okay. That's okay. Don't worry at all. But it's been ... mostly, I wondered if it's been a couple of years, so it's been a couple of years. Do you still do delivery work now?

Interviewee: Alas, I cannot, my body cannot keep up, especially where my left leg is concerned. That is not possible. I do miss it though. I loved every bit of it beside the whole how they ran things. I just like being outside and driving.

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I was going to ask if you enjoyed the job or would you like to do something similar in the future? I guess not with deliveries-

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: But some other kind of driving.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, I would definitely love to drive. I don't know about trucking. That terrifies the hell out of me because I've heard people just drive for days on end and have to do things to keep themselves awake. No. But if it's like vans or delivering medical equipment or maybe, again, there's like smaller packages or food delivery, be it not my own car, but someone else's car. Sorry.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I would totally do that, because I love being outside, that was like a relaxing thing for me. I get to see new areas and new places, so yeah, I would totally do delivery again if I had a choice.

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh, and I forgot to ask, did you have like a specific manager who gave you your assignments, or how would you figure out what your assignments were?

Interviewee: So Amazon ... I'm going to answer that with two ways. Both are correct. Hear me out.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: So for courier service, we did have managers. We had a manager at the time, but then he was doing something shady, so he got kicked off. So he would tell us this is where Amazon wanted us to go. Amazon always dictated the route of the areas and the districts they wanted us to go. So I technically had two managers, I guess?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Or they'd also have one of our drivers be like, "Okay, if you're not going to deliver, you be the dispatch this day or this day." And so it would kind of vary, like one day it's this person, the other day it's this person, then it'd be this person, I was like, "Eh", does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. So my last questions are about the future of work. Do you worry about things like self driving cars?

Interviewee: A little bit? Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: I don't know. Not because I'm like, "Oh God, technology or electronics is taken over my life", it's more like I don't really think it's a good idea for self driving, because electronics are still built by human beings. They're still flawed in a way. So there's always going to be a glitch.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I know it sounds weird, but I would still comfortable were it be more, I guess, human error than electrical error, because it's like, well, we can't blame the technology, I mean, we can't blame the electronics, it just had a bad day. Whereas more like, "You turned here, you're under the " ... I don't know how to explain it. I feel uncomfortable with self driving cars. I mean, yeah, it would be beneficial for elderly people involved if they want to drive, they want to get somewhere, but I don't trust that if something's running on a schedule or a program, I don't think it will allow any sort of discrepancies or allowances of the person who it's for. Again, like elderly people or kids or, you know

what I mean? Because it's like you're on a protocol. It's on a protocol, on an electronic protocol. It has to be here, like I said, at a time or a certain way, and if the person who is in the self driving car is not able to function or is not able to do that, it's going to leave them behind. Whereas I have to wait for this person for 10 minutes, but is that because they're old or they're young or they're disabled or unable, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, for sure.

Interviewee: So probably not, [inaudible 00:31:17] self driving.

Interviewer: Yeah, no worries. Could you imagine Amazon trying to use self driving cars in their fleet?

Interviewee: You know, I kind of can, which sucks, because it's Amazon. They're taking over everything. I mean, look at Bezos, come on. I think one day he wanted to be like, "I want to be a dragon when I grow up." And someone's like, "You can't be a dragon." And now he's got all this fricking cash under him, of course he's now a dragon. So I have heard a lot worse from other drivers or other locations, that they couldn't go to the bathroom, they had to get back [inaudible 00:31:55]. We had a lot of leniency. I will say that. We had a lot of leniency, but other places around the nation are much worse. I'm like, "Damn, we had it good, didn't we?" Yeah, I can totally see Amazon doing that self driving car thing.

Interviewer: How did you learn about how the other experiences were, do you know people driving in other cities or ...

Interviewee: Let's see, there was, of course, reports on TV, certain channels, definitely where they had that whole fiasco online a while back where Amazon is not paying their drivers, they're not taking care of their drivers, if certain conditions were not met they would get fired, and not just for drivers, but also for those who would do the packaging and loading in the plant and stuff like that. I heard tons of stuff from there, but I've also heard from other drivers [inaudible 00:32:49] be like, "Man, things they do to us and don't allow us to get away with. Well, obviously you still get away with, but it's been a lot of stress and they cut down our hours, and they cut down our payments and cut down the salaries." It's like, ooh, that's bad.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. We got through all my questions. Thank you so much for your time.

Interviewee: No problem.

Interviewer: I'm going to stop recording now.