

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

Interviewee: Yeah. I have a neighbor and the neighbor was telling me ... Well I drive for a couple other shared driver pool services and I was telling her that certain times a day I don't make as much money. She had a friend who's also a mom and her friend was doing Amazon Flex and she was saying that she gets paid up to 18 to \$25 an hour. Oh well that's nice. So I put in an application, I don't think they were hiring immediately, but they opened a hub that's about 30 minutes from me, like a distribution center-

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They gave me a call and the interview process was pretty fast.

Interviewer: Was it over the phone?

Interviewee: It's been over a year, so I'm trying to remember.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Most of it was online. I don't remember if I spoke with anyone-

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But there was an interview process unlike these other ride share companies, it's totally online, and it's very basic. The other ride share services are background check, insurance, car registration. Boom you're good.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That's it. This was a little bit of ... I feel like it was something like, "What's your work experience?" There was a little bit of personality type questions, but it was all online. It was more in depth than just like, "Hey, you're legal, you know?"

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So much more than that.

Interviewer: Did you do it through a website or did you do it through an app on your phone?

Interviewee: Through my phone. I think they sent an app. That's how I remember it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. You said that your job with them is that you've been driving with Amazon Flex specifically, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned other ride share ones. What other ride share groups do you work with?

Interviewee: Uber and Lyft at this point.

Interviewer: Okay. Are these your three? You work for Uber, Lyft, and then you also do Amazon Flex?

Interviewee: Yeah. Then I also work as a crochet artist. So I'm actually ... You're about to hear me start sewing.

Interviewer: Oh cool.

Interviewee: While we're talking.

Interviewer: No, sounds great. Sounds great. How do you schedule your week between these three jobs?

Interviewee: I do what I want.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: How do I schedule it? When the kids are at school, I typically would do ride share, but I've been having an asthma flare up so I've just been doing stuff at home instead.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So ... Well, and I have vendor fairs coming up. Typically though ... I like these jobs because they're extremely flexible.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So I have not worked Amazon for a few months. Amazon's like, "Hey, come back, it's Thanksgiving. So come back." I mean to look into that, but I don't like to work the Amazon job until it pays \$25 an hour because I drive 30 minutes out there without getting paid and then I have to put at least \$20 of gas in my car and then I may drive an hour away and then be out in the fucking boonies.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Maybe not able to get Uber, Lyft fares back home to make money to recoup my gas. I don't like that anymore. Yeah.

Interviewer: If I wasn't doing Lyft and Uber, I think I'd be more okay with doing Amazon Flex more regularly.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: But because I see that gas money come out and I see that it's not there and I don't get paid for like, this is stupid, I feel immature saying this, but I don't get paid for three days. So I feel like, "Why is it taking you so long to pay me?" When I know in a real job I'd be waiting weeks, but my delay of gratification has gotten so low with money.

Yeah, I understand. When you started, were you taking a lot of blocks up front with Amazon and just trying to do a lot of work with them?

Interviewee: Well I started Amazon Flex third ... I feel like I was doing several blocks a week, but my availability has changed. So I am now available really seven days a week to work. At least five days a week while the kids are in school. Then all day on weekends if I choose. But I have kids, I do these jobs so I can be invested in them and in their life. So I liked the flexibility because of it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So last year when I started, it was more of a part time thing. The kids were only in school half days, four days a week. I still had weekends. So my availability has changed a lot. Also the times that I want to work has changed a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Does that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yeah absolutely. Do you still end up working on weekends now?

Interviewee: I try not to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: If I have to make money, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I try not to.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because I crochet, I've been trying to save up for vendor fairs and my son has been doing soccer and so I wanted to be at soccer and doing that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Soccer mom. I have a mini van. I'm a soccer mom.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah I like it though.

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: I have thought about doing more with Amazon because it's a guaranteed amount of money and there are times of the day driving Lyft and Uber that it's not very good money. I usually bank on between Lyft and Uber making about \$14 an hour at slow time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But when it's busy I make anywhere between 20 to 30 something.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It makes it hard to go to Amazon and put some money out and then, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. When you started with Amazon, was there some training or you know, introduction that you had to go through before you started driving with Flex?

Interviewee: They did through an app they had training videos.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So you had to go through all the training videos and they covered a variety of different topics and I've forgotten about half of them.

Interviewer: Yeah. When or if something went wrong on a Flex trip, did you have a manager or someone that you could talk to?

Interviewee: Oh, that's tricky. You have to have WiFi and there's places where there are dead spots in [state], because it's very rural in some places and so you can't get WiFi connection. So if I don't have continual WiFi connection, I have no way to call back to the supervisor. I have no way to call the company. I literally have to drive and find WiFi to be able to call. Say there's an issue, deliver the next package. I mean it's a lot. So after that happened once or twice, I started to screenshot what packages are on the list. I would go off the GPS and when I found WiFi again, I would call them and tell them what packages I've already delivered, which doesn't go through their system accurately because you're supposed to scan. When you deliver the thing, you're supposed to scan it and take a picture and they verify how many packages you have and they use a GPS indicator to make sure that you're at the right address.

But there was a day that I lost almost an hour, but I don't recoup that money and I couldn't call anyone and my phone wouldn't work because there was no WiFi or nothing. No LTE, no 3G, no 5G. Nothing. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Does that answer that?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Did you-

Interviewee: That was frustrating and that is one of the reasons that I'm like, "If I lose connection with Lyft or Uber, the GPS will still generally send me to where I was going. With Amazon because there are so many steps to the process, it does not continue and then I just lose time and money, which is not what I'm there for.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. When you started the job, did you have to sign a contract or anything?

Interviewee: That I would work a certain amount or ...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Certain time?

Interviewer: Or just anything. Was there some written agreement or something that you had to read and sign?

Interviewee: Yeah, I get a 1099. I have to present my social security card and address and insurance and all those things. So yeah, I mean I think that counts as signing. I did sign something on the phone.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I didn't sign a piece of paper. I signed on the phone.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. That makes sense. Do you feel they were skilled-

Interviewee: I am.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I am considered an independent contractor. I'm not an employee. I don't get a W2.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Do you feel there were skills you had to develop to do the Amazon Flex work?

Interviewee: Yes. Yeah. So I have a mini van and there are different lengths of blocks that you can work, I've never done one of the Whole Foods ones, but Whole Foods blocks usually run an hour to two hours depending. Then delivery blocks all over the state. They run between three to five hours at with 30 minute increments. So you could do a three, a three and a half, four, four and a half, five. Well it fluctuates like each block pays differently. Each time slot for each block pays differently depending on what their needs are.

So when I first started I would take any block, whatever the highest paying block was and then I would just go do it. I found when I had three hour blocks that I was able to complete those blocks in two and a half to two hours and 45 minutes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Which is better for me because I get paid the same amount of money no matter how quickly I finish it. When I would take five hour blocks because I didn't have a good system of how to sort the packages, they would take me five and a half, sometimes six hours. So I would be making less money per hour. So I stopped taking five hour blocks. I now do three to three and a half, sometimes a four if I'm really just desperate for money.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't like to do the fours. I really like to finish in two and a half, two hours, 45 minutes. That's better.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see [inaudible 00:16:55] we answered a couple of these already. Are there different kinds of data that you ended up having to record or track for Amazon while you were working?

Interviewee: Like what? What do you mean?

Interviewer: So you mentioned scanning packages when you put them in your car and I assume when you leave them, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Then also the GPS was there sometimes, I guess when it wasn't cutting out.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But were there other ways that they were monitoring what you were doing or you had to say like, "I've completed this task or anything like that."?

Interviewee: So the way that it shows that you've completed this task is that it's GPS tracked.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They can see what house you're at, what neighborhood, honestly, which door you're at. They can see if I'm in a condo complex or something apartment complex, they know down to five, 10 feet away. Am I at the right door? Am I at the wrong door? They know. I mean it's not 100% but it's really, really accurate when it's accurate.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So, yeah I'm monitored just like that. Repeat the question again.

Interviewer: Oh sure. No I wondered if there was stuff that you had to log in the app when you were doing things or that Amazon was telling you like, "We're tracking your location," which you answered, but were there other things that they were like, "We want to know how long it took you to do this or ...?"

Interviewee: They don't tell me how long it took me to ... It is like that, but it doesn't feel like that they word it differently.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So when we're at the distribution center, we get X, Y, Z amount of packages. So three hour blocks depending on how far away I drive in the state, I'm going to have anywhere between 21 to 45 packages.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Someone somewhere built an algorithm somehow-

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That maps out the order of the houses you should go to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They give you explicit directions on how to get there and it's their own GPS system. You can override the system and sometimes I need to, and I'll use Google Maps or Waze, but their GPS system will still try to tell me to turn around. But sometimes they'll take me out into the fucking woods. I mean like-

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Going up some dirt alley with a date? No, it doesn't work like this Amazon, it just doesn't work like this. Sometimes they'll try and take me into gated communities I'm not able to get into.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's, yeah. So Amazon's GPS is problematic in that way, but it is very accurate about where the door is. The only way that I've seen variants to that is sometimes people will deliver multiple packages in the same apartment complex or apartment building and they'll gather a number of packages together and so if the person before you has chosen to deliver multiple packages and carry them rather than driving, it may not give you the exact house number. It seems to go off of what other drivers have done in the past. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. No, that's great. That's perfect. I want to-

Interviewee: It'll tell me about how long it'll take to get from one place to the next too.

Interviewer: Oh good. That must be helpful.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Wait, so have you had to test any new software or features on the app since you've worked for them?

Interviewee: Oh, that's a good question. Maybe early on.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know. Once you're learn a new system, I forget the old one.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense. Has anything changed since you started working with Amazon?

Interviewee: I don't know if this is because the seasons fluctuated or not.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I feel I got paid better when I first started working. They were paying more for blocks when I first started working, but I have not checked it. This is the same season that I started working and so I don't know how much of that was seasonal based on demand because the holidays are coming.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Has anything changed? I see Flex drivers around more.

Interviewer: Oh really? Like in your neighborhood and stuff?

Interviewee: Yeah it's funny.

Interviewer: How do you recognize them?

Interviewee: They do my job.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. I don't recognize their faces. I just know what the job is. We'll usually drive either a vehicle, some of them will wear, there's been a couple of people who've gotten hit by vehicles, while they're picking up at the distribution center. So when that happened, they insisted that we wear fluorescent color vests, like safety vests.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Sometimes the people who are delivering will be wearing the safety vests so that they don't get run over.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah, that makes sense. Very visible then.

Interviewee: I know. I know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I tend to not do that. I tend to stupidly wear my plain clothes because I don't really like wearing neon vests that are ill-fitting and ...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: But they're easy. You're easy to notice when you're wearing a fluorescent vest in the neighborhood and stopping at every house.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, that's true. Okay. So my last few questions are about future of technology and future of work. How do you feel self driving cars?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No?

Interviewee: Hard no.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean ... It's a nice safety feature. Say if someone was to fall asleep on the road. There was an unfortunate incident. This is with my other job with Uber. There was a truck driver that fell asleep and hit a bus driver. I drive the bus driver's cousin a lot. She's in my neighborhood and she was days from retirement. She was beloved by the kids she drove and because this truck driver was exhausted and fell asleep, he hit the bus and it was a really, really bad accident. It was really bad.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So for that reason I think self driving cars would be good but I don't think that self driving cars should replace humans. I don't think they should.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Because this is an industry that it's low entry requirement, you know you have to be able to drive, you have to not have tickets. It's not hard. You could speak another language. It's easy for immigrants to come and do this. It's easy for house moms to come and do this. It's not brain surgery. So it's unskilled work, but it pays okay. I think that there's a lot of people in our communities that need something flexible. So for these reasons, I absolutely oppose self driving cars.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you imagine Amazon or Uber wanting to use self driving cars?

Interviewee: Oh hell yeah. Listen, they're greedy as fuck. Come on.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Are you serious? Yes. I'm sorry. You have to ask the question. Yes. They would do it if they could. All these rich, greedy fuckers they would get rid of. They was just, Oh my God. Do they want us dead? Oh my God, please.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They don't care.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They would absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Especially the old Uber executive. I mean, Jeff Bezos shit. He doesn't give a fuck about people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: He doesn't.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: He has. I can't. Okay I'm ...