

Interviewer: So to get into the questions, how did you find your work with Amazon?

Interviewee: I actually just, I'm in law school basically. I just jumped on indeed and stuff and they were, it was one of the applications that they're applying for or you're accepting applications.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Of course. It took about four months to be like, put through the process when they accepted new application.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Interviewee: Yeah. There's a huge backlog of people that are applying right now.

Interviewer: Oh I see.

Interviewee: They do major hirings like around Amazon Prime Day, in the summer and obviously like for Black Friday.

Interviewer: Yeah. So how long have you been working with Amazon?

Interviewee: I... yesterday I figured out there's March, 2017 is when I first, when I first did my first, the delivery.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Interviewee: Back when they were, they were still doing the food service at that point.

Interviewer: Okay. And, you said that... So you applied four months before that and it took that long?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was November, 2017 that I sent him the application.

Interviewer: Oh, so did you send everything at once and then you just had to wait in silence?

Interviewee: I sent in the application and then yeah. They wait with your background process? It's like they basically just, you submit your stuff and they wait to accept.

Interviewer: What did you have to send them as part of the application?

Interviewee: I'm trying to, they wanted a picture of her driver's license. The basic information is normal on a form and then car registration.

I believe that was it. I don't remember if he required insurance or not. So the other apps do, but...

Interviewer: But this one maybe not? Yeah, it was this...

Interviewee: Yeah I don't think they required it.

Interviewer: Was this through Indeed or was it, how did you send that info?

Interviewee: It was so the Indeed link went to, I think it's Amazon. It's flex.amazon.com I believe it was their website.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And it actually has the, what city is they're currently hiring in, and then there's some cities that will list this for hiring, which just means you can send in your application. Doesn't even get it approved anytime soon.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what is your job now that you drive with flex or do you drive with a different service?

Interviewee: I drove with Flex for... I mean I've only ever Flex for Amazon.

Interviewer: Okay. And you said it's been since you said 2017 is that what you'd said? March, 2017 something like that?

Interviewee: Yeah. Sorry, is this, that was March [date], 2018

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, I applied my first year in law school and then I started that spring. Okay. Yeah, sorry.

Interviewer: Yeah. No, that's okay. How do you juggle classes and the flex shifts?

Interviewee: So with their app, you basically, I'm not required to work in a certain amount of hours, so it just, you pull it up and if there's blocks available you do it. So it was basically, I liked it for the fact that I wasn't required to work. So during like finals and things, I don't have to actually work at all. Yeah. Cause I can pick it up on, usually most of the shifts are available in the evenings or weekends.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Interviewee: So they do like Whole Foods delivery and all those kind of options. Amazon Flex kind of picks, they pickup whatever the main delivery drivers don't drive, and their van service. All the packages that arrive later or that didn't get delivered in the beginning get like pushed onto Flex.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. I see. That makes sense.

Interviewee: Back in the beginning, before they had their DSP drivers, basically it was all new Amazon Flex and as they've like added the vans for usually evenings and weekends.

Interviewer: Okay. And so did you, at the beginning, were you working almost every day or how often did you take a block?

Interviewee: At the beginning?, I was going to say it was probably just a couple of times a week is when they were just, when they were available. And then like Black Friday and those hours, like you can work 40 or 50 60 hours a week if you want.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Did you ever do that?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. I did a last year.

Interviewer: What was it like?

Interviewee: During certain holidays. I'm going to [inaudible 00:05:42] because you basically don't know what you're actually going to work. You just kind of pick them up as they go. Sometimes they release them a half hour before. It just kind of depends. Obviously they start with the base pay, and it like goes up depending on how soon it is. Public block.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So it's to your advantage sometimes to wait until the last minute.

Interviewer: Yeah. And did you go into it thinking you were going to work as much as possible?

Interviewee: Actually no. I just kind of was just blanket applying cause I needed to figure out, I need to at least bring some money in while I was in law school. Yeah. And it was just one of the options. So I did that in a couple of the other gig apps.

Interviewer: Yeah. And with the, I meant war with the Black Friday kind of holiday rush. Did you go into that thinking?

Interviewee: Yeah. I originally planned on working those.

Interviewer: So did you end up doing...

Interviewee: [inaudible 00:06:32]. You can start working, you can work 6:00 AM until 2:00 PM.

Interviewer: is that what you were doing?

Interviewee: I pretty much did, you basically pick them up on like three hour blocks and there was some days where I picked up like four different blocks.

Interviewer: Wow. That sounds exhausting.

Interviewee: You could make four or five hundred dollars in a day. Which...

Interviewer: Was it worth it? Yeah. Was it worth it?

Interviewee: I drive an older car, so the mileage and wear and tear didn't affect me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So I just pay, you pay you gas out of pocket, but, and it worked for me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think you'll do it again this year?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. I most likely will at least a couple of days. My first shift ever, actually I showed up for Black Friday and it was at 6:00 AM and because the trucks were late, there was a storm or whatever that basically, they call it like they scan your driver's license every shift and make sure that you're the right person. And they were just letting people go. Like basically you were getting scanned paid and used to go, we got sent home.

Interviewer: Oh, you got paid for the block even though?

Interviewee: Yeah, it basically is because you showed up. They said that they screwed up and didn't have the block available.

Interviewer: Oh, that's cool. That's not what I would've expected. That's cool.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's happened like two or three times over the whole time, but...

Interviewer: Yeah, but I bet that's nice. Like okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, I was like "Is this how its going to always be? All right. I don't mind getting up at six in the morning."

Interviewer: When you started, was there some kind of training or introduction to the job?

Interviewee: They have some really basic videos on their website through their app. That they tell you to watch before and I've watched them, but you get a lot like I was, he posted one of the online forums. There's a lot more tips and tricks and people tell you what's easier, like how to arrange your packages in your car. Like they're all numbered stop order. You're better off arranging them in order on the rack instead of just throwing them all in your car and then scavenging while you're there.

Interviewer: Yeah. Were there other things that you kind of had to learn on the job or that you asked for your advice, when you were trying to do it?

Interviewee: Well, I mean, I'd say the biggest one I learned online was basically if you go over your block time, I could give you a three hour block and [inaudible 00:08:37] packages. If you go over it, you have to like actually request like a pay bump on top of it. You actually have to send an email. And most people that post on the online forums complain about going over and they don't realize that they'll actually give you more money. You just got to ask for it. Like it's not just, it's given to you, you've just got to ask.

Interviewer: Have you done that before?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, I did it more like during Black Friday and things. Way too many packages over what their standard packages per hour were. And you just accepted it because you're like, well, I'm going to get paid so I don't care. And it was Black Friday so they're paying about \$36 an hour. So I wasn't here to complain very much.

Interviewer: Yeah. Like, great. More work for me. Yeah. What do you have to file? It's just like proof that you've done it and all that?

Interviewee: So on your app, you basically log in and once you have your block, you show up and then basically you have to check in on the app within five minutes of arriving to the station to be on time. Then they scan your driver's license and then you scan each and every single package as you load them into your car during a loading phase. And then you have to scan each and every single one as you actually deliver it.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah. And so then they have an...

Interviewee: And the app has all the addresses preloaded and what they say is the most efficient route, but sometimes you just go on the map and look and take a more efficient way.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then I guess they have the electronic record that shows that you were working longer than that.

Interviewee: Yeah. And then just GPS, like everything's GPS, timestamps, everything's scanned. So yeah, it's pretty obvious.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, cool. So it's not like a, "I have to prove that this was hard and whatever",

Interviewee: Yeah, everything's timestamped, they know when you dropped off your last last package.

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, interesting. All right. So if something goes wrong, do you have a manager or somebody that you can talk to?

Interviewee: So they have a customer service line, very hit or miss depending on how it helpful they are depending on who you get. They're only authorized to do so much. I'm sure it's just some big call center and they reroute it, but usually they just, whatever it is, they can usually assist you. But I mean usually there's not really that many problems that happen. I'm trying to think, I mean in the app you could hit, we can't find the house and all that and you just return the package to the station at the end. So yeah, that's pretty much, it wasn't really that many times times I actually had to call them.

Interviewer: Yeah. And when you started, did you have to sign a contract or any kind of agreement?

Interviewee: Yes, it was electronic and honestly I couldn't even tell you what it was. And then basically they update it through the app and basically if you logged into the app, you

have to press, "I accept the new terms and conditions," but they're not there, here's a website to see them. It was like they would definitely have updated it throughout time, but it basically is, Hey, if you still want to work, which there's people that quit their full time jobs to try to do this. They make decent money and then the hours go away and...

Interviewer: Yeah. That's tough. Do you feel like, or so you've mentioned a couple of places where you sort of learned from online discussions and things. Were there other things that you had to kind of fill in the blanks and pick up skills or something or strategy or something to do the job?

Interviewee: Yeah. Well, so basically. Everyone online calls. It like swiping, if you're on your app, there's nobody, like the blocks just appear randomly throughout the day whenever they decided to drop it. So I've kind of started paying attention to see what the patterns were and when they drop and kind of like knew when or when the pay increase has started going up. It's like about 45 minutes out, 30 minutes out. So, and then also like there's in the [city] area where I'm at, there's like three different warehouses. So that's, [inaudible 00:12:24]. Some of them are about an hour away, but depending on what they're paying, it might be worthwhile to go down there.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Is there a big variation in how much it pays per hour?

Interviewee: So the base pay for like standard packages is 18 an hour and then they can go up to 36 an hour, but then they like released them in two, three, four and five hour blocks. So you get paid and you're guaranteed that amount of money for obviously the whole block.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So do you...

Interviewee: There's also Whole Foods delivery. We do that too.

Interviewer: Yeah. So with, with Whole Foods or these kind of hour chunks or is there one that you prefer?

Interviewee: Yeah, there's like two hour blocks and basically you will, you show up and it's like, all right, you're from two to four, you had orders that were submitted like at 3:00 PM that have been shopped and they're like, they're putting bags in a cooler and freezer and shelf space. You scan the bag through your order and then I go deliver them. And it's usually within that two hour window that people choose as delivery. And that's honestly those are the most, the best paying blocks because you get tips.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. So it's just Whole Foods that gets tips?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. So, with these...

Interviewee: They used to also have Amazon restaurants that closed down a couple of months ago, you did get tips for that and that was just sporadic restaurants throughout the area. Like they closed it down because Uber Eats was [inaudible 00:13:40] the money, Uber Eats and Grub Hub and...

Interviewer: Door Dash. Yeah. With these, is there like a certain amount of time or like do you prefer Whole Foods? Which ones do you like best?

Interviewee: I mean I prefer, I live five minutes from Whole Foods. So I prefer Whole Foods because obviously I can be there, I could be dressed in there within 10 or 15 minutes. And I mean you can get paid a lot more for hour. Like there was some three hour blocks where you're dropping off, some have a \$400 orders and people tip five or 10% on it, it adds up really quick for that. Sometimes you're getting paid 50 plus an hour.

Interviewer: Oh cool. So that's what you would sign up for?

Interviewee: Yeah, its all tip based.

Interviewer: And with the Flex ones, do you prefer doing like a two or three or five hour one? How do you pick between those?

Interviewee: So I drive like a four wheel or a four door Sedan. So I think I'm not allowed to take the five hours. But it kind of, I prefer the two hours for those. You just like 7:00 to 9:00 PM and you might show up and there's two packages to deliver and you're done in 20 minutes and you still get paid full two hours. But I'm usually, I pick up the three one because sometimes they overstuff them and I don't know how long the four hour can be if they over push any packages in it. That's whatever their systems optimized to say time-wise from.

Interviewer: And what kind of, so when you pick something up and drop it off, what do you have to record in the app? Or what does Amazon asks you to input?

Interviewee: Their app actually, so it'll show all the packages that you're supposed to have for your route basically. And you actually have to scan, there's a barcode on each one. You have to scan that barcode, the QR code and yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then when you drop it off, what do you have to do?

Interviewee: You scan the same barcode and then you have to be within whatever they've geo located the address as, you have to be within a hundred feet. But apparently, I mean, I found this out a long time ago. Houses with huge gates where the geolocation is like way too far from the road. You can't get in. You put your phone on airplane mode, it turns off the geolocation. You could actually still submit it as dropped off.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah. Oh, a hack.

Interviewee: It's one of those random things that people put on the forum online and you're like, Oh well now I don't have to, because you use to have to call and tell them. And then they would mark it as delivered and...

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh, you had to call customer service to do that?

Interviewee: Yeah. You just have to call them. Yeah...

Interviewer: It seems like it adds time.

Interviewee: If you're outside the geolocation area.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. And since you've been working there, have you ever had to test any new features or software on the app?

Interviewee: They don't really test, they just kind of like, all of a sudden you'll go to log in because you know, you pick a block and it'd be like all of a sudden there's new apps, if you download it basically and you're good to go. So they basically, I think they just live test it. There's been some times where they've got big screw ups and like one time they wouldn't, it wouldn't let us take anybody to pick up any packages. They sent everyone home and paid them.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: They've screwed up a couple of times.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. Have they rolled out any new big features recently?

Interviewee: Trying to think. I mean, I guess it's not a big feature, but just kind of makes sense for areas with low cell reception, they finally put something where you can download the offline maps areas so you're not like completely stranded in case your cell service goes out. Because you can still drive obviously and scan the packages, but if you don't have any data connection, you can't actually mark that they're there and now that allows you to do it. I'm assuming they started delivering more rural areas and they had to start putting those features then.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you mostly end up driving around cities or do you ever have to go out there?

Interviewee: So I'm trying to think like, I mean I live in [city], [state], so like usually it's about an hour max outside of the city I've ever had to drive. And obviously that time's included in the block, but it's not really, I wouldn't consider it really rural. Maybe some farms and stuff, with a lot of land, but they're like, it's next to main roads.

Interviewer: How does this job compare to other work that you do?

Interviewee: So I did most of, it was the best paying gig economy job.



Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Because you said you did a lot of them right?

Interviewee: Huh?

Interviewer: You've said that you've done a lot of different ones, right?

Interviewee: Yes, I did Instacart, which was the grocery shopping one and then I did Door Dash, Grub Hub, and then another one called Roadie, which was like delivery. I live next to the airport, like Delta delivers luggage for the [inaudible 00:18:19] make the flights.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. And do you still work on all of them or no, not anymore?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. I still have active accounts on them all. The only one I pretty much quit working on was Instacart. So they just lowered the pay rate down to where it wasn't worth it anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah. So how do you decide which one you'll do?

Interviewee: So it became more of, as I got onto, originally just started with just Instacart and it became more of, I looked at what hours were better on each of the apps. Like, obviously food delivery are best around dinner, time and lunch. And then like grocery delivery was from like eight to noon or after people get home from work and then Amazon's pretty much flexible throughout the day. Yeah. We used to be flexible throughout the day and now it's more like the earliest blocks are around 2:00 PM within my area. The warehouse comes around system.

Interviewer: Yeah. So do you have like a certain number of hours that you try to work per week or do you have like a financial goal for the week?

Interviewee: I actually do not, but I mean there's certain weeks where I have things coming up or I have more time and just, my mindset is if I'm not making money, I'm probably out spending it. So that was kind of what I would do.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense.

Interviewee: I come up here up on the weekends and work Instacart, eight to noon and then [inaudible 00:19:40] to spend the rest of the day.

Interviewer: Yeah. So with all of these, and especially with Amazon, do you think of yourself as like a, contractor or a freelancer or are you sort of running your own business?

Interviewee: I mean, [inaudible 00:19:57]. I mean, it's definitely, it's just contract work. I don't think it's really running your own business per se. And I guess the flexible hours and stuff. Sorry, I'm in [inaudible 00:20:05]. [inaudible 00:20:06]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Kind of a weird, I know [other state] [inaudible 00:20:11] everyone's texting an employer. They dictate what you're doing and when you do it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. How do you feel about that, the Uber case?

Interviewee: I guess it's not, I mean, I'm okay with it. I mean, basically that's what a job is.

Interviewer: Yeah. You're watching to see what happens?

Interviewee: So, and I mean, getting paid 18 an hour for a job that we're not as required to report at certain times and kind of really flexible. I'm not trying to complain.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Do you think you'll still be doing Amazon Flex in a couple of years?

Interviewee: Probably not. I graduate school in like a month. So yeah. I'm assuming per hour I'd be able to get more as lawyer.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I guess we'll see. Like obviously there will be some time where I'd be between a job or something, but yeah, I think it depends on whether an hours time is worth more to be working with Amazon or something or working on something else.

Interviewer: Yeah, for sure. Okay. So I have two questions left about sort of more future work stuff. Do you worry about things like self driving cars?

Interviewee: I'd assume no, for the fact of I still think it's a decent amount of time off. Yeah. I mean Elon Musk is probably the pioneer of it all and [inaudible 00:21:30] companies buy, it's still really five or 10 years at least from... I mean you still have to have a person in your self driving cars, so that'd be my, as of right now. Because who knows how long the regulation special takes to allow self driving cars.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Could you imagine Amazon ruling out self driving cars in their fleet?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I believe they're actually, I want to say they've actually put money into kind of the self driving startups. [inaudible 00:22:04] use electric vehicles startups, but I'm sure there's, in self-driving startups, that's a business [inaudible 00:22:13] get rid of the bottom line. It all that one day delivery and these new drones, I think they asked him to those street robots. They show like the robot. They're talking about the robots going deliver packages to the houses.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: They're definitely testing it.

Interviewer: Have you seen them or have you just read about them?

Interviewee: I seen it online. Digital posters in those groups. I'm in [state], so I'm sure they're testing it up then near their, whatever their research level pressing areas are.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Awesome. Thank you so much. I'm going to stop recording.