

## Software Development Manager

### Interview Preparation Document

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**“Random forests, naïve Bayesian estimators, Restful services, gossip protocols, eventual consistency, data sharing, anti-entropy, Byzantine quorum, erasure coding, vector clocks ... walk into certain Amazon meetings, and you may momentarily think you've stumbled into a computer science lecture.”**  
- Jeff Bezos, 2010 Shareholder letter

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**Amazon**—a place where builders can build. We hire the world's brightest minds and offer them an environment in which they can invent and innovate to improve the experience for our customers. We want employees who will help share and shape our mission to be Earth's most customer-centric company. Amazon's evolution from Web site, to e-commerce partner, to development platform, is driven by the spirit of invention that is part of our DNA. We do this every day by solving complex technical and business problems with ingenuity and simplicity. We're making history, and the good news is that we've only just begun.

Thank you taking the time to speak with us. The tips below are intended to enhance your candidate experience.

**Software Engineering Managers** own the design, development, testing, deployment, and maintenance of the company's software applications, systems, and technology projects. As a manager, they own building, managing, focusing, and developing an engineering team that meets the needs of the business and works well within the overall system architecture. They draw from a deep and broad technical expertise to mentor engineers, complete hands on technical work, and provide leadership on complex technology issues in the company. While they may possess deep technical skills, they spend the majority of their time building great software by directing and managing the engineers who work for them. To sum up a Software Development Manager is a hybrid of solution architect, people manager and a project manager.

### Topics to Review

Below is a short list of vital competencies that define a successful Software Development Manager at Amazon and suggestions on how to prepare to discuss.

#### Technical Deep Dive

Good architecture and design is paramount to extensible and stable product. It's possible to solve any given software problem in an almost limitless number of ways, but when software needs to be extensible and maintainable, good software design is critical to success. Using customer driven data and sound object-oriented design patterns is one way to build lasting software. You should have a working knowledge of a few common and useful design patterns to solve scalability, security, latency, availability, refactoring and sustainability of the product.

How to prepare?

Instances from your experience in combining a deep, cross-functional business understanding with a long term, strategic context when making technology decisions across groups, would be of interest for us to know about. Expect problem solving and white boarding technical design questions.

#### Hire and Develop the Best

Recruiting, training and developing quality performers on the team and continually raising the bar are primary responsibilities as a people manager. A strong commitment to recruiting quality hires and creating a strategic partnership with Talent Acquisition helps define the footprint of a talented project team. Proactively implementing a well thought out career development plan for every team member is key to upholding the individual productivity and team solidarity.

How to prepare?

Anecdotes from your experiences to highlight the core competencies of a people manager would be a vital ask during the assessment process.

### Program Ownership

Amazon is a matrixed environment with several of our services, platforms and products that are reliant on one another. To successfully orchestrate and strive towards the business objectives and prioritization, we look for an entrepreneurial self-starter who can think big and earn the trust of others to rally around your vision. A strong business judgment and direction that stems from understanding the product's competitive advantage within a specific marketplace and its relative deficiencies is what we seek in a successful Software Development Manager.

How to prepare?

Being prepared to share narratives from your experience to highlight your contribution towards project ownership, management and operational excellence can be expected.

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**“Invention is in our DNA and technology is the fundamental tool we wield to evolve and improve every aspect of the experience we provide our customers.”**  
**- Jeff Bezos**

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### Interview Tips

- Be prepared to discuss your experience as a technical architect, people manager and as a program owner. These core competencies typically have 2-3 underlining Amazon leadership principles that complement it (enclosed below). Leadership Principles enable every individual to highlight areas of excellence and maturity as a subject matter expert. Reviewing our leadership tenets and recollecting anecdotes from your experience to support each of those, would be helpful preparation for an Amazon interview.
- Please ask questions if you need clarification. We want the interview process to be collaborative and an opportunity to mutually interview. We also want to learn what it would be like to work with you on a day-to-day basis in our open environment. If you are asked a question, but not given enough information to solve the problem, drill down to get the information that you need. If that information isn't available, focus on how you would attempt to solve the problem given the limited information you have. Often times at Amazon, we have to make quick decisions in the absence of all of the relevant data.
- When answering questions, staying succinct and offering the necessary details would define an effective interview. We realize it's hard to gauge how much information is too much versus not enough; an effective litmus test is pausing after your succinct response to ask if you've provided enough detail, or if the interviewer would like you to go into more depth.
- We want to hire smart, passionate people. Please reflect on what motivated you to pursue a career with Amazon and be prepared to speak to it. Although “Why Amazon?” is a standard type of question, it's not a check-the-box type of formality for us. We genuinely want to understand what inspired you to explore an opportunity with us, so we get a better sense of who you are. It's also appreciated when a candidate has put thought into a few questions for the interviewer. It goes a long way when you've taken the initiative to research the company prior to your interview.

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**“Many of the problems we face have no textbook solution, and so we happily invent new ones.”**  
**- Jeff Bezos, 2010 Shareholder letter**

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## Amazon Press

- How Jeff Bezos built a business through experimentation  
<http://fortune.com/2015/09/17/amazon-founder-ceo-jeff-bezos-skills/>
- Why Maria Renz chooses to work for Amazon  
<http://recode.net/2015/09/25/why-i-work-for-amazon-a-response/>
- Amazon ranked in the Top 5 Most Attractive Employers for Computer Science by Universum  
<http://top100.universumglobal.com/united-states-of-america/ranking/most-attractive-employers-ranking-for-computer-science-it>
- Record Breaking Holiday Season 2014  
<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=2002024>