



## Life in Brief

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**Born:** January 12, 1964

**Hometown:** Albuquerque, NM

**Current Residence:** Medina, WA

### Education

- BS, Engineering, Princeton University, 1986

### Family

- Divorced, MacKenzie Bezos
- 4 children

### Work History

- Founder and CEO of Amazon, 1993-Present
- Various positions including Senior Vice President, D. E. Shaw & Co, 1990-1994
- Product Manager, Bankers Trust, 1988-1990
- Various positions, Fitel, a fintech start up, 1986-1988

### Other Notable Companies and Associations

- Founded Bezos Day One Fund, 2018
- Purchased Whole Foods, 2017
- Purchased the Washington Post, 2013
- Founded Blue Origin, 2000
- Bezos Family Foundation

### Professional Associations

- Board member, Bezos Family Foundation
- Board member, The Business Council (2015-2016)

## Quick Summary

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**Known for his aggressive business practices and long term thinking, Bezos has risen to market supremacy and become the wealthiest person in the world**

- Learned the importance of data driven business while working at a hedge fund on Wall Street in the early 90s, where he researched internet-based businesses
- Started Amazon as an online book store that offered over a million books at low prices
- Used disruptive strategy of forgoing profits in the early years of Amazon to focus on long term market share domination that includes consumer goods, web services, and more
- Amazon success driven by Bezos's obsession with customer experience; includes empty chair at meetings to represent the customer's needs
- Evaluates performance against hundreds of measurable goals, drawing criticism from workers who find it difficult to meet increasing metrics while following all safety protocols
- Passionate about space exploration and sees it as the only way humans can continue to grow and innovate without destroying Earth

## Approach and Motivations

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**Drive for domination through relentless innovation**

- Credits summers spent at his grandfather's ranch in Texas for teaching him to be self-reliant and innovative
- Focused on long-term thinking and goal setting, often setting 7-10 year time frames for projects
- Motivated by deep fear that humans will be forced into a stagnant state once energy resources on Earth have been depleted
- Strives to follow "adventure and fellowship" and states that abiding by these principles is the best way to be proud of your decisions later in life

## Policy Positions and Areas of Focus

**Life-long interest in space exploration, focuses philanthropy and the environment**

**Business Practices: *Savvy data collector and powerful tax lobby***

- Obsession with customer data has allowed Amazon to track thousands of indicators used to create new products and offerings, such as the Kindle and expanding into new markets like video streaming
- Amazon had effective federal tax rate of -1% in 2018 after successful lobbying on the 2017 tax bill, targets local government to repeal internet sales tax

**Space: *Long interest in colonizing space***

- Expressed goal of building space hotels and colonies and turning Earth into a national park in high school graduation valedictorian speech in 1982
- Believes Blue Origin is his most important work; sees colonizing space as essential to human survival and has invested an estimated \$1 billion of his wealth a year in the company
- Motivated by the concern of using up the limited supply of energy available on Earth, claims humans will be forced to stop growing if we don't leave the planet
- Developing re-usable space vehicles to help lower the cost of going into space

**Climate Change: *Recognizes Amazon's expansive supply chain and logistics operations impact on the environment***

- Launched Bezos Earth Fund in February 2020 and pledged to donate \$10 billion in the form of grants to help fight climate change
- Announced in 2020 that Amazon was using a fleet of all electric delivery vehicles in India
- In 2019, Bezos announced that Amazon would meet climate goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement 10 years ahead of schedule

## Core Communities

**Well-connected across global leaders and influencers**

**Key Mentors: *Relationships that have shifted his career***

- Took classes by Gerard K. O'Neill, author of *The High Frontier*, in college and credits his ideas on space exploration as an influence
- Credits former boss David Shaw at D.E. Shaw as a key figure in helping him understand potential of the internet
- Close relationship with Don Graham, former editor of the Washington Post convinced Bezos to purchase the paper

**World Leaders: *Frequently meets with world leaders to discuss Amazon, sometimes with contention***

- Has had difficult relationship with Prime Minister Modi as Amazon expands in India, who has enacted stricter regulations on foreign companies' operations
- Pulled out of a \$2.2 billion deal with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince after allegations that Saudi agents killed a columnist at the Washington Post
- Met with President Emmanuel Macron to discuss climate policy goals for Amazon

**Connections in Government: *Amazon lobbyists worked in powerful offices***

- Iram Ali is current Public Policy Lead at AWS, former White House Liaison at Dept. of Defense
- Pres. Obama Press Secretary Jay Carney is current Head of Global Corporate Affairs at Amazon
- Kathryn Edelman is former Digital Services Expert at OMB, current Amazon lobbyist
- Paul Misener is former Chief of Staff for Harold Furchtgott-Roth at FCC, current VP of Global Public Policy at Amazon

## Relevant Financial Information

**Wealthiest person in the world, has donated to candidates in both parties**

### Personal Finance

- Net worth of \$120 billion
- Makes approximately \$2,500 per second
- Became the wealthiest person in the world in March 2018, surpassing Bill Gates

### Political Donations

- Consistently donates to Amazon and Blue Origin PACs, typically in \$5,000 increments
- Donated \$10 million to With Honor Fund, a super PAC that supports veterans running for office in 2018
- Donated \$2.5 million to support same sex marriage in Washington State in 2012
- Made smaller contributions to individual candidates over the past 10 years including Cory Gardner (R-CO), Patty Murray (D-WA), Jason Chaffetz (R-UT03), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

### Affiliated PAC Donations

- Amazon.com PAC has donated \$900,000 in 2020 cycle, evenly split between both parties in House and Senate
- Blue Origin PAC has donated \$90,000 in 2020 cycle, 52% to Democrats and 48% to Republicans

### Philanthropy

- Only American billionaire who has not signed the Giving Pledge, in which participants promise to give away at least half their wealth over their lifetime or in their will
- Donated \$33 million to TheDream.us to fund college scholarships for immigrants
- Donated \$97.5 million to Bezos Day One Fund to support education for homeless families in 2018; donated \$98.5 million in 2019 to fight homelessness
- Pledged \$10 billion to fight climate change through Bezos Earth Fund in 2020

## Publications, Media, and Speaking

**Global figure who frequently appears in media engagements and speaking events to discuss business priorities and philanthropic goals**

### Media: Frequently appears on national media outlets, has penned op-eds

- Preferred Outlets: CNBC, Business Insider, Forbes, Bloomberg
- Publications: Wrote op-ed for Medium responding to photos released by National Enquirer
- Favorite Subjects: Amazon, space exploration
- Social Media Habits: Incredibly active Twitter, previously made big announcements on Instagram

### Speaking: Addresses business community tech communities and education groups

- Favorite Subjects: Business success, interest in space
- Preferred Outlets: Summit Series, Economic Club of Washington, D.C.

## Family and Personal Background

### Early childhood struggles led to later success

- Mother was 17 and in high school when he was born; separated from his father when he was a young child. His stepfather, a Cuban immigrant, Miguel Bezos adopted him when he was 4 years old
- Grew up moving around the country, spent time living in New Mexico, Texas, and Florida

### Notable Family Members

- Brother Mark Bezos is SVP at Robin Hood, a poverty-fighting charity in New York; has popular TED talk that discusses his experiences as a firefighter
- Country singer George Strait is his cousin through his maternal grandmother

### Hobbies and Interests

- Unabashed super fan of Star Trek, appears as a cameo in *Star Trek Beyond*, and the Amazon Alexa was inspired by devices used in Star Trek

## Criticisms and Controversies

### Bezos has faced controversies within his companies and in his personal life

#### Public divorce with MacKenzie in 2019 after an affair leaked by the media

- Announced the divorce on Twitter after the National Enquirer threatened to release embarrassing photos of Bezos' affair with news anchor Lauren Sanchez
- Bezos has claimed the threat from National Enquirer is a response to the Washington Post reporting that was critical of President Trump and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman
- It was later released that the photos were sold to the paper by Sanchez's brother
- MacKenzie Bezos received 25% of their Amazon stock, with voting control remaining with Jeff. The stock is valued at \$38.3 billion

#### Amazon has been scrutinized for its labor practices, tax avoidance, and data use concerns

- Criticized for using "cheetah and gazelle" strategy that targeting small businesses and publishers selling on Amazon
- Working conditions at Amazon warehouses have often been criticized, citing extreme heat and walking long distances to fulfill productivity quotas
- Pulled out of HQ2 deal with New York City after hearing with city officials about Amazon's labor union policies
- Amazon has been ranked as most aggressive tech company for tax avoidance by transparency group Fair Trade Max
- Introduced data opt-out features for Alexa after it was discovered that Amazon was hiring people to transcribe transcripts from user data
- Bezos sees Amazon as a key partner for US national security and has sold face ID software to ICE despite concerns that the software is not always accurate and has little government regulation

## COVID-19 Response

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**Prominent corporate leader with workers on the front lines of COVID-19 response**

### Relevant Positions

- CEO of Amazon; meets with global leaders to discuss COVID response

### Actions: *Working closely with world leaders and health officials*

- Met with WHO Director to discuss use of Amazon Web Services, which currently supports the WHO website; Amazon recently increased security and capacity and has provided machine learning and AI capabilities to help build epidemic models
- Modified Amazon's supply chain to help get supplies to areas most in need and prioritizing essential orders
- Met with Governor Jay Inslee to pledge continued support from Amazon to the state of Washington during the crisis
- Launched Amazon Relief Fund with \$25 million from Amazon to help support contracted and part time workers who develop COVID-19 symptoms
- Ordered millions of face masks for Amazon employees
- Raised wages, added a quarantine leave policy, and offering overtime at double pay for warehouse workers; tripled janitorial staff

### Statements: *Has addressed response through company memos and social media*

- On April 2, announced on Instagram that Bezos was donating \$100 million to Feeding America; Amazon released a statement saying it would start auditing warehouse compliance with new safety rules
- On March 21, issued a memo to employees stating he was wholly focused on COVID-19, noted hiring 100,000 people for new roles

## COVID-19 Response

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**Criticisms: *Concerns over effectiveness of new safety measures***

- Reports of COVID-19 spreading in Amazon warehouses have resulted in workers demanding better pay and sick leave
- Many workers fear going to work and in mid-March attendance at warehouses fell 30%
- Investigations have been launched in New York City after employees protesting conditions were fired, Amazon claims the employee was fired for safety violations