

# 3 Questions Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos Asks Before Hiring Anyone

By Vernon Gunnarson, The MUSE - August 26, 2014



[Amazon](#) has forever changed the way people shop online, but it wasn't always the juggernaut that it is today. In fact, once upon a time it was just a tiny startup with a big vision. So, how did it end up as the giant online retailer that it is now?

It's hard to say, but one thing founder Jeff Bezos was very intentional about was how he hired for the company. In fact, in his 1998 letter to shareholders, just four years after Amazon was founded, Bezos wrote, "It would be impossible to produce results in an environment as dynamic as the Internet without extraordinary people... Setting the bar high in our approach to hiring has been, and will continue to be, the single most important element of Amazon.com's success."

Since then, Bezos has charged his hiring managers to [hire](#) based on three critical measures. And if you were to ask him, it's these questions that have made all the difference.

## 1. Will you admire this person?

Bezos' first benchmark was about admiration. He wanted hiring managers to admire the people they were bringing on to their teams, not just the other way around. Bezos extrapolated that admiration meant that this was a person who could be an example to other and who others could learn from. From this criterion alone, the standard for hiring is kept sky high.

## 2. Will this person raise the average level of effectiveness of the group they're entering?

The goal for new hires, according to Bezos, is to elevate the company. Rather than having apathy grow as the company grew, he envisioned that each new hire would fight instead of contribute to entropy. Or, in his own words, "The bar has to continuously go up. I ask people to

visualize the company five years from now. At that point, each of us should look around and say, 'The standards are so high now--boy, I'm glad I got in when I did!'"

### **3. Along what dimensions might this person be a superstar?**

The last (and quirkiest) thing Bezos seeks from new hires is a distinctive skill or interest to contribute to the company's culture and help cultivate a fun and interesting workplace. And it doesn't have to be related to the job--he gives the example of one employee who is a National Spelling Bee champion. While there's a lot to be said for being well-rounded, it's the pointy ones that Bezos wants.

It's been over 15 years since Bezos wrote about these hiring goals, but given Amazon's success, his advice is certainly worth considering. So, if you're interested in growing your team, first get a grip on your company culture and embed it into your hiring process. Then it's ultimately about finding a way to keep hiring standards high in whatever way resonates with your hiring managers. While you may not want to adopt Amazon's entire hiring philosophy, it's certainly worth picking up a trick or two from Bezos. If Amazon's success is any indication, he clearly knows what he's doing.