



# Mariel Penkowski

**B.S. in Computer Science and Engineering (2014)**  
**Amazon, Seattle, WA**

## **Describe your overall duties/responsibilities as a Senior Software Development Engineer:**

Some of the teams I have worked on at Amazon have included building backend systems to support fulfillment of packages to Amazon customers, owning experiences through Alexa to allow customers to shop and interact with Amazon carts through voice enabled devices, and working with Whole Foods Market to enable Prime member experiences in stores. My responsibilities are to design and build software systems and to lead the technical direction of my team. I work with many teams around Amazon to bring together many different systems to deliver on projects that are used by millions of customers worldwide. I am also very involved in mentoring of other engineers and Amazon's hiring process.

## **Explain the skills/abilities that are required for being successful in your role:**

The most important skill for a software engineer is the ability to problem solve. Having a solid background of coding languages, data structures, and algorithms is of course important, but

knowing how to break down problems and find creative solutions is what makes a great software engineer. Being successful is also about growing skills in leadership. Amazon has a set of Leadership Principles that define the skills that are important to being a successful leader and I've found that these are very broadly applicable outside of Amazon as well. Some of these including having a bias for action, being able to dive deep into problems, showing ownership, and always seeking to learn more.

## **What advice would you give to students who are considering majoring in Computer Science and Engineering?**

The tech industry is huge and has an endless range of applications. There is no wrong way to get into the field. I have worked with people who have the traditional CS degree but also others who have come from backgrounds of all different types. The best advice I can give is to find something that makes you excited and go for it! Building a solid foundation of the fundamentals of computer science is important, but take time to explore a wide range of fields where you can apply them.

