

AMAZON'S

# PROJECT DAWN

*A Business Communication Blunder Case Study*

---

By: Devin, Mannan, and Brady

# What We'll Cover Today

---

## 01 Company Background

History, mission, CEO, competitors

## 02 Financial Overview

Ratios, statements, macro environment

## 03 The Blunder

What happened, stakeholder reactions, financial impact

## 04 Our Communication Plan

7 communications across all stakeholders

## 05 Reflection

Why our plan is better & key lessons learned

# Amazon — Company Overview

## Company History

- Founded 1994 by Jeff Bezos in Bellevue, WA as an online bookstore
- IPO on NASDAQ in 1997 at \$18/share
- Launched AWS in 2006 — now world's #1 cloud platform
- Acquired Whole Foods for \$13.7B in 2017
- Reached \$2 trillion market cap in 2024
- \$716.9B revenue and 1.5M+ employees in 2025

## Mission

*"To be Earth's most customer-centric company, Earth's best employer, and Earth's safest place to work."*

## CEO: Andy Jassy

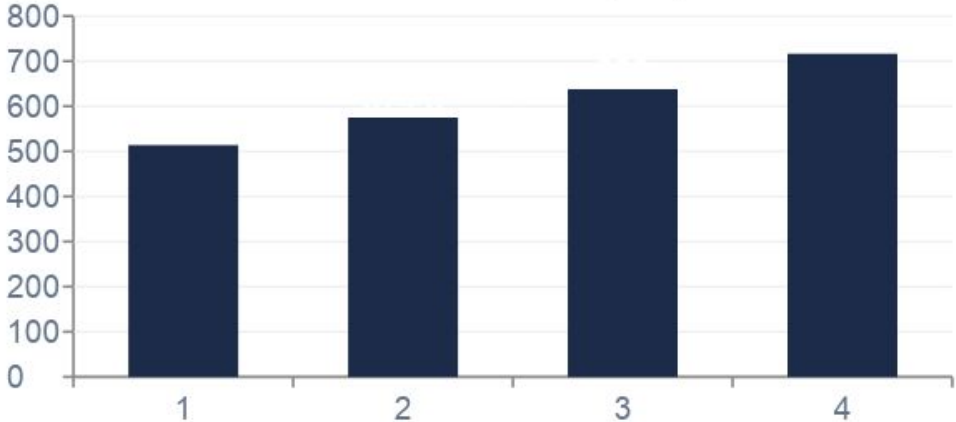
- Harvard College & HBS MBA (1997)
- Joined Amazon in 1997; co-founded AWS in 2003
- Built AWS into \$127B revenue business
- Became Amazon CEO July 5, 2021

## Major Competitors

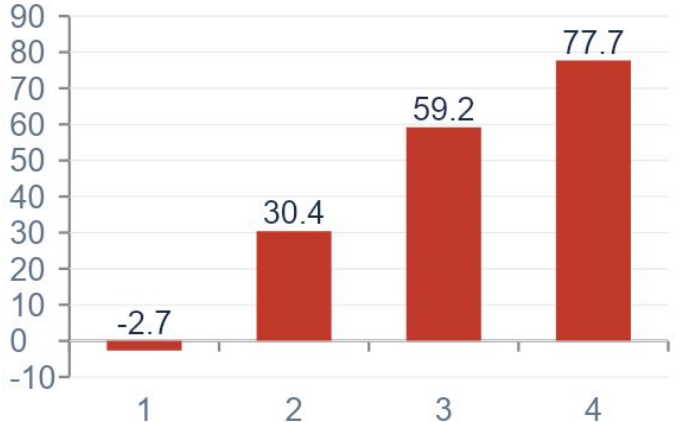
- E-commerce: Walmart (\$681B revenue FY2025)
- Cloud: Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud
- Streaming: Netflix, Disney+, Apple TV+
- Advertising: Google, Meta

# Financial Overview

## Total Revenue (\$B)



## Net Income (\$B)



## Key Financial Ratios vs. Walmart (FY2024)

Ratio	Amazon Pre	Amazon Post	Walmart	Insight
Gross Margin	48.8%	50.3%	24.6%	Amazon nearly 2x Walmart
Net Profit Margin	9.3%	10.8%	2.4%	Amazon 4x more profitable
Current Ratio	1.10x	1.08x	0.83x	Both companies run lean
Return on Assets	9.5%	9.5%	6.6%	Cloud beats physical retail
Debt to Equity	1.15x	0.88x	0.51x	Amazon has less debt

# Macroeconomic Environment



## Interest Rates

Fed kept rates elevated throughout 2025, raising Amazon's \$131.8B capex financing costs and dampening consumer discretionary spending.



## Trade Tariffs

Trump tariff regime raised costs for Amazon's third-party sellers sourcing goods from China — Jassy raised this at Davos, Jan 2026.



## AI Boom

AWS AI workload revenue grew ~50% YoY in late 2025, but \$100B infrastructure bet created investor pressure to reduce costs elsewhere.



## Job Anxiety

Broad societal fear of AI-driven displacement made the accidental Project Dawn disclosure land with devastating emotional impact.

# The Blunder

---

Jun 2025



Jassy warns AI may reduce corporate jobs

Oct 2025



HR SVP Galetti announces 14,000 position cuts

Jan 27, 2026



Accidental 'Project Dawn' email sent to AWS employees

Jan 28, 2026



Amazon confirms ~16,000 corporate layoffs

# Stakeholder & Media Reactions

## Employees

- Fear and panic spread through Slack channels
- H-1B workers faced immigration anxiety
- Blind/Reddit posts exploded with outrage
- "Finding out via Outlook is peak Amazon 2026"

## Media

- CNBC, Reuters, BBC, Business Insider reported within hours
- Project Dawn trended on X (Twitter)
- Framed as organizational dysfunction
- Narrative: Amazon can't manage its own communication

## Investors

- AMZN dropped from ~\$241 to ~\$196 by mid-Feb
- Concerns about governance and execution
- Analysts flagged employer brand risk
- Bank of America maintained Buy rating

# Financial Impact of the Blunder

## AMZN Stock Price Around Blunder



**-\$45**

Stock Drop  
(Peak to Low)

**\$1.8B**

Severance  
Charges (Q3 2025)

**\$2.5B**

FTC Settlement  
(Q3 2025)

**16,000**

Corporate  
Positions Cut

### Negative Effects:

Employee trust damaged • Employer brand eroded on Glassdoor/LinkedIn • WARN Act legal risk across 3 countries • Voluntary attrition risk among top AI talent

# Our Communication Plan

*Strategy: Speed · Transparency · Humanity*

## Who We're Talking To & How

Stakeholder	Primary Concern	Key Message	Channel
Non-Affected Employees	Am I next?	Your status is clear — here is what happens next	CEO email + All-hands Q&A
Affected Employees	Job, income, benefits, visa	You deserved better — here is everything you need now	Personal manager call + HR email
Visa-Sponsored Workers	Immigration status/clock	Dedicated legal support available tonight	24/7 immigration hotline
Investors / Analysts	Governance, execution risk	This error does not change our financial plan	Form 8-K + analyst briefing
Media / Press	Who is accountable?	Here is exactly what happened — fully transparent	Press release + VP briefing
Customers	Service disruption?	Amazon services are completely unaffected	Amazon.com statement
Regulators	WARN Act compliance	We are meeting all legal obligations	Formal legal correspondence

# The 7 Communications — Overview

1

**CEO All-Employee Email***Within 60 min*

2

**Public Website Statement***Within 2 hours*

3

**Personal Email to Affected***Within 4 hours*

4

**Social Media Posts***Within 2 hours*

5

**Investor 8-K Filing***Within 24 hours*

6

**All-Hands Q&A Meeting***Next morning 10am*

7

**Visa-Holder Immigration  
Notice***Within 2 hours*

# Sample Communications

## COMM 1 — CEO All-Employee Email (60 min)

### **SUBJECT:** An Important Message From Me

*Team — I'm writing right now because you deserve the truth immediately. A draft layoff communication was accidentally sent in a calendar invite tonight. This was a human error and I take full responsibility. The statement that affected colleagues had already been personally notified was incorrect. I am deeply sorry. All-hands Q&A tomorrow 10am PT. Every affected employee will hear from their manager personally first. — Andy*

## COMM 7 — Visa-Sponsored Workers (2 hrs)

*Your visa status has NOT changed tonight. A 24/7 immigration hotline is now active. For every visa-sponsored employee whose role may be impacted: 90-day paid extension, full immigration legal counsel at Amazon's expense, and visa transfer assistance to a new employer.*

## COMM 2 — Public Website Statement (2 hrs)

*Amazon acknowledges that an internal draft document related to an ongoing organizational restructuring was inadvertently distributed via a calendar invitation error this evening. The draft incorrectly stated affected employees had already been personally notified — this had not yet occurred. Amazon deeply regrets this error. CEO Andy Jassy has communicated directly with all employees. The organizational changes will proceed with full care and respect. Amazon is implementing immediate process improvements to prevent recurrence.*

## COMM 4 — Social Media (X, LinkedIn, Slack)

**X:** *Amazon acknowledges an internal communication error tonight. CEO Andy Jassy has communicated personally with all employees. We are deeply sorry. Full statement: [amazon.com/news](https://amazon.com/news)*

**Slack:** *[Andy Jassy pinned]: I've sent an all-employee email. All-hands Q&A tomorrow 10am PT.*

# Reflection — Why Our Plan Is Better

---

## Speed vs. Silence

---

Amazon said almost nothing for 24 hours. Our plan deploys 7 communications within 24 hours, starting with a CEO email within 60 minutes.

## Humanity First

---

Our CEO email is personal and apologetic. Amazon's only statement was a passive, toneless 'sent in error' acknowledgment.

## Completeness

---

We address every stakeholder — including visa holders — with tailored messages. Amazon left affected workers without clarity for over 24 hours.

## The Opportunity

---

Exceeding industry norms on severance (6 months pay, 12 months benefits) flips the narrative to 'Amazon made it right in an extraordinary way.'

## Root Cause Fix

---

We recommend a Sensitive Communication Governance Protocol requiring dual CPO + General Counsel sign-off for all sensitive workforce communications.

# Key Takeaways

---

- 1 Project Dawn shows that workforce notifications must be treated as highly sensitive operational events — not standard email tasks.
- 2 Amazon's 24-hour silence after the blunder was as damaging as the blunder itself. Speed and humanity are non-negotiable in crisis response.
- 3 A Sensitive Communication Governance Protocol (dual CPO + GC authorization) would have prevented this entirely.
- 4 Handled correctly, this blunder was an opportunity to demonstrate genuine care — and become the employer Amazon always claimed to be.

Questions?

*Thank you*