

Paranorma Amazon: The Truth Behind the Click.

Who?

Amazon is a platform that lets almost anyone sell almost anything that anyone can buy for reasonable prices. You can find merchandise sold directly from Amazon, like books, and merchandise sold from other companies, like beauty products, electronics and garden furniture.

What?

This documentary shows what it's like inside the warehouses after people 'click' buy. It explains what the employees have to do when collecting the items, and what happens if they don't meet the standards.

Where?

The documentary is mainly set in one of the warehouses in Swansea, and a secret camera was attached to a worker, showing exactly what happens behind the scenes.

Why?

Not many people know what happens in the warehouses, and how stressful and exhausting it can be, but I'm glad I've watched this documentary as it will remind myself unnecessary items I don't need, try and shop local, and appreciate how hard the floor staff/order pickers at Amazon work.

When?

When Amazon was founded in Washington D.C in July 1994, by Jeff Bezos, the company employed 21 staff. In 2019, Amazon had a total of 789 000 staff across the UK. Who would've thought it would become the world's largest marketplace? Bezos was named the world's richest man in modern history.

The documentary shows a man with a hidden camera go behind the scenes at an Amazon warehouse and show us what it's really like after the 'click'. Adam Littler is a 23 graduate who has done manual work before. He says when he previously worked in a factory it was physically demanding but nothing more than what he expected so it wasn't an issue. Inside, there are large shelving units filled with products on 4 floors. When going up to another floor, the cart gets put in a lift and the workers take the stairs. The day shift pay is £6.50 an hour and the night shift pay is £8.20 an hour. Personally I think these workers should get paid more, as what you're about to read is unexpected.

When an item is scanned and put onto the cart, a timer on the scanner will start, and the worker has around 37 seconds to get to that item and scan it, if they don't make it on time, the process gets slowed down and they fail to reach the target that gets set, which is usually around 172 times scanned per shift. People are always pressuring workers about reaching the targets, which easily stresses them out. If they fail to reach the target, the worker will get verbal counselling on productivity. If they are still underperforming after that, it will escalate. If a wrong item is scanned, the scanner will beep, and after hearing this beep for hours, it gets stuck in your head. Littler said this kept him up at night, as it was just going on and on in his head. Over time, the workers start turning into robots and it's described by Littler as traumatizing. Any kind of sickness comes at a price, the company operated disciplinary system is based on points. If you get 3 points you are fired. A day off for illness earns you one point, going home sick gets you half a point. People who used to work there say even if you're throwing up at work and have to go home half way through the day, you still get half a point. Amazon says only 11 people have been dismissed due to attendance this year, which in all honesty I find hard to believe considering the amount of employees they employ. Being late costs half a point, and it's very easy to be late if you've been doing 10-hour night shifts and catching up on sleep. Professor Sir Michael Marmot says, various dimensions of the work environment are bad for health, and all the bad things are hitting them at once. He says a job where you have little control, but under pressure can be a dangerous combination.

The results from having a job like this increase the risk of mental illness and physical illness. Amazon says staff safety is their number one priority, and official safety inspections have not raised concerns and an independent expert appointed by Amazon said the job isn't unusual and does not increase the risk of mental and physical illness. I disagree. Michael Marmot says it's not the boss that's unfair it's the way the organization is structured, is unjust and is injustice. He also adds that the demands of efficiency at the cost of an individual's health and wellbeing have to be balanced.

In conclusion, this documentary has taught me a lot, and shown me that it is not easy to work in one of the most popular online stores, and people need to understand what actually happens behind closed doors, not just workers' lives in the warehouses, but their lives outside the warehouses. What is certainly true is that from click to delivery, they're cheap and efficient, but does that efficiency come at a price for workers?

