



Expert: Amazon bid bios shrewd, but necessary 'Generational project'

Jordan Graham – December 29, 2017



JEFF BEZOS

State officials' decision to put together extensive dossiers on top Amazon executives was a shrewd move to land the \$5 billion project — and an unusual step for government, a corporate relocation expert said.

"This is the Cadillac of all negotiations, all incentives, the most significant project in the history of economic development," said John Boyd, principal at corporate relocation firm Boyd Company.

Boyd said collecting as much information as possible, even if it seems irrelevant, could help down the line when it comes time to impress Amazon.

“They want to be in markets where they feel that government leaders are partnering with them,” Boyd said. “Amazon is a company that really views incentives as a link between its growth and these communities.”

The Herald reported yesterday that Baker administration economic development officials compiled in-depth information about Jeff Bezos and a number of top executives as it prepared its bid earlier this year, according to documents obtained through a public records request. For Bezos, the bio included professional investments and history, but also included information about where he grew up, where his maternal ancestors are from and even where he met his wife.

Information for other executives included the same kind of background. A spokeswoman for the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development said the bios were compiled to help inform the proposal, but declined to elaborate. Throughout the bios, connections to Massachusetts are emphasized. At the end, the document lists five key Amazon executives or board directors who are alumni of Harvard and another three from MIT. Another exec, Jeff Blackburn, senior vice president of business development, grew up in Concord.

Boyd said compiling such detailed biographies is unusual, but not surprising for a project of Amazon’s size.

“I think it’s somewhat out of the ordinary, but so is this project,” Boyd said. “It’s a generational project.”

Still, all the personal touches in the world will only get Massachusetts so far. The state’s bid offered dozens of sites, but did not emphasize any, instead just trying to sell Massachusetts in general. More than 20 cities, towns and regions in Massachusetts submitted separate bids, pushing specific sites.

In September, Amazon said it would accept proposals from cities and states for a new headquarters. The new building could be home to as many as 50,000 employees and cost \$5 billion to build, the company has said. Amazon has said it will release more information about its choice in 2018.

Amazon declined to comment on the dossiers put together by the state.