September 2014

**Letters to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos from *Lowdown* readers**

**Received at Hightower World Headquarters in Austin, Texas**

Dear Jeff Bezos,

 My husband and I have ordered from Amazon many times, as has our large, extended family.  I have recently learned about the ruthless way you treat your employees, your suppliers, and your competitors, and I am appalled.  Look to Costco to learn how to get terrific productivity from your employees by treating them well: good salaries, set schedules, excellent benefits.  Expect high quality and professionalism from your suppliers, but don't squeeze them to the point where they can't make a decent profit.  Stop immediately your disgusting practice of losing great sums of money on a particular product until you've ruined the competition and driven them out of business at which point you can raise the prices again.  Don't be a civic welfare moocher, but charge sales tax like other businesses must.  If you must continue your ruthless business practices, do us all a big favor and don't keep claiming it is to help me the consumer.  I don't want that kind of help of low prices no matter what the true cost to others.

 NOT IN MY NAME!

--Olympia, WA

You don't need to do anything in my name except back off with your driving the small booksellers out of business.  The likes of you don't ever stop, do they?  What you have is never enough; always got to push for more!

I am hereby cancelling any account I had with Amazon!  I do not care to be part of the huge hog gobbling up everyone else.  I'm old enough that you remind me of the railroad tycoons who wanted control of all the railroads -- means of transportation for farmers of goods to market.  We need Teddy Roosevelt back again.

--Sacramento, CA 95816

What you are doing at Amazon is like the creeping crud, destroying everything in its path.  How do you sleep at night knowing how many businesses you have destroyed, how many workers you are exploiting?  When your businesses practices are finally exposed to all, perhaps you will reconsider your methods.  Our small book club has been made aware and will no longer purchase from Amazon.  Somehow maybe someday you will challenge your energy and know-how into improving conditions for all in your country and the world.

Dear Mr Bezos,

 I’ve been a long time user of Amazon, and appreciate your efforts at providing convenience and multiple vendors.

 What I do not like is hearing of your anti-competitive practices. You should be playing by the same rules as everyone else, not destroying your competitors but embracing them. America needs the diversity of many business, small and large. There is a place for you, but not for a bully who destroys our culture in the name of greater profit margins.

 Furthermore, it distresses me that you treat your workers with such contempt that they are unable to earn a decent wage in your employ. Every worker deserves to be treated with dignity and given a living wage, and I expect no less from the companies with which I do business.

 I have dramatically slowed my purchases from Amazon. I do not intend to resume until I am satisfied that you are acting as a good corporate citizen, and treating others fairly. I could have just let it go without telling you why I am not using Amazon so often, but then there would have been no incentive for you to change your ways.

 It is my hope that Amazon will become a model of good behavior in the corporate world. You have the strength to create a better America if you but use your gifts for the common good.

 I look forward to better news about Amazon’s business practices.

--Saint Louis, MO

Dear Jeff Bezos:

What I'm saying to you comes from Jim Hightower's THE LOWDOWN, a tastefully-crafted, 4-page newsletter I get every month for $12 a year with copy in it that is Mr. Hightower's own research, own opinions, and I can tell he's done a lot of work himself on them; my gut instinct is that he's the up-and-up.  He passes my sniff test.  Therefore I believe him when he says that you mistreat your employees, under pay them; you stash profits in Luxemburg to evade taxes, you buy government subsidies, you undercut prices and kick the little local businesses out of existence.

    So, Jeff, I'm quitting using Amazon and beginning to spread the word to that effect.  Jeff, NOT IN MY NAME, NO MORE!

I have recently been learning about the predatory, immoral and possibly illegal business practices of Amazon. I am writing to tell you I will no longer buy anything from Amazon, as the low prices are not worth exploiting workers and suppliers, cheating municipalities out of tax money they should have, and pushing competitors "off a cliff".  I will also be encouraging all those I speak with to do the same.

--Schenectady, NY

I have been a loyal Amazon customer for several years.  I have enjoyed your low prices and fast delivery.  But, it never occurred to me to question these wonderful ways of shopping.  Now that I realize what this can do to local businesses and their owners and employees, I feel very ashamed!

When I checked my account earlier today for some other reason, I think I saw 38 purchases in this month alone.

The only way I can think of to make amends for what you and I have done is to immediately stop doing it and hope our community can return to normal.  I am handicapped and a shut-in but I will find other companies from which I can purchase the things I need.  So what if I have to pay shipping and wait a little longer?  At least my conscience will be clear.

While I am waiting to find out the next thing my family needs, I intend to copy the Hightower "Lowdown" and send it to all my friends.  I suspect they will feel just as used and outraged as I do.

How do you sleep at night anyway?

--JN

Mr. Bezos --

   I write to ask you to re-consider your avoidance of state sales taxes.  I live in St. Louis, not far from the now-famous Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb with more than its share of abject poverty.  Every time you avoid paying sales tax on a transaction, you earn even more money, and a poor person loses state funds that could provide jobs, training, education, healthcare and food stamps.  What ever happened to the thirst for fairness upon which this country was founded?  "From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs."

   I will no longer buy from Amazon, so perhaps you don't need to listen to my opinion.  Please realise that I am not alone.  Deceit and greed may be good business, but they are are not moving the U.S. economy forward.

   I, and many of my friends, want to promote progress and equality.  I invite you to join us.

Sincerely,

St. Louis, Missouri

**Subject:** Not in my name, please

Hi Mr. Bezos,

I have been reading a lot in various media about Amazon’s employment practices, as well as following some of the “wars” between Amazon and the publishing industry. I have been a customer of Amazon for years, I still have some of the little souvenirs you were sending out in the beginning, like the mouse pad with the Groucho Marx quote.  Not only am I a long-time customer, I am a shareholder.  I truly think Amazon has a great business model in terms of making all sorts of goods available easily and quickly.

That being said, I find it disturbing to hear that all these low prices and convenience come at a high cost for your workers and suppliers.  I can only speak for myself, of course, but low prices can be too low if they mean workers go without a living wage or are working under untenable conditions.  This is the problem I have with Wal-Mart, and frankly I avoid shopping there for that reason.  I really like Amazon, and it would be painful to boycott, but I will start looking at other sources.

I have heard it reported that your focus is on helping consumers.  As one of your consumers, I am saying that I have a conscience about these issues, and I do take this into account when I decide where to buy things.  So, it is ok with me if prices have to go up to rectify some of these issues.  After all, the more low-wage workers there are in the world, the fewer potential consumers for all kinds of business!

Thank you for your attention!

--Alexandria VA 22302

Dear Jeff,

I thought the following limerick tells it all.

Amazon’s owner, Jeff Bezos

Sells products at prices that please us.

He’ll soon boast in his Post;

“The competition is Toast”!

Then; like juice from a lemon, he’ll squeeze us.

-- Bill