

Tech: Workspace	Bookshelves	available on request	available on request	You can ask for bookshelves. Amazon engineers tend to have more room for them, though.	Amazon
Tech: Workspace	Phone	audix	audix	Both companies use the truly bizarre and annoying Audix software for their phones. "Press 1 to record messages. Press 2 to explode your phone. Press 3 to end the call. Press 4 to delete all your messages. Press 5 for personal options. Press 0 to listen to your frigging messages." Who designed that menu? My God!	Audix
Tech: Workspace	Chair	Comfortable, ergonomic - Regular onsite visits by ergo specialist	Cheap, painful	Engineers spend most of their time in their chairs. Google's are really nice. Amazon's chairs are hard, minimally adjustable. Amazon engineers often buy their own chairs and bring them in. (You can get a decent chair at Amazon, but you have to get special permission, and they're not "breathable").	Google
Tech: Workspace	Desk	Standard adjustable	Door desk	Amazon door desks are their legendary symbol of frugality. They are non-adjustable in height (though you can ask for a new one), have uncomfortable a-frame joists that could sever an artery, and tend to splinter. Quite ironically, the door desks are more expensive to manufacture than standard-issue office desks. Google's desks are, you know, desks. Smooth, comfortable, rounded corners and edges, adjustable. Just what you'd want.	Google
Tech: Operations	Machine Allocation	Easy	Hard	Both companies are in a perpetual state of machine shortage. Google apparently realized this before Amazon did, because their allocation and requisitioning system is much more mature, and the response time on machine requests is much faster. Amazon's making definite improvements here, but has a long way to go.	Google
Tech: Operations	Operations Staff	Extensive	Minimal	This is probably the single biggest difference between Amazon and Google. Amazon doesn't hire software people to manage production; they make their application developers do it. This is analogous to building a city in which the construction workers are also the firemen. Google has many, many job roles in operations: launch engineers, site reliability engineers, release engineers, network engineers, etc. Google has much larger teams for the non-development roles (e.g. security engineering) that Amazon -does- permit. Amazon's production systems have the distinct feel of always being barely up, with development teams perpetually responding to on-call crises on a daily basis. Its all spit and baling wire. Google's systems run orders of magnitude more smoothly, precisely because they hire a huge staff of brilliant people whose sole job is to make that happen.	Google
Tech: Operations	Pager Load	5% or less	20% or more, with some teams at 50% or higher	Pagers are a fact of life at Amazon. All engineers feel the burden. Being the oncall for a week effectively prevents you from doing any development for that week, AND the week before (because you're prepping), AND the week after (because you're exhausted). The average team has a 6-week pager rotation, so the average engineer is 50% utilized towards development. Being paged night after night is the #1 cause of engineers leaving Amazon; it's the #1 cause of feature slip; it's the #1 cause of years of extreme bitterness after employees leave. [Funny, but I never minded it myself. I wasn't married then, though, and I tend to keep late hours.] At Google, teams have pagers, but the difference is simply night and day. A stressed-out team at Google, during a particularly bad week of operational issues, will take their lunches back to their desks, and stay until 9pm instead of 7pm. Amazon people will understand how comically lightweight that is compared to their lot in life.	Google

Tech: Job Roles	Internships	second-class	first-class	Amazon.com interns are basically full-time, regular employees with full access to everything a normal employee has. At Google, the interns don't have access to the code base, documentation, and large parts of the intranet. They have to put in tickets to relax access to specific files on a case-by-case basis. This means everything's much harder as an intern, and it puts undue burden on the team hosting the intern. This is an example of Google being foolishly over-secretive. (Amazon is usually the company with more -internal- secrecy, which hurts them more than they usually realize. But they have no such policy towards interns.)	Amazon
Tech: Job Roles	Non-Technical Tech Managers	Never	Sometimes	Google doesn't hire non-programmers to be managers. Even their directors and VPs have computer science degrees, often Ph.D.s. Amazon has increasingly been hiring non-programmers to manage technical teams. Note that these are the same people responsible for hiring decisions (see below.)	debatable
Tech: Job Roles	Technical Career Options	2-pronged	3-pronged	At Google you can be an individual contributor or a tech lead / manager. Amazon has a third category, Technical Program Manager, responsible for shepherding projects rather than teams. Amazon and Google both have Product Managers, but at Google they're comp sci graduates and they tend to split the TPM responsibilities with the tech leads. Amazon argues constantly about what the role (and technical ability) of a TPM should be, which seems like a clear sign that it's not the right role. The situation is clearer and cleaner at Google.	Google
Tech: Job Roles	QA	Google has QA	Amazon doesn't	Google hires strong QA engineers with B.S. and M.S. degrees. They use their skills to write sophisticated test suites, automated testing, monitoring, and many other kinds of automation. As a result, Google systems have few bugs and stay up all the time. QA engineers are considered first-class engineers. Amazon believes in pushing the QA function off to the customer (or to the developers), so Amazon's offerings are buggy and unstable. They make it up with world-class customer service, but it's expensive.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Monitors	dual 24-inch LCDs, extras available as needed	one 19-inch LCD, 2nd one on request	Google's standard dual-monitor setup is awesome. 2-head Nvidia card with 512mb, super-bright 24-inch Dell screens. I have a third 19-inch LCD for my laptop. Just unbeatable. Amazon recently upgraded from 19-inch to 21-inch LCDs after they heard what "some competitors" were using, but they haven't rolled them out to everyone. Amazon won't give you a dual-head video card, though.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Laptop	PC or Powerbook	PC	Google gives you a choice of a 15-inch Powerbook (or 12" if you prefer) or a Windows laptop. They're giving out Intel powerbooks as of May 2006. Both windows and mac laptops are fully supported by Helpdesk. Macs are -not- an option at Amazon, and are not supported by deskside or infrastructure if you buy your own. Google gives you a very nice laptop bag stocked with tons of goodies for travel and international travel. Amazon gives you a bag and a power cord.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Keyboard and Mouse	Anything you want	Standard or Microsoft	Google stocks many varieties of ergo keyboards and mice, including some fairly odd-looking ones. Google also has regular visits from ergonomics experts, who will help you overhaul your office. Amazon doesn't typically pay for special keyboards or other peripherals, so employees buy their own.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Headphones	Sennheisers	bring your own	If you walk into any Tech Stop at Google and ask for headphones, they'll hand you a beautiful set of Sennheisers, no questions asked.	Google

Tech: Equipment	Speakers	decent	none	You can also get PC speakers, as many as you need, from the Google tech stops. They're nothing fancy, but they get the job done.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Accessories	readily available	special-order	Google tech stops have all kinds of goodies, including wrist pads, mouse pads, splitters, hubs, phone headsets, special monitor mounts, and lots of other stuff. You can get some of those things at Amazon, but it usually requires so much effort and patience that you're better off buying your own.	Google
Tech: Equipment	Computer	standard issue	standard issue	Not much to say. They're about the same. Most engineers at both places run Linux.	neither
Tech: Documentation	Wiki	Fancy	Minimalist	Both companies rely heavily on Wiki for internal docs. Amazon has at least two wikis that don't communicate, which is a problem. Google uses a Twiki with customized templates and macros. Google's seems to have fewer outages (as in, I've never experienced one.)	Google
Tech: Documentation	Design Docs	Central Repository	Ad Hoc	Google requires design docs for any project longer than a week, and they must meet rigorous guidelines, and be reviewed by several people. At Amazon, some teams do design docs, but they have no standards, no requirements, no guidelines, no consistency, and no support. Google's design docs are a treasure-trove of information for the engineers.	Google
Tech: Documentation	Doc Templates	Centralized	Ad Hoc	Google has a small number of carefully designed and well-chosen HTML templates for their key documentation types, complete with nice stylesheets and italicized text to replace with your own. Amazon has a sprawling, unsearchable mess of competing templates strewn across the company's machines. Every document at Google looks nice; nearly every document at Amazon (the few that exist) looks amateurish, simply for the lack of good templates.	Google
Tech: Documentation	New Hire Courses	1 week of training	3 days of boot camp	Google has every engineer spend their first week as a Noogler in Mountain View, during which they have a handful of lectures; the rest of the time is supposed to be spent doing CodeLabs, talking to your mentor, and other new-hire orientation and setup. Amazon finally introduced a Developer Boot Camp. It's been extremely well-received by new hires, but Amazon has a perpetual shortage of volunteers to teach the course, because Amazon never rewards anyone for anything extracurricular.	Google
Tech: Documentation	Tutorials	Many (CodeLab)	None	Google has a large and growing set of CodeLabs, which are detailed, self-guided tutorials for major infrastructural components. They're invaluable to the new engineer. Amazon has nothing like this whatsoever.	Google
Tech: Documentation	Tech Talks	Several per day	Monthly (at best)	Not documentation per se, except at Google they're always videoed and archived in easily accessible formats. Google has many internal and external speakers give tech talks, approximately 2 to 4 per day, every day. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours of tech talks in Google's archive. Amazon has tech talks a few times a year, and they're sometimes recorded, but the support is minimal and hard to come by.	Google
Tech: Documentation	Project Database	Large and up to date	Nonexistent	Google has an internal database for keeping track of every project in the company in great detail. Amazon does quarterly fire drills, asking everyone what they worked on for the last 3 months.	Google

Tech: Documentation	Tech Writers	Many	Almost none	Amazon tries to minimize hiring in non-software-engineer roles, so they have almost no tech writers - when I left, they had 3 for the whole company. Google has a large staff of technical writers, and it shows. Their documentation is high-quality, and any team can ask for tech writer support.	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	VPN	Good	Great	Google has those old-fashioned calculator-like things that require you to enter a password and receive a challenge, then type it into your computer. Yuck. Google VPN's only saving grace is that the authentication handshake only takes about 2 seconds, and the connection is pretty fast and very reliable. Amazon has nifty VPN hardware devices that velcro onto your laptop, and let you log in securely from any network, with no hassle.	Amazon
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	Intranet	Extensive and growing	Decent but unsupported	Amazon had a corporate intranet group for a few years, during which time their intranet became very nice. Amazon disbanded the group since they weren't building production software, and the intranet has been on autopilot ever since. Google has a huge focus on their internal systems, with many dedicated groups contributing to their massive and well-organized intranet (called "MOMA", after the Museum of Modern Art).	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	Internal Search	Excellent	Good	Google, not surprisingly, has a high-quality internal search engine that indexes multiple data sources. Amazon has the Google Search Appliance, although their package lacks capacity to index their entire intranet.	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	NFS	Huge, fast, and backed up	Deprecated and dying fast	Amazon gave up on trying to get NFS to scale internally. Developer and team machines are now balkanized. Google makes NFS scale just fine, and everyone's home directory is on NFS, with fancy snapshotting auto-backup mechanisms. Everything has well-defined locations at Google; at Amazon you just have to know where things are.	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	Helpdesk	24-hour 800 numbers and Tech Stops	deskside support during office hours	Google has a full time helpdesk for issues with networking, Windows, the phones, facilities, and other problems. They also have Tech Stops, where you go for just about any computer setup problem at all, and MV has at least one 24-hour Tech Stop.	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	Ticket System	simple	complicated	Amazon's ticket system (Remedy) has been criticized internally for years. It has a labyrinthine interface. Google's ticket system is incredibly simple: you enter a synopsis and description, and hit Enter. That's it. Someone figures out how to route it for you. At Amazon you have to categorize it yourself, and it can take days to bounce around to the right owner.	Google
Tech: Corporate Infrastructure	Email	GMail	Outlook	Google employees can use Google products for email and calendaring, and get to use upcoming features if they choose. Amazon folks have been forced to use Outlook, to the chagrin of many, with its slow/useless search function, slow startup times, frequent crashes, security holes, and cumbersome interface. Oh, and it's not available on Linux or the Mac.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Languages	C++, Java, Python	C++, Java, Perl	Both companies use other languages, but each of them has a "big 3" that are officially allowed and supported. Amazon is -very- slightly more supportive of teams using other languages if they prefer; e.g. some teams use Lisp and some use Ruby. Google is adamantly opposed to introducing more languages in production.	Amazon

Tech: Code Base	Nightly Build	Ad Hoc	Centralized	Amazon has put tremendous effort into developing a build system that creates pre-built, versioned libraries and packages, which developers can link against. Google (which has much less code than Amazon) gave up on trying to make this work, so every developer has to build everything from scratch. Surprisingly, Amazon build times are still quite a bit longer, perhaps because of the dependencies problem. But having pre-built, versioned, shared packages is a big win.	Amazon
Tech: Code Base	Code Review Tool	OK	Very nice	Amazon has a really spiffy web-based code review tool. Google has a usable but clunky system based on Tk.	Amazon
Tech: Code Base	Code Layout	One big tree	Ad hoc	Google's code base is far better organized than Amazon's, because they bothered to organize it from the start. Amazon's is a complete mess, with few conventions, many hand-rolled build systems, and a nightmarish dependencies problem that's taking years to unravel.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Monitoring	Standardized	Getting there	Amazon obsesses over metrics and monitoring, but Google seems to do a better job of it, for reasons I haven't quite figured out. Amazon has invested a lot of effort in it for the past 2 to 3 years, though, and their centralized, standardized service monitoring is improving dramatically. Google's is probably better because of the requirement that everyone use standardized components; Amazon engineers prefer to build their own stuff than use someone else's, as a general rule.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Distributed Computing	Pervasive and brilliant	Ad hoc and flaky	Google's scale is many orders of magnitude greater than Amazon's. Amazon thinks their transactional systems are higher-volume, and that Google doesn't have transactions; they're mistaken. Google has been doing things for years that Amazon has dreamed for years of doing years from now. The two companies have taken radically different approaches to the problem, and at least for the moment, Google's is vastly superior by almost any objective criterion: scalability, availability, latency, throughput, visibility, usability, you name it.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Readability	Outstanding	Unattended	Google has programming style guides (mandatory compliance), rigorous code "readability reviews" for every language that every engineer must pass, and strictly audited code reviews. Google runs a tight, tight ship, and you're not allowed to code any old way you want. As a result, Google's code all looks the same and is uniformly high-quality. Amazon is more like the Old West; engineers tip-toe around code reviews so as not to offend, and anyone can write their code (and format it) however they please. Some teams at Amazon have some conventions, but there is nothing global or universal.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Java Support	Grudging but solid	Grudging and gradually improving	Java is a first-class language at Google, and they had to fight hard for it. Java is not quite as first-class at Amazon, although they've seen great strides in the past couple of years. Since Google accepted Java a few years before Amazon did, Google's Java support is much more uniform and high-quality; there's almost nothing you can't do in Java at Google. Amazon has a long way to go on this front.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Deployment System	Unparalleled	Very good	Google and Amazon both developed several generations of systems for specifying and deploying filesets to production. Both systems are quite good, but Google's has the edge, largely because it's equally flexible but much simpler to use. And Google's is tied closely to their domain-specific languages for distributed computing, which makes it the clear victor. (Amazon's desperately needed DSLs for years, but doesn't fully recognize it yet.)	Google

Tech: Code Base	Configuration	Standardized via DSL	Designed by H.P. Lovecraft	Configuration is one of the nastier problems at Amazon, and has been for years. Amazon has at least fifteen different and incompatible ways of specifying configuration for production systems, and none of them are satisfactory. Their systems have thousands upon thousands of fragile, poorly-documented, labyrinthine configuration flags. Google has one system with an in-house domain-specific language, and it's to die for.	Google
Tech: Code Base	Standardized RPC	Proprietary	Proprietary + web services + legacy protocols	Google and Amazon both have proprietary, standardized RPC mechanisms for communication between services. Amazon has a vastly greater focus on web services, which gives them certain natural advantages (e.g. language neutrality, communication with outside world, existing standards and documentation). Amazon also, unfortunately, has several political wars going on about RPC, such that they still have several legacy protocols to support. Google's system, despite its weaknesses, is clean, simple, fast, and everyone uses it for everything.	Google, for now.
Tech: Code Base	Standardized persistence	Proprietary	Oracle	Both companies have more or less standard solutions for persistence, although they're very different. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses.	neither
Tech: Code Base	Build System	Very clean	Pretty clean	Both companies have usable build systems. Google's has better support for their three main languages; Amazon's tends to focus overly much on C++, because C++ causes so many problems at Amazon. (Problems that have by and large been avoided at Google.) Amazon's system is written in Perl; Google's is in Python. Both of them work well enough, and both of them are woefully understaffed.	neither
Tech: Code Base	Code Search	Proprietary	LXR	Engineers rely on code-base search tools more than most companies realize. LXR (the Linux Cross-Referencer) was voted the most valuable tool at Amazon (to the chagrin of dev tools, who didn't write LXR), and Google only created a code-search tool in 2006. They're actually both decent, and neither is anywhere near as good as it should be.	neither
Tech: Code Base	IDEs	ad-hoc	ad-hoc	Neither company has an IDE with extensive knowledge of the internal systems and code abstractions. At both companies, Java developers use primarily Eclipse and IntelliJ, and everyone else uses Emacs or vi. There are helper modules and functions at both companies, but neither company realizes how useful it would be to staff a real group around this function.	neither
Perks: Food	Lunch at Headquarters	Several large cafeterias at MV headquarters	Partly subsidized cafeteria at corporate HQ in PacMed building; open for lunch (but not dinner)	The Amazon cafeteria is very good, with tasty food that's reasonably priced. The Google cafeteria is over-the-top crazy good, with many international selections. It's all-you-can-eat, and completely free.	Google
Perks: Food	Lunch at Design Centers	Daily catered lunch buffet, salad bar, soups, fruit bar, dessert bar	None	At non-HQ sites, Amazon has no food offerings; Google has delicious, 5-star restaurant quality, free, all-you-can-eat, daily catered lunches with vegetarian and non-vegetarian selections at all their design centers, once they reach sufficient size (maybe 20-30 people).	Google
Perks: Food	Breakfast	Cafe in MV HQ, offered on some days at other sites	None	Google tends to scale up their food offerings at a location as the location grows. Kirkland currently has breakfast one day a week.	Google
Perks: Food	Dinner	Cafe in MV (?) and delivered dinner at dev centers	None	The Google Kirkland office currently has dinner delivered from a different local restaurant each night, and there's always plenty of food.	Google

Perks: Food	TGIF	Wines, beers, cheeses, hors d'oeuvres and finger foods on Friday afternoons	Everyone leaves early	Google has a "TGIF" party every Friday (in lieu of dinner), in which the execs give updates to the company and answer questions from the crowd. Some are just "social" TGIFs, where people mingle and chat (no presentation). Then most people go home. At Amazon, people just go home.	Google
Perks: Food	Surprise snacks	occasionally	only at funerals	Google often has unannounced morning or afternoon snacks arrive: donuts, ice cream, biscotti, or other treats. Usually there's no reason given. Amazon has cake and sometimes even catered food when an employee leaves that they're sad to lose, on the employee's last day. "I should quit more often!" is usually what the employee in question says at these occasions.	Google
Perks: Food	Snack stations	Everywhere: usually at least 2 per floor in every Google building	potluck	Google offers a staggeringly vast variety and quantity of free snack foods, both healthy and not: chips, candy, fruit, dried fruit, nuts, trail mix, energy bars, breakfast cereals, string cheese, yogurt, crisp veggies, and much more. You really wouldn't believe it. At Amazon, some employees bring homemade snacks once in a while.	Google
Perks: Food	Beverages	Free non-alcoholic beverages, many types	Paid vending machines (usually soda)	Google offers a correspondingly vast selection of free drinks: Starbucks Frappuccinos and double-shots, Snapples and Diet Snapples, sodas and diet sodas, Soba drinks, Odwalla/Naked fruit juices, RedBull-type energy drinks, Arizona teas, many kinds of bottled water and fruit juices, lemonades, and just about anything else you could find in a grocery store. Amazon has Coke machines here and there - the kind that are always either out of your favorite selection, or eating your change.	Google
Perks: Food	Outdoor Barbeques	Every few weeks during summer, typically	Outdoor what?	Google often has lunch outside when the weather is nice: huge barbeques with hamburgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers, juicy bratwursts, salmon burgers, and other favorite tastes and smells. In Kirkland they do it a few blocks away (walking distance) at the Marina. At Mountain View they do it in the huge, grassy courtyard between the buildings. Don't know about other sites. (PacMed actually does this once or twice in the summer.)	Google
Perks: Food	Coffee	Do-it-yourself espresso machines and easier coffee options at all micro-kitchens	Espresso stand at HQ; Starbucks across the street at Union Station (both full-price)	Google kitchens (usually at least 2 per floor) have extensive coffee-making equipment, flavored coffees, flavored syrups, lots of sugar and sugar substitutes, cups, stirrers, etc., and cold half-and-half, milk, soy milk, nonfat milk, and Coffee Mate (tm) in various flavors. Amazon has old-fashioned coffee makers in some locations (the kind where you brew a pot of Folgers or Mr. Coffee). Amazon also has a non-subsidized independent espresso vendor onsite at PacMed HQ.	Google, unless you insist on paying someone to make your coffee
Perks: Food	Team lunches	as appropriate	as appropriate	Managers at both companies can take their teams out to restaurants and expense the bill. Both companies tend to start asking questions if you do it more than once a month. Google's probably -slightly- more forgiving about it, but it's roughly a wash.	neither
Perks: Parties	Holiday Party	Extravagant	Nice	In Kirkland, the holiday party was in the Space Needle; they rented the whole restaurant floor and had amazing food, open bar, dancing, a talented magician, free photos, gifts for everyone, and lots of tasteful decor. Amazon's holiday party is usually a cold warehouse full of drunken people who don't know each other. Also, Amazon's "holiday" party is in February.	Google

Perks: Parties	Free Movies	Usually at least quarterly	Usually at least yearly	Amazon took us to see 3 movies in my 7 years there. In my 1 year at Google, we've seen at least four movies so far. Google also took everyone to see Cirque du Soleil: Varekai, which was a very cool show. I'd venture that Google has company outings like this 4 to 10 times as often as Amazon.	Google
Perks: Parties	Open House	monthly (roughly)	yearly (roughly)	Google often has open-house events, in which they'll do a tech talk (or just throw a party) and open it up to either the general public or invited guests. They almost always have an open bar and great food, and it's usually a really nice event. I think Amazon's done a few times, but nowhere near as often, and they're nowhere near as generous with the food and drink.	Google
Perks: Parties	Company Ski Trip	Extravagant	Company what?	Google has a yearly ski trip; they rent an entire mountain in Tahoe and fly everyone in who wants to go. It's a massive undertaking, and unbelievable fun. One benefit to Amazon, though: lots of skiing nearby, so employees sometimes head out at 4pm and do night skiing 20 min away (until 10pm!)	Google once a year; Amazon the rest of the winter.
Perks: Parties	Summer Picnic	Fancy	Fancy	Both companies have summer picnics, and both companies do pretty well with it. Amazon's tends to be 60 miles east in Barn Country with a 1-lane road in and out, so the traffic is bad when the food runs out. Google always has leftover food. Otherwise, they're both pretty fun. In Kirkland they do it at the Woodland Park Zoo, which is neat.	neither
Perks: Parties	Halloween Party	Extravagant at HQ, none at other places yet	Decent	Amazon holds a yearly Halloween party, usually in the same cold warehouse where they have the holiday party. I hear Google has an amazing one down in MV, but they haven't yet emulated this at the other sites yet.	neither, at least at HQ
Perks: Misc	Holiday Gift	Every employee, every year	None	Google's company gift last year was a high-quality Google-logo bicycle helmet, one for every Googler worldwide.	Google
Perks: Misc	Free Schwag	Large bins stocked at least quarterly with Google-logo clothes, toys, and misc merchandise	Only if you steal it at recruiting events	The schwag at Google goes pretty fast (it's usually all gone within a day or two), but they fill those bins up with enough for everyone, and then some. Amazon typically reserves their schwag for prospective employees, not real ones.	Google
Perks: Misc	Concierge	worldwide	none	Google has a worldwide 24-hour concierge service for all employees. Amazon has... employees.	Google
Perks: Misc	Housing discounts	some locations	no locations	You can get \$500 off your first month's rent in the ultra-nice Tera apartments across the street from Google Kirkland. I've never heard of Amazon offering anything like that.	Google
Perks: Misc	"Passport" membership	Kirkland	nowhere	Possibly because Mountain View has more perks, Kirkland employees all got a Passport card, good at most restaurants in the greater Seattle area, that gives you a free 2nd entree every time you dine with any of them.	Google
Perks: Misc	Prius discount	everywhere	nowhere	Google will subsidize \$5000 of any employee purchase of a Toyota Prius (hybrid car)	Google
Perks: Misc	Educational Leave	manager approval	none	Google recently began a program in which engineers may take unpaid leave to return to school and obtain advanced degrees. They subsidize some portion of it, if it's a work-related degree.	Google
Perks: Misc	Educational Courses	Occasionally	Rarely	Google frequently offers employees free courses for topics such as financial planning and tax preparation. Amazon has experimented with offering engineers technical courses, but as there is nobody to administer or plan these things, they're usually one-offs and peter out after a while.	Google

Perks: Misc	Project Shirts	Usually	Rarely	Google usually creates a custom t-shirt for every reasonably large project launch. They make enough for everyone in the company to get one, typically. Amazon has made nice fleeces for a few projects, but they only make them for the team that worked on the project.	Google, mostly
Perks: Luxury	Massage	Onsite chair and table massage available (for pay) at all sufficiently large sites. Subsidized in Kirkland (\$20 for 1-hour table massage with licensed pro masseuse)	Free beatings	Google has private massage rooms and high-quality massage therapists. You get a free 1-hour massage coupon when you join, on your birthday each year, and occasionally as a reward (e.g. for helping a recruiter with a bunch of resume screens). At Amazon you'd probably get reprimanded for going and paying for a massage during office hours.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Massage Chairs	Several per floor	Sells them for \$4000	Google doesn't skimp; their massage chairs are the high-end ones that cost upwards of \$3000. Anyone can use them at any time. You can see what they look like on Amazon's website.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Grand Pianos	A few at MV HQ	Sells those, too.	Google has some lovely Steinways in common areas in Mountain View. Sometimes employees will play them at night while you work. Really nice.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Custom Artwork	Virtually every hallway on every floor	Building entrances	Google has lots custom Google-logo artwork on the walls: usually replicas of their whimsically modified corporate logos on their website. Amazon has plain old Amazon.com logos, framed, in some of their lobbies. The walls at Amazon are usually bare, other than dirt smudges.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Couches and Squashy Chairs	Everywhere	Nowhere	Google fills all their little common areas with comfy furniture, so people can sit and have impromptu meetings outside offices. I only saw three couches in 7 years at Amazon, all brought in by employees to put in their offices.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Movie Rooms	Many	A few	Google has many conference rooms equipped with high-quality projectors and screens, and a few are designated specifically for movies and gaming. Amazon has a few VERY large conference rooms with projectors and screens, and you can use them for gaming on the weekends, if you're brave.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Plants	Lots	None	There's actual indoor greenery at Google: plants, shrubs, flowers. All of it nicely chosen and situated and tended, just for ambiance (and oxygen). Amazon is a barren wasteland by comparison; the relatively rare plants are brought in by (and usually killed by) employees.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Game Rooms	Many	Few	Amazon has a few pinball machines, a few arcade games, one or two foosball tables, and a few other odds and ends. Google has all that, plus ping-pong, air hockey, dart boards, arcade consoles with thousands of preloaded games, pool tables, and who knows what else. It varies by site. Kirkland has a pretty cool game room off the main cafeteria; Mountain View has several game rooms and lots of games in open areas.	Google
Perks: Luxury	Decorations	Everywhere	Elsewhere	Google facilities are always full of brightly-colored, fun, totally useless stuff: big green shade leaves, dangling colored balls, lava lamps, teeny round rugs, glass doohickeys, glowing plastic thingies -- whatever the interior decorator thought would look pretty and make people feel like they're working somewhere cool. Amazon is a maze of twisty little passages, all alike, and all bereft of anything "fun" or "colorful". The Amazon headquarters building is -deliberately- decorated with industrial rivets and long ducts, like something out of the movie Brazil.	Google

Perks: Luxury	Cave Bear Skeletons	None	One giant one on display just inside the entrance to PacMed.	Nobody knows what that Cave Bear skeleton is for, nor what it has to do with Amazon.com, nor why they've propped up its bone, uh, bone, in the erect position. It just appeared one day: the bizarre whim of an unpredictable billionaire. It's a bit creepy.	Google. Please, Google, don't ever get a cave bear skeleton, and if you do, please make it not so obviously male.
Misc: Stuff Not Covered Elsewhere	Design Centers	Lots	A handful	Google's pretty close-mouthed about their locations, but when they open a site, they have to put up job postings, so it's pretty easy to see where they've opened up shop for development. They have many more locations than Amazon, and if you've been tracking them both, Google's growing faster. That's good news for expats who want to keep working but return to their home country. And good news for employees worldwide who want to travel a little as part of their job.	Google
Misc: Stuff Not Covered Elsewhere	Travel Policy	Nearly unrestricted	Heavily restricted	Google encourages engineers to travel between dev centers, and even sign up to work in other sites for a few weeks or months at a time. Google foots the travel bill, and the housing bill up to certain limits. Amazon encourages employees to try to minimize their travel, and you must have a pressing need (and VP approval) before you can visit one of the other sites.	Google
Misc: Stuff Not Covered Elsewhere	Review Process	Twice a year; self-review and peer-review based. No curve.	Once a year; self-review and manager-review based. Graded on a curve.	Amazon has forced quotas for percentile "buckets"; e.g. there can only be so many "A" performers (which is the rating that gets you raises and stock). At Amazon, your evaluation is based on how well your manager can argue your case in a big arena with all the other managers. There is much horse-trading ("I screwed you this year, but I'll make it up to you next year; I promise") and other drama. Promotions only happen when you quit. At Google, it's all peer-review based. Promotions are based on merit and happen regularly. Peer review feedback is transparent to everyone. It's possible for everyone to be an "A" performer. Google's review process is fairly lightweight. At Amazon, it causes months of flurry and angst.	Google
Misc: Stuff Not Covered Elsewhere	Corporate Motto	Don't Be Evil; Organize World's Information And Make It Accessible To Everyone	Earth's Most Customer-Centric Company; Find, Discover and Buy Anything You Want Online	In the final analysis, Amazon cares about their customers but not their employees. Google seems to care about their users and employees about equally. Amazon is famously frugal, to the point of pound-foolishness. Google is lavish with employees; there's no better word for it.	Google
Misc: Stuff Not Covered Elsewhere	Hiring Process	Candidates choose team after being hired; interviewers don't communicate; committees make hiring decisions	Candidates apply for specific teams; interviewers communicate and potentially bias each other; hiring managers make hiring decisions for their own teams	Google has separate, unbiased committees evaluate candidates and make hiring decisions. At Amazon, individual teams recruit and hire new members. Amazon has a "Bar Raisers" program to help combat the obvious undesirable consequences of their process, but they still have a high false positive rate, and wind up firing 5%-10% of their staff each year as a result. Google has almost no false positives, albeit at the cost of a painfully high false negative (i.e. unfortunate rejection) rate. Both systems have strengths and flaws, but Google winds up with a slightly higher hiring bar in the end.	Google, in the short term. Long-term, Amazon may be generating less ill-will from false negatives.

Facilities	Common Areas	40% or more of the floor	10% or less of the floor	Amazon crams people into every square inch of space in their facilities. Aside from hallways, conference rooms, cafeterias and the reception areas, Amazon is a sea of cubes and offices on every floor of every facility. Google has dedicated common areas, from tiny to vast, balanced tastefully through every floor of every facility. The common areas have couches, snack bins, bean chairs, massage chairs, display cases and artwork, bookshelves with entire libraries of interesting reading, and sometimes games, picnic tables, or other oddments. It's very, very hard to find a place to sit down at Amazon.	Google
Facilities	Restrooms	Plentiful and fancy (similar to a hotel or resort)	Sparse and stinky	Google has nice private showers and lockers in many of their restrooms, and they stock fresh towels, toiletries, hair dryers, and other amenities. MV has bidets available. The restrooms are cleaned thoroughly twice a day, and someone posts new stuff to read in stalls and above urinals at least weekly. The toilets are usually auto-flushing. Amazon's restrooms are overworked and overcrowded hand-flush affairs, and smell like a saloon loo for up to 2 hours after lunch. At one facility, years ago, they had a bathroom straight out of the movie "Trainspotting" for over a year.	Google
Facilities	Conference Rooms	Plentiful and fancy	Sparse and cheap	Google has many conference rooms: on the order of 5 times as many as Amazon, per capita. Which is ironic, because Amazon's a far more meeting-driven culture. Google puts high-quality videoconferencing equipment in essentially every conference room. The furniture is uniformly comfortable, and rooms are always stocked with pens, paper, and other supplies. Amazon conference rooms tend to be small, cramped, poorly-lit with cheap, red-spectrum fluorescent bulbs, stocked with uncomfortable chairs and door-desk tables, and usually contain broken telephones.	Google
Facilities	Interview Rooms	Some	None	Amazon doesn't differentiate between interview rooms and conference rooms. Google does use conference rooms for interviewing, but they also have "phone booth" rooms for doing phone screens, plus certain rooms that are designed and designated specifically for interviewing, with comfy, modern furniture, good natural lighting, and lots of whiteboard space and supplies.	Google
Facilities	Supply Rooms	Several per floor	Alternating floors	Google has well-stocked rooms filled with all the office supplies you could ever need. Amazon has them too, but with a more limited selection, and they're harder to find. Amazon is clearly conflicted about giving away "free" office supplies, so they don't restock very often, and it can be especially hard to find useful supplies like Dry-Erase markers, erasers, whiteboard cleaner, and Kleenex. There are always plenty of red pens and number-2 pencils.	Google
Facilities	Printers	Several per floor, color and b/w	2 per floor, b/w only	Amazon doesn't believe in color printing, and color printouts are disallowed there. The printers are perpetually out of toner, out of paper, broken, disabled, dismantled, or busy printing someone else's 300-page job. Amazon "loves" printing huge packets of metrics information for every meeting, though, so when you need to print something, allow 2 hours (minimum) before the meeting for getting your job printed. Google has lots of high-quality b/w and color printers, always stocked and in good repair, and they have a neat per-facility graphical map for locating and adding printers with a single click.	Google

Facilities	Ventilation	On until 8pm, 7 days	On until 6pm, off weekends	Amazon shuts the ventilation (A/C) off much earlier than Google each day, and it's off all weekend, during which time it heats up badly and starts to smell like a locker room in summer. The lights go off at 7pm, and it's hard to find the override switches for the lights (even harder for the A/C; they're basically "secret"). At Google, the A/C is on from 8am to 8pm daily (typically), and the lights are on until midnight. The override switches are all clearly labeled by the elevators.	Google
Facilities	Parking	Free, and more spots than at Amazon	Partly subsidized, limited spaces	Parking is a hassle at both companies, but it usually holds out at Google until 11am or so. Amazon parking is not typically free (except at HQ), and they'll only subsidize up to \$80/month; you shell out the rest out of pocket. Parking in downtown Seattle ranges from \$160 to \$260/month. Both companies are moving towards valet parking at HQ, and both companies offer free bus passes.	Google
Facilities	Workspace	Fishbowls, shared offices, some cubes	Mostly cubes, managers have offices	Google engineers get less personal workspace than Amazon engineers. Amazon favors individual cubes, and small offices for managers. Amazon managers sometimes share 2-person offices. Google managers are usually located out on the floor with the engineers. Google favors putting teams very close together, sitting next to one another in close proximity. Amazon engineers generally get larger desks with more horizontal space.	Hard to say; both approaches have pros and cons. Probably Amazon.
Compensation	Stock Refreshers	Typically no yearly stock grants - It's not a given but if you're performing well, you can actually get more stock options.	Typically have yearly grants	Most companies keep the golden handcuffs going by issuing additional stock grants (with a 2- to 5- year vesting schedule) to strong performers each year, so they don't hit a "vesting cliff" 4-5 years after their hire date. Amazon still relies on this approach for retaining their top performers. By many accounts, Google doesn't typically issue yearly refreshers.	Amazon
Compensation	Signing Bonus	Sometimes.	Almost always.	Amazon usually offers a higher signing bonus to compensate for the lower base pay. It's a nice hunk of cash, but you're making less for the rest of your career there. Most Amazon folks agree it would be better to have had a higher base.	Amazon, as long as you swear an oath to quit after 1 year, and stick to that plan.
Compensation	G.P.A.	Matters a lot.	Matters somewhat.	Usually only an issue for college hires at Amazon, but Google checks GPAs even for experienced candidates. Google seems more grade-elitist than Amazon.	debatable
Compensation	Pay Scale	No cap	\$140k salary cap across the board	Google's average base pay seems to be higher, although it varies by individual. The difference becomes more pronounced at higher seniority levels. Amazon had a \$120k salary cap until very recently when it was raised \$20k, and nobody (not even directors and VPs) makes more than the cap.	Google
Compensation	Bonuses	15% is minimum - Max is 175%. Incl the 2X co multiplier, it's 30% for meeting expectations (not exceeding which is higher)	3% on average	Google has individual and company bonus multipliers; in several recent years the company multiplier has been 2x, yielding an average 30% bonus across the board. Top performers can get 100% or more; it's far from uncommon.	Google
Compensation	Stock Vesting	Usually 4 years, 25% after first year, then 1/48 monthly - RSU's actually vest yearly	Usually 5 years, 20% after first year, then quarterly	Vesting can have complicated schedules for any individual at any company, so take this with a grain of salt.	Google

Benefits	Employee Discount	Only at Google Store	10% up to \$1000 max	Google has a cute store with Google schwag, and employees get 50% off, but it only has about 100 items. Nooglers get \$150 of free goods (up to 3 items) when they start at Google. Amazon has a 10% employee discount that saves you up to \$100 max, per year, if you buy \$1000 of merchandise from Amazon.com. Note that a Barnes & Noble readers advantage card has the same discount, with no upper limit, so Amazon employees save more by shopping at their competitors.	Barnes & Noble
Benefits	Personal Days	not sure - none BUT it's an honor system for sick days vs. a fixed amt	5 days a year, use or lose	I think they're comparable for sick/personal days. Neither company polices it very carefully; they're more interested in your output than the exact days you worked.	both
Benefits	Medical	Outstanding	Mediocre	Benefit packages vary by location (state/country) at both companies. Google benefits are generally comparable to Microsoft's: a little better for some things, a little worse for others. But comparable. Google usually offers at least two providers to choose from in any given location. Amazon shops around for the cheapest packages they can find, and usually only offer one choice. Amazon employees get almost no coverage for quite a few common scenarios. Many pharmacies refuse to take Amazon's carrier (I forget who it is now.)	Google
Benefits	Day Care	Subsidized	None	Google partners with various child care and child education facilities to offer discounted day care for toddlers through kindergarten (at least in MV). Amazon has no such program.	Google
Benefits	Pets	Good	None	Google has a pet insurance program with MetLife. Google also offers pet counseling (!) as a separate benefit.	Google
Benefits	Vacation	3 weeks years 1-3, 4 weeks years 4-5, 5 weeks years 6-10, max 240 hours	2 weeks year 1, 3 weeks year 2, 4 weeks thereafter, max 160 hours	I'm going off memory here, but I'm pretty sure Google gives more (and allows you to accrue more) across the board.	Google
Benefits	Paid Holidays	twelve	five	Google gives 12 paid holidays: Day after New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Day before Independence Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day After Thanksgiving Day, Two Days Before Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Day After Christmas Day. Amazon has five: Independence Day, New Years Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day. Amazon also strongly discourages taking vacation time around Christmas, because it's their peak load of the year, and their systems are under the most strain.	Google
Benefits	Gym membership	Kirkland: free membership for employee (only, not spouse) at Pro Club or 24-hour fitness. Mountain View: very nice gym, 2 "infinite pools", and volleyball court onsite. Other sites: free local gym memberships.	Discounts on membership dues at several local gyms.	Google takes employee health and fitness very seriously. They have numerous awareness programs, and even a "Health for Life" program (6 months doctor + nutritionist + health coach + personal gym trainer) that costs around \$3500 -- but Google pays 75% of the cost. Amazon has no such program, but offers discounts at some gyms. Several of these gyms (e.g. All-Star fitness) are adamant that they've never heard of this deal, however. Amazon discounts must be expense-reported monthly, after paying the full rate.	Google
Benefits	Dental	Good	Good	As far as I can tell, they're about the same.	neither
Benefits	401k	standard - there actually is a max up to \$2,200 for either roth or reg 401K	standard	Both companies offer Roth 401k with no matching and the same max contribution.	neither
Benefits	ESPP		none	Neither company offers an Employee Stock Purchase Plan at this time.	neither

Benefits	Other	lots - DSL reimbursement, paid meals for 2 wks for new parents, parental leaves, beta'ing shuttle service, charity gift matching	some	I'm creating this spreadsheet from memory, and I don't usually pay very close attention to benefits, as I have no kids. Google has at least two dozen benefit programs that I haven't covered here. Generally speaking, Google's benefits are better and more comprehensive than Amazon's, and are more directly comparable to Microsoft's benefits package.	
Amazon.com vs. Google: a job comparison for engineers				<i>Version: 2006.06.25</i>	
	Employee Satisfaction Surveys	Frequent and detailed	Ad-hoc, except for asking for feedback after big events	Google appears to be absolutely paranoid about losing their culture, and they send out well-thought-out surveys on all sorts of topics asking people anonymously if they're happy, how things could be better, etc. at a fine-grained level of detail. Amazon already knows how happy their employees are.	Google
	Culture	Colloborative, fluid, grass roots/peer based, not into hierarchy/titles/bureacrac y. Eng is top function	Frenzied	Amazon loves the feeling of being busy and bustling. They love war team meetings. They love being in a state of emergency. They love "all hands on deck" exercises where everyone drops everything to work on a "sev-1" issue. Google is quiet and relaxed, and yet their launch rate seems equally high.	Google