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Should We Fear or Embrace Uber and Lyft?

*Smart Cities Need
Smart Partners,
Says Passport's
Khristian Gutierrez*
Page 34





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I love Uber. I've never even tried Lyft. I'm also Uber about small business. I'm Uber excited about supporting risk takers and hard workers. You can tell a lot about people by how they treat their cars and, in this case, their place of employment. I think one of the big differences between Uber drivers and taxi drivers is their entrepreneurial spirit. A taxi driver is simply content to sit and wait in a queue for the next fare. An Uber driver hustles to the next opportunity and holds on long enough to get just one more fare before going home to rest before heading to their day job.

Every Uber driver has a story. The story unfolds around you when you step into their environment. I like to sit up front when I can, and I always do Uber Pool. Not just because I'm cheap, but I like to meet people. Today, I stepped into an Uber that was cleaner and fresher than a brand-new car. This guy took immaculate care of his vehicle, and I knew right away that he would also take immaculate care of me.

I took an Uber in California recently that reminded me of college, not really. I honestly never smoked pot in college and I also never inhaled. This driver was high as a kite and the influence of the residual second hand smoke caused me to ask him to stop for a bag of Doritos and a visit to Little Caesar's to get a hot and ready thin crust pepperoni. Despite my risking life and limb with him driving, while sitting in the front seat beside him, we solved world problems.

I solved a woman's relationship problem between Jacksonville Airport and Atlantic Beach once. She complained that her boyfriend was non-committal. The solution was simple. He was living with her and getting exactly what HE wanted, whenever HE wanted it. He had all the commitment he needed. After pointing it out to her, she realized the problem and obvious solution.

I took an Uber with a group of guys in Pittsburgh once during a parking convention. The driver picked us up at the bottom of the Duquesne Incline. The pristine Dodge Caravan had drinks and snacks for the taking. Seriously, how little money does a driver have to spend to differentiate his business and make a client feel special?

Uber drivers come from all over the world, from Jacksonville to Jakarta, and from Pittsburgh, PA to Pittsburg, KS. These hard-working souls don't sit on the sideline waiting to be pampered.

You could hire an Uber driver for your business from a simple check list, it would be uber easy.

- Driver got out of the car and introduced himself/herself to me. Check ✓
- Driver helped me with my luggage. Check ✓
- Car was clean and no residual odor of cigarettes or marijuana. Check ✓
- Driver knew where I was going and knew how to get there. Check ✓
- Driver was able to carry on an interesting conversation and asked questions about me. Check ✓
- Driver made recommendations for activities and dining. Check ✓
- Driver advised me where to reconnect with Uber when I was departing. Check ✓
- Driver had taken a chance and moved to a new city and found a way to make money honestly. Check ✓
- Driver had a vision for the future that didn't include driving an Uber. Check ✓
- Now the big one... Driver asked me for a job. Check ✓

What can you start to do to mimic good Uber driver practices in your business? I really think it comes down to the old golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

I'll leave you with this contrast. My boss out of college, an east coast guy transplanted in the Midwest, taught me a precious lesson one day. As I sat in my office one morning, looking out the window, I saw him drive up, exit his car, and approach the door to enter our office building.

After seeing trash on the ground, Don stooped down, picked it up and proceeded to police the area for trash. Now for the complete opposite. I had a recurring problem where toilets in the men's bathroom at my office seemed to never get flushed.

One day, I entered the men's room as one of my employees was finishing up and about to leave. I saw that the toilet wasn't flushed. I asked him why he didn't flush it. He said, "I find it disgusting to flush toilets, I don't want it splashing on me." Did I say that he was a former employee? You can't fix an entitlement attitude like that, you simply get rid of it.

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