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Let's Drive Change

Team Name: NaN
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Details of Group Members

Name	University/ Organization	Program (UG or PG)/ Year	Discipline	Designation	Short Bio
Team member 1	Animesh Jha	UG 2 nd Year	Computer Science and Engineering	NA	Quizzing Enthusiast
Team member 2	Neha Dalmia	UG 2 nd Year	Computer Science and Engineering	NA	Pokémon Enthusiast
Team member 3	Nisarg Upadhyaya	UG 2 nd Year	Computer Science and Engineering	NA	Football Enthusiast

Theme Background (What problem is being addressed by your Idea?)

We propose a mechanism to help drivers raise money for medical, educational and other emergencies. Uber has often come under fire in multiple occasions for their drivers being overworked and lack of policies towards protecting the drivers' interests.

- Uber is only as reliable as its drivers, if drivers are not working optimally the quality of the ride decreases substantially thereby resulting in decrease in customer satisfaction. The reason behind several driver-initiated protests has been their need to work long hours to sustain themselves. This has brought a negative image of Uber in the consumers mind with respect to the way the company treats its drivers.
- A large portion of drivers take to driving Ubers in emergencies, however, drivers do not earn enough to cover exigencies in normal working hours and have to work extra hours.
- This leads to exhaustion and irritability, and poorer quality of service. Lack of job satisfaction is common for drivers working under Uber, this has led to criticism against Uber multiple times.
- Price hikes are not an option as it is not consumer friendly or sustainable for Uber given market competition.

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- Crowdfunding in India is inaccessible and impractical for the demographic that most uber drivers belong to, that is those who access internet only through mobile phones and use it in their primary language which is often not English.

The gist of our idea is to allow users to take “special rides” which cost a little more but the extra money goes to the driver. Documents indicating medical needs etc will be verified Uber. This plan is based on the fact that many people want to donate to charitable causes but often have a fear of being scammed. Verification by Uber provides an extra layer of trustworthiness. It also helps in improving Uber’s relations with its drivers.

Describe your idea, and its key characteristics.

1. A driver in need of money approaches uber with a proposal. Uber verifies the genuineness of the need (medical records/ receipts for college etc). The amount of money which needs to be raised will also be verified to ensure its not exceeding the required amount. Verified drivers will be registered as “Drive for a Cause” drivers.
2. The Uber app will have a feature which allows users to take rides which cost 15% more than normal and the extra money goes to driver (if the paired driver is suitably registered under “Drive for Cause”, for unregistered drivers, normal charges apply). This feature is called “Ride for a Cause”.
3. The interface provides an option called “Know your Driver” for the rider to read about the driver’s needs after being matched with a ride. This interface will also provide an option for the rider to pay more money for the cause via the Uber app if they want to.
4. Payments will only be possible via the uber app, and there will be a bar in the “Know you Driver” interface showing how much of the desired “goal” (driver’s target amount to be raised) has been achieved. Once fulfilled, the driver will no longer be registered as a “Drive for a Cause” driver.
5. In a nutshell, this feature allows riders to book rides with the option of helping out drivers in need of money registered suitably under Uber. It also allows riders to read about why the driver is in need of money and if touched by the story, allows them to contribute more to the cause. To avoid scams, any kind of donation to the driver is added to a bar indicating how much of the target value has been raised. Payments are done only via Uber app to ensure the driver is not getting any donations which are not getting reflected in the bar.

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Please elaborate on the novelty/uniqueness of your idea.

Drivers are an essential yet often ignored aspect of the entire enterprise. Our idea takes a step towards identifying their issues and assisting them by providing the help they deserve.

Efforts are continuously being made to improve the experience of Uber's riders. Almost all the features in the Uber App are for improving the quality of rides, smoothness of payment, duration of travel etc for the **rider**. At the same time, there are no features which are made solely for the purpose of helping the driver.

In our idea, we propose the addition of a feature solely for the purpose of helping the driver. Initiatives and features directly aimed at helping the drivers help ensure they are looked at as an integral part of Uber. This is something we want to achieve by the addition of our feature. We believe that a healthy relationship between Uber and their drivers would go a long way in improving the quality of rides for the consumers. We have recognised this and our feature will help in showing the drivers that Uber as a corporation recognises their needs and supports them.

Our idea is unique as this kind of funding mechanism for employees has never occurred on a large scale before. It usually manifests in small circles where people raise money for a colleague/friend in need. A giant organisation like Uber doing this for their employees is a new concept which will definitely go a long way in establishing it as a company with genuine concern and recognition for its drivers.

Explain the relevance of your idea to address the current challenges

In the current scenario, in order to earn extra money for sudden financial needs, drivers have to work several extra hours every day. Uber cannot increase fare prices as that would not be sustainable for it as a company given that there are strong competitors like Ola and Lyft in the market as well.

This has led to increase in dissatisfaction amidst Uber drivers. Numerous protests by Uber drivers have happened in recent times. Uber drivers want the company to be more driver-friendly and address their concerns. Our idea not only helps in raising

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money in the material scale, it also helps addressing an equally important issue at hand – the strained relations Uber has with its contracted drivers.

It also goes a long way in improving the crowdfunding scenario of India. People are wary of donating to charities/organisations as they are unsure of how their money will be used given the corruption which is prevalent in the country. “Ride for a Cause” has a “Know your Driver” feature which shows you why the driver needs money and how much has been raised. This acts as a direct link between the donor and the needy and also ensures the donor their money will not go to waste. Hence, people will be more willing to donate money to help these drivers in need.

Explain the effectiveness of your idea/concept

Quality of rides decrease when a driver is stressed or overworked, one of the main reasons why many drivers work themselves to exhaustion is to collect money towards exigencies, like school fees for their kids or medical expenses. In such cases allowing a driver to generate extra revenue, would reduce the number of rides needed by them to cover their requirement.

Drivers form an essential part of any urban mobility system and satisfied drivers would lead to better ride quality for customers. Knowing more about a driver and the situations they are in helps humanise them, many times customers forget that they exist or are very rude to them. Events from the recent past, like the one where a customer deliberately sneezed on a driver, reaffirms this.

Our idea can lead to a reduction of overworked drivers and can improve rider driver interactions, leading to a better in-cab environment. Better in-cab environment at similar price points will give Uber an edge over its competitors, while customers don't necessarily expect excellent rides, a single bad ride is enough to push them away. While the ultimate impact of this idea depends on people donating, the potential upside given the low cost of implementing this makes it an effective idea.

Is your idea sustainable and scalable? Please elaborate.

Our idea scales very easily given the existing infrastructure Uber has, the basic ride for a cause feature is just an extra ride type similar to uberGO, Premier etc. The option to donate towards a driver's goal can be processed like a payment for a ride, for which Uber's existing payment infrastructure already exists.

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An aspect which would require engineering scaling solutions is how applications for causes are approved. Uber already has a workflow in place to handle driver verification, this verification can be added as a part of this workflow. Fee demands, medical bills and similar documents can serve as basis for approval. In the case of rapid increase in the number of requests, natural language processing techniques can be used to give a score of “genuineness”. Multiple industries handle the task of verification (like verifying school email ids for discounts or medical bill verification by insurance companies), thus multiple engineering solutions already exist for this problem.

This idea can also be scaled to uber eats in the future, where people can donate to delivery executives. The idea’s sustainability comes from the fact that once the system is setup, the only recurring cost to Uber would be maintaining the verification system which it already has in place for verifying drivers, so the entire idea won’t add any extra burden. The cash flow in this system would be from customers to drivers and Uber would have minimal costs here.

What is the scale of impact of your idea? Is it widely applicable?

In the past few years Uber and its competitors have become a part of the urban landscape, and the huge number of Uber drivers form an essential cog in the urban mobility system. This idea helps them increase their earnings without having to overwork themselves. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic, people working in the gig economy more so, other than that financial emergencies are fairly common in this demographic, this means that there would always be drivers who can use this feature.

Existing fundraising platforms are often not optimized for usage on mobiles and are inaccessible to the demographic to which most gig workers belong to. Moreover, they have very little reach as compared to Uber. Uber is an app drivers are familiar with and it has the ability to make this feature accessible to a larger demographic, therefore this idea has the potential to be **widely applicable**.

This feature can also be extended to cover fundraisers similar to how charity runs work. What makes this idea potentially impactful is that riders get an option to do good and help out people while commuting, time which is otherwise considered “wasted”. Given the huge volume of riders using the uber app, the number of possible donors is also huge, this means that this idea can have a huge **impact**.

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Annexure

The images below describe how a possible implementation of this idea would work

Please find more images at this link

(<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1exGmeQzusGLpZ5b7F6BKmLxF-OMYEDJI?usp=sharing>)

