THE STORY OF HOW TRAVIS KALANICK BUILT UBER INTO THE MOST FEARED AND VALUABLE STARTUP IN THE WORLD

Five years ago, a company called UberCab made a splash in San Francisco by letting you hail a car with your smartphone. Since then, the company, now known as Uber, has spread like wildfire through the globe. Uber currently operates in 58 countries and is valued at over $60 billion.

But the road hasn’t been easy.

While its valuation has continued to climb and it has attracted more and more investors, Uber has also fought rivals and regulators as it has transformed from a black-car service into a sprawling logistics company gunning for a future of self-driving cars. It has confronted threats from the taxi industry and even its own drivers.

It has also waged war against Didi Chuxing, its rival in gaining ride-hailing dominance in China. After a prolonged and exorbitantly costly battle, however, Uber China is now surrendering to Didi in $35 billion megamerger.

As Uber’s biggest battle yet comes to a close, we look back at how the company got to where it is today. See the insane and successful journey of Uber and its CEO, Travis Kalanick, as it has moved from an idea to a worldwide phenomenon.

**June 1998**: Scour, a peer-to-peer search-engine startup that Kalanick had dropped out of UCLA to join, snags its first investment from former Disney president Michael Ovitz and Ron Burkle of Yucaipa companies.

**October 2000:** Scour files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy after being sued by several entertainment companies for around $250 billion.

**April 2007:** Kalanick sells RedSwoosh, a company he’d founded in 2001, to Akamai for $23 million and becomes a millionaire. He says he started RedSwoosh as a “revenge business” to turn the 33 litigants who sued Scour into customers.

**December 2008:** Kalanick first hears the idea for Uber at the LeWeb technology conference. He thinks of it as a way to lower the cost of a black-car service using your phone.

**March 2009:** Uber is founded as UberCab, a black-car service. Garrett Camp, Oscar Salazar, and Conrad Whelan build the first version, with Kalanick serving as a “mega adviser”. Kalanick has also said his title back then was “chief incubator”.

**January 2010**: Kalanick tweets, “Looking 4 enterpreneurial product mgr/biz-dev killer 4 a location based service.. pre-launched, BIG equity, big peeps involved--ANY TIPS??” Ryan Graves, who would later be named CEO responds.

**June 2010:** Uber launches in San Francisco. At the time, it cost about 1.5 times as much as a cab, but you could request a car in San Francisco by sending a text or pressing a button. It quickly became a hit.

**October 2010:** Uber closes a $1.25 million seed funding round from First Round Capital, Kalanick’s friend Chris Sacca, and Napster cofounder Shawn Fanning.

**December 2010:** Ryan Graves, who had become CEO, steps down in favor of Kalanick. Graves became Uber’s general manager again, and both say the reshuffle was a friendly one.

**February 2011:** Uber closes an $11 million Series A funding round that values the company at $60 million. Benchmark leads the round, and its partner Bill Gurley joins Uber’s board of directors.

**May 2011:** Uber launches in New York City, which is today one of its biggest and most controversial markets. Uber provided nearly 170,000 trips per day between 2015 and April 2016.

**December 2011:** Uber begins to expand internationally, starting with Paris, France. It also closes a $32 million Series B funding round led by Menlo Ventures, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, and Goldman Sachs.

**July 2012:** Uber unveils its secret, low-cost “Uber X” project to the world. The service debut at 35% less expensive than the original black cars, and features cars like the Prius and the Cadillac Escalade. Kalanick declares, “Uber is ultimately a cross between lifestyle and logistics.”

**August 2012:** Lyft, which is considered by many to be Uber’s main competitor, launches in San Francisco. The stage is set for the San Francisco price war that will follow.

**August 2013:** Uber moves to India and Africa, and it closes a Series C funding round that sees an enormous $258 million investment from Google Ventures. This round values Uber at $3.76 billion.

**April 2014:** Uber begins its UberRUSH service, which brings bicycle delivery to Manhattan. The service starts at $7 – a $3 base fare and $4 per mile.

**July 2014:** Uber enters China after raising a $1.2 billion funding round at a $17 billion valuation in June. China looks like it will eventually become Uber’s biggest market, and today five out of Uber’s 10 largest cities in China.

**August 2014:** Uber start its UberPOOL service, which lets you split the ride and cost with another person who is riding a similar route. It’s the Uber version of carpooling.

**December 2014:** Uber raises $600 million from Chinese search powerhouse Baidu. Baidu’s mobile-search and maps apps begin to integrate with Uber, and it seems that Uber is gearing up for a fight with other prominent Chinese tech companies.

**January 2015:** Uber rolls out UberCARGO in Hong Kong, which expands Uber’s service to include all moving and delivery needs. Uber calls it a way for your goods to “travel like a VIP”, and this new feature continues Uber’s move in the direction of a logistics company.

**March 2015:** Uber begins the process of buying mapping startup deCarta, its first acquisition – perhaps to decrease its reliance on Google Maps.

**April 2015:** Uber launches UberEATS, an on-demand food-delivery service that brings meals to your location in minutes. The service starts in four pilot cities: LA, Barcelona, Chicago, and New York City, it’s is available in 23 markets in the U.S.

**May 2015:** Uber poaches over 40 employees from Carnegie Mellon University to staff its robotics-research facility, which it opened in February to build self-driving cars. Kalanick has previously mused, “The reason Uber could be expensive is because you’re not just paying for the car – you’re paying for the other dude in the car.”

**June 2015:** Violent protest erupt up across France as taxi drivers and their supporters block roads, burn tires, and attack suspected Uber drivers.

**June 2015:** The California Labor Commission rules that an Uber driver is an employee, not a contractor. This calls Uber’s underlying business model into question. The decision comes after a San Francisco driver, Barbara Ann Berwick, files a claim against Uber.

**September 2015:**  Uber’s China arm raises $1.2 billion to aid in its fight in the China market. Uber’s biggest competitor, Didi Kuaidi, responds by raising about $3 billion.

**October 2015:** Uber officially launched its UberRUSH program, which had previously been in pilot mode since April 2014.

**January 2016:** Uber raised another $2 billion in private equity funding to continue to help fund its international expansion plans.

**February 2016:** Uber got a $200 million investment from Russian billionaire Mikhail Fridman.

**February 2016:** Uber agreed to pay $28.5 million to 25 million riders to settle a class-action lawsuit surrounding its advertisements. After the settlement, Uber is no longer allowed to use the terms “industry-leading” or “best in class” in reference to its background checks.

**May 2016:** Uber and ride-hailing competitor Lyft both exited Austin, Texas, after the city’s voters backed a measure that would require fingerprint background checks for drivers.

**May 2016:** Uber and Toyota signed a “memorandum of understanding” to explore how the two companies could work together.

**June 2016:** Uber raised $3.5 billion from the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund, Uber’s largest investment from a single investor. Yasir Al Rumayyan, managing director of the Public Investment Fund, joined Uber’s board.

**June 2016:** Kalanick proclaimed that Uber was profitable in hundreds of cities globally, but that money was being reinvested in its war against Chinese rival Didi. The company said it’s losing $1 billion each year in its fights against Didi.

**July 2016:** The company got another $1.15 billion cash infusion, this time in the form of a leveraged loan. The company took advantage of low interest rates and secured a loan that was said to “support Uber’s global expansion and operations and invest in research and development and engineering.”

**July 2016:** Uber ran into trouble in Hungary. The company was forced to pull out of the country after government legislation made it impossible for it to operate. The move followed months of protests by taxi drivers.

**July 2016:** Uber announced in mid-July that it had completed its two billion trip, just six months after reaching one billion rides.

**July 2016:** A federal ruled that Uber “engaged in fraudulent and arguably criminal conduct” when it used an investigative firm to conduct a background check on a plaintiff in a lawsuit. The plaintiff is accusing Kalanick of violating anti-trust laws by coordinating surge pricing.

**July 2016:** The Chinese government legalized ride-hailing, paving the way for Uber and Didi to continue their battle for ride-hailing dominance. Didi is already operating in more than 400 cities throughout China, while Uber’s global goal is to reach 100 cities by the end of the year.

**July 2016:** Uber’s costly battle in China comes to a close as Didi and Uber China merge in a $35 billion deal. The merger basically means that Uber has thrown in the towel in China, likely to the relief of both Didi and Uber’s investors.

**What’s next:** Uber remains the highest-valued startup in the world. It continues to expand in Asia and South America, develop driverless car technology, and raise billions. The company has yet to go public – Kalanick has said he plans to ensure an IPO happens “as late as possible” – but the Didi deal could mean an IPO is now on the horizon.