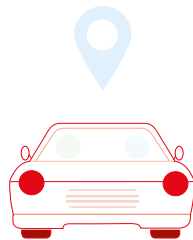


# MY UBER STORY



One  
professor's  
journey into the  
minds of the  
personas that  
shape your  
U B E R  
ride



**experience!**





# MY UBER STORY

Instant Entrepreneurs  
In The New Gig Economy



BAN MITTAL

# MY UBER STORY

## Instant Entrepreneurs in the New Gig Economy

Ban Mittal, Ph.D.

Editorial consultants: Ashley Westerhold  
Graphic design: Sundar Chellam, Nabanita Ghosh,  
and Uday Shilpi

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[www.MyUberStory.com](http://www.MyUberStory.com)  
[www.OpenMentis.com](http://www.OpenMentis.com)

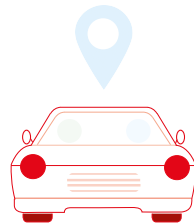
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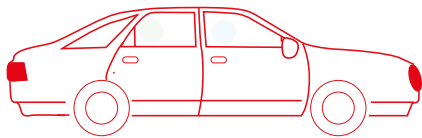


I dedicate this book to:

. Some 100+ Uber drivers who shared their stories with me and several thousand more who serve in the new gig economy with dedication, making their riders' journeys a joy.

. Millions of Uber riders around the world who dig the new sharing economy and love their Uber app.





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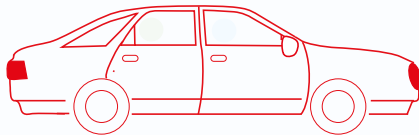
## DEAR READER

### Dear Uber Driver:

So, you have been driving for Uber. Maybe you love it; maybe you don't. Regardless, you have sometimes wondered what other drivers—beyond those few you know personally—feel about their Uber driving gigs. In this book you will read about fifty of them—those whose lives are just like yours and those whose lives are different.

### Dear “Thinking About It” Uber Driver:

Okay, so you have been thinking of getting into the Uber driving gig. You have learned the economics of the business and you have done a profit-and-loss analysis. But you are still not ready. What does the job of driving strangers around feel like, you wonder. You wonder also, what kind of people drive Uber and what their motivations and life goals might be. This book lets you peek inside the minds of fifty of them. Take the test drive. Welcome aboard!



## Dear Frequent and Avid Uber Rider:

So you love your Uber app. And you love this sharing consumption economy. Now get to know your Uber drivers. They are much more than a pair of hands steering a car to your destinations. Many lead interesting lives. Many have aspirations so noble that your jaw will drop.

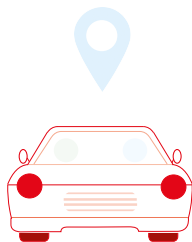
It is unlikely, of course, that you will ever run into any of the drivers profiled here; but your future driver may well be just like one of them. Reading about these fifty persons will likely make your future Uber riding experience twice as cool!

## All Readers

If you like these stories, I invite you to post your comments at:

[www.MyUberStory.com](http://www.MyUberStory.com).

—BM





# My Uber Rides

## Across the USA and Canada

For a few years now, I have been fascinated by the new *sharing economy*. I consider Uber to be the coolest play in it. I find my Uber app addictive and meeting a new Uber driver an adventure.

Over these past two years, as I traveled around the country, I developed a new hobby: having conversations with my Uber drivers—deep conversations.

My drivers were as diverse as the athletes at the Olympics. They shared their stories, a few of them with initial hesitation, but most others eagerly.

These stories offer a fascinating window into their motives, life journeys, and worldviews. In the following pages, I share fifty stories from a pool of 100+ drivers I interviewed. From thirty states and forty-eight cities, across the United States and Canada.

Come along and **enjoy the ride!**

# The One Question

While our conversations were free-flowing, there was one constant question I asked everyone:

If you won a million-dollar lottery,  
what would you do?

(And would you still be driving Uber?)

I asked this question as a window into their souls—what they dreamed of having and what they really wanted to be doing in life.\*

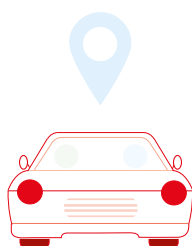
I asked it, and then I listened, without judgment but always with curiosity and fascination.



---

\*While I was interested in whatever their answer would be, I was in particular interested in knowing what they would do with the money left after meeting the basic needs and their customary obligations, such as paying off any debt and helping their families.

# THE STORIES



Matthew Pleczkowski



40° 26' 39.07" N 79° 59' 41.07" W

1

Pittsburgh, PA

Uber gig: Two years  
200 trips

### My Uber Gig

I do Uber only when I don't have other plans. I drive, listen to music, chit chat. I am a people person. It is the easiest, most fun job I have had!

### My Day Job

I am a corporate trust administrator at a bank. I take care of "behind-the-scenes" paperwork for clients—moving money around. My job requires liking numbers, and yes, I love numbers.

I am also a National Guard reservist in the military. I have soldiers below me, and I am responsible for their training and well-being.

### My Life

My dad was in the military, and I saw how good the military was for him. I have learned to do things I could not have done without it—like shooting a 50-ton machine gun without moving the armored truck. The training work is tough, but I have to sacrifice some comfort to keep my countrymen protected.

### If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...

I would pay off my student loan, pay a chunk to my parents who took me back when I needed a place to live. Buy a Dodge Charger, just to show off.

#### Make it five million; would you give up working?


No, I would not. I would invest some.

#### Ten million?

Then, I would take a two-year hiatus from work—to travel. And I would do some volunteer work. I would make sure my time is spent contributing to society, helping those in need. Give to the homeless. Teach people. Gain experiences that I can pass on.

### How I Look at Life

I have always been a very giving person. For me, driving Uber is pretty selfless work. I think the purpose of life is to improve the life of people around us. If I give a little bit more than what I get, if I improve someone's life, then my life is a success!



For me, driving  
Uber is pretty  
selfless work!

## Jesse Seward



**Some say “living in the moment” is the key to happiness.**

Happiness definitely comes from gratitude. Gratitude and humility, and being in the moment and being able to show up for my job and for Uber, be with friends and family—that is where and when I find happiness internally, and if I am internally happy, then I don’t need anything, any material items.

When I am not feeling happy that is because I am not feeling grateful for the simple things in life. For example, a lot of people don’t have two eyes, I have two eyes. I could have been in a wheelchair. I am grateful to be alive—I almost died once (due to drugs). I am grateful to have a family that cares for me, have food to eat, place to sleep; I sang my

first solo when I was in fifth grade—I am grateful for being able to sing!

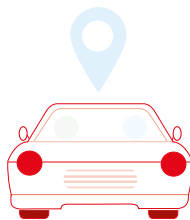
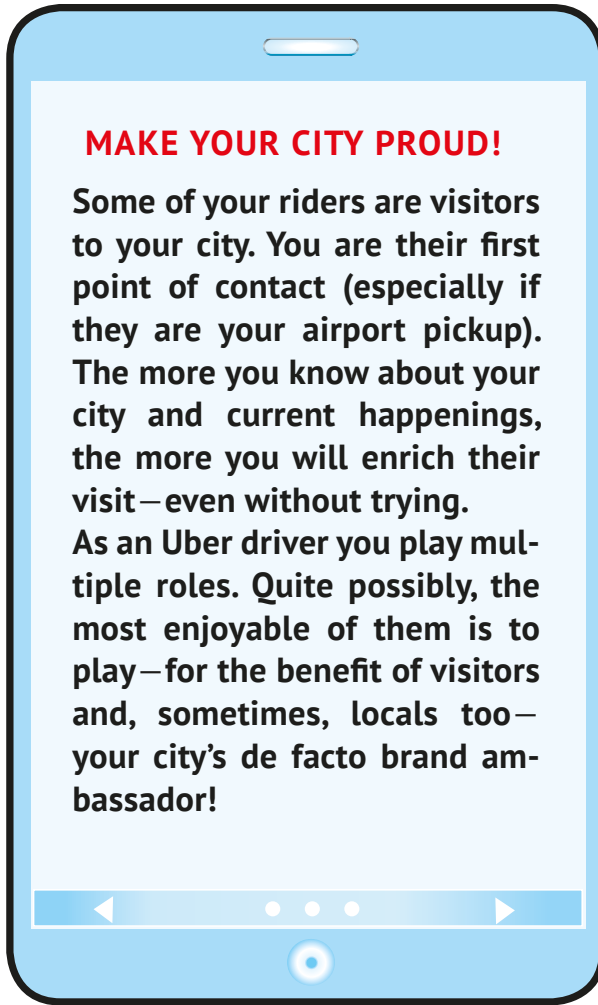
### ***My Memorable Uber Experience***

Once, my rider was Melissa Peterman; I sang for her and she put it on her Instagram. It got 30K likes! And, once, Tom Wallace from Star Tribune was riding my car and he filmed me.

---

After our conversation, Jessy insisted on singing for me, which I considered a gift. I wished his free performance for me lasted longer. Here, you can hear a sample.

<https://tinyurl.com/Jesse-Seward-Gravity>





Jamie Faust



40° 35' 16.20" N 105° 4' 33.89" W

48

In my free time, I write poetry. I have written about 2,000 poems—on philosophy, on life.

Fort Collins, CO

Uber gig: Two years  
1,700 trips



### My Uber Gig

I like it—otherwise I wouldn't be doing it. I like to pick up people from the airport. That gives me a lot of time to talk to them. I like to know where they are coming from and what it is like out there. That way, I get to know about a lot of places.

### My Day Job

A few months ago, I graduated from Wartburg College in accounting and finance and got a job in a company here. I prepare financial reports for regulators and executives. I like my job because I have always liked working with numbers.

Driving Uber has given me a larger view of life. I am learning that there is no one way to live one's life!

### My Life

Until recently I was a student, so my life was that of a college student. I had started playing golf seven years ago. I try to play golf three or four times a month. My handicap now sits around seven, but once I had it at 4.7. The biggest things on my bucket list (I already checked off the World Series this year)—is to play golf in Augusta—which I have yet to accomplish.

### If I Won a Million-Dollar Lottery...

Just \$1 million wouldn't mean much. But with, say, \$5 million, I would invest in a sports business so that I could be my own boss. I would like to start coaching basketball or golf.

My goal in life is to make myself happy but at the same time make the people I surround myself with also happy; my goal is to find that balance.

### Has driving Uber changed you in any way?

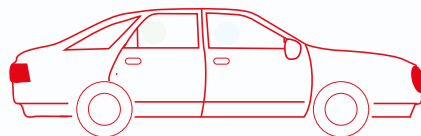
It has given me a larger view of life in general. Where I am from, I graduated high school with corny kids—95% of them were just like me. So, I never felt comfortable with people from other backgrounds. Now I am getting comfortable talking about topics different from what I used to talk about with my friends. Now I am seeing that everybody has a different story. I am learning that there is no one way to live one's life. This Uber gig has made it possible!



## AFTERWORD

As a life-long student of marketing and as a consumer myself, I have been fascinated by the art and science of the sharing economy. As a graduate student, when I had no car, I rode with strangers who were going to my destinations. I paid for gas, and time passed easily with mutual discovery. We arranged these peer-to-peer transactions via notices on physical bulletin boards. The advent of information and web technology made these connections easier. Then in 2011 came Uber (UberX in 2012) and car sharing became truly democratized. Suddenly, any two people—two strangers—one with a car and one without—could connect instantly and arrange to share the car!

My fascination with the technology began the moment I downloaded the Uber app. A simple touch of a finger would bring me a car. Anywhere, for anywhere, at any-time. From requesting the ride to giving a five-star rating to the driver, it provided a seamless experience. But my joy came from more than just getting a car to ride. After I confirm my pickup location on the Uber app, it tells me that it is searching among ten (or fifteen or twenty) nearby drivers, and I wait with curiosity: man or woman, young or old, driving a Prius or a Ford or a BMW, a red car or a white car or a blue car—who will it be, what will it be? I wait with no prejudice or preference, but with innocent curiosity. It is for me an adventure, a game. It is like a fortune cookie! Because the Uber app is so intuitive and requires no learning, we take it for granted, but, in reality, it is a small miracle!



The real thrill of my Uber rides is the driver. Each time, it is someone new. Each has a different store of knowledge. Each has a different life story. Over the years, I have enjoyed my conversations with them.

A year ago, I decided to take my conversations with my Uber drivers a notch deeper (occasionally, ten notches deeper). As we reached my destinations, I made a proposal: would they mind being interviewed for a book I would be writing? Most agreed happily, and we talked. I recorded my conversations with about a hundred Uber drivers across the USA (and a few in Canada). The result is this book.

In these vignettes, you can read about the motivations, aspirations, and experiences of Uber drivers as diverse as America itself. Taken together, these stories also shed light on the developing cultural fabric of the new, sharing economy.

I hope reading this book brought you as much fascination as writing it brought me. As an Uber driver, you may now apply yourself with twice the spirit. And as an avid Uber rider, this book may rekindle your own memory of past conversations with your Uber drivers. All experience is felt ultimately in our minds, and I offer you this book as an invitation to make, in your mind, all your future rides feel twice as cool!



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ban Mittal (Ph. D.)

- . Professor
- . Social Scientist
- . Author
- . Listener

Cincinnati, Ohio  
(USA)

New Gig Economy Enthusiast

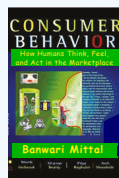
[www.BanMittal.com](http://www.BanMittal.com)

Author is a professor and social scientist, specializing in consumer psychology. Over the last two decades, he has interviewed a thousand or more people, exploring how consumers think, feel, and act in the marketplace. The new sharing economy is the latest of the marketplaces that he finds fascinating. Over the past two years, he has held conversations with more than a hundred Uber drivers across the USA and enjoyed understanding their psyche, their mojo. Currently, his home base for teaching, research, and creative writing is Northern Kentucky University, listed among the America's Top Colleges by *Forbes* magazine, and also the alma mater of George Clooney. He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

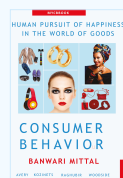
### Other published books



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2006

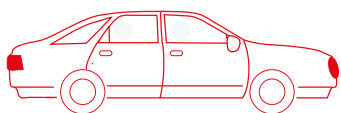


2016



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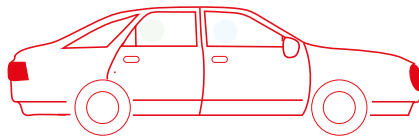




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**YOUR UBER RIDES:  
A WHOLE NEW  
CULTURAL WORLD!**

Our minds are wired to chat with people who look similar to us in age and social profile and who share our interests. But sometimes we learn more from strangers whose style and interests are different from ours!

