



Gigs Save the Day: Ride Sharing Companies Help Shine Light on Human Trafficking

Insights

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Recently, the on-demand economy has made the news for the best reason possible: saving victims of human trafficking.

In December 2016, an Uber driver in California alerted police after becoming concerned that his recent passenger may be in danger. The Uber driver heard suspicious comments from two of his passengers about a third passenger – an underage girl – being delivered to a hotel for money. Thanks to a prompt call to the authorities, the police arrived and arrested several people in connection with “pimping and pandering.” The underage girl was rescued from the situation.

Uber issued a statement after this incident was reported, saying: “Maintaining the platform as a safe and comfortable place for both riders and driver partners is very important to us, and any incident that disrupts that experience for either party is one we take very seriously.” Indeed, in April 2016, Uber became the first company in the ride sharing economy to officially take the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes “ECPAT-USA” pledge against trafficking. As a part of this pledge, Uber educates drivers about the physical and behavioral indicators of a commercially exploited and trafficked child, provides them with the tip lines for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and National Human Trafficking Resource, and instructs them to call 911 if they believe a child is in imminent danger.

Just last month, the Florida Attorney General’s Office issued a resolution recognizing Uber for its efforts to spot and fight human trafficking. In a statement, Attorney General Pam Bondi stated: “Governor Scott and the Florida Cabinet joined me today in recognizing Uber’s proactive efforts to fight human trafficking. The company and its drivers, operating in more than 70 countries, are uniquely positioned to help identify and ultimately prevent human trafficking and can play a key role in the fight to stop traffickers across the globe. Today’s resolution commends Uber for their commitment to safety in the communities drivers serve and in doing their part to put an end to this horrific crime.”

Many on-demand economy participants, such as Uber, are in a unique position to witness signs of human trafficking occurring in their own back seats. Indeed, the very nature of human trafficking involves moving individuals to homes, hotel rooms, or other locations where an Uber or Lyft ride may be the preferred method for a quick transport. By being vigilant and watching for suspicious

statements or situations (such as a young girl in provocative clothing riding with people she does not appear to know well), more on-demand drivers can identify possible trafficking in process. Likewise, by trusting their instincts and reporting their suspicions to the police, drivers can help rescue victims from dangerous situations and put traffickers behind bars.

You may want to consider whether your business can take steps to educate platform users about the dangers of human trafficking and implement safety measures to help eradicate the problem.

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