



The Rubber Meets the Road When Gig Economy Execs Get Behind the Wheel

Insights

12.11.17

"The most powerful leadership tool you have is your own personal example." – John Wooden

The well-known rideshare company Lyft has personified the above quote from legendary basketball coach John Wooden when it recently announced that it will require all eligible corporate employees to spend some time behind the wheel to experience driving passengers. Lyft's Chief Marketing Officer Melissa Waters shared her driving experience in a recent article, saying she was surprised at how hard it was to both navigate and care for your passenger. Waters is not alone in this quest. Both the Chief Executive Officer, Logan Green, and President, John Zimmer, got a feel for the driver's seat. In fact, all the corporate employees will be required to experience the day-to-day tasks of each Lyft driver for at least four hours every 90 days. Employees can fulfill this requirement by being a driver, staffing driver-support calls, or working within a Lyft driver hub.

What's the end to these means? Lyft wants to better understand its driver's needs, which it hopes will equate to providing better driving experiences for its passengers. Additionally, Lyft strives to be more approachable and enhance their driver-passenger connection. From January to October 2017, Lyft gave 500 million rides – more than all their rides in the past four years combined. This momentum is what Lyft is striving to maintain through this initiative. In doing this, Lyft is challenging every employer to consider a new approach to leadership.

What Can You Learn from Lyft's Initiative?

Company leaders have a responsibility to lead by example. What better way to lead by example than to get a firsthand perspective on what your employees or contractors experience every day? Walking (or in the case of Lyft, driving) in the shoes of your workers augments the appreciation and understanding you have of their work, and better prepares executives to make decisions to best serve their workforce. Here are three reasons why you should consider employing Lyft's efforts by getting on the front lines:

1. **You may be disconnected.** The higher up you go in a company, the harder it is to stay in tune with the front lines of your business. Being on the frontlines gives you a truthful perception of the happenings from the top down. If your executives are detached, it can be catastrophic to your business and can breed legal issues.

2. **Learn the day-to-day.** Even Lyft's CMO admitted the difficulty in driving and caring for her passengers – a challenge drivers likely experience during each ride. Learning the day-to-day challenges of your workforce helps leaders make better decisions that effectively streamline their operations and support the employees on the front lines.
3. **Get a closer look.** The frontline is vital to every organization. Taking time to check in with the frontline workers on a regular basis will provide valuable information. Stepping out of the executive suite allows you to accurately take the temperature of your workforce and what is needed to propel the success of your organization.