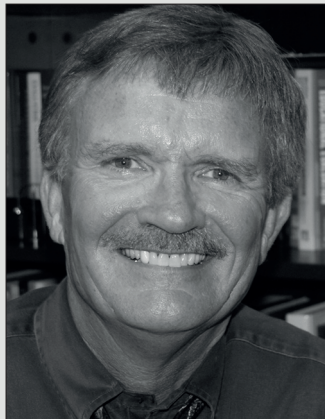


Uber, Taxis, and Distance Education

Michael Simonson

Uber is a ride-sharing business. It is also a smartphone application. Uber identifies people with a nice car who have a little free time and hope to make extra money. Uber provides these people with a smartphone that has a built-in application that allows them to be identified by smartphone users who are physically near them looking for a ride.



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Usually, once a rider places a request using the Uber app, the closest driver is notified and within minutes they share headshot photos; they meet and they are on their way. Fees are paid automatically using a preapproved credit card. No money changes hands, and when the monthly credit card bill arrives the amount is remarkable low—often one third of what a taxi ride would be. Uber and other ride-sharing companies are a vivid example of a disruptive technology.

What is Uber disrupting? Most know what a taxi ride is like—except in large cities with taxis circulating regularly, a call is placed to an 800 number, an operator takes the call, and then contacts drivers who estimate how long it will be before a pick-up of the rider can be made. Experienced taxi riders make their reservations long before they need a ride. At the end of the ride, the driver collects the fee. Cabs are roomy, but often dirty and old.

Both processes get riders to their destination, but anyone who has used a ride-sharing service and also a taxi knows immediately that the two options are dramatically different—in convenience, immediacy, dependability, comfort, and cost.

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