This App Will Revolutionize the NYC Taxi Experience

City dwellers, we've all been there: It's the after-work rush hour, the heavens have opened up in a torrential downpour and all you want is a taxi, but there's none to be found.

Good news: A revolutionary digital service called GetTaxi, which has hit it big in Russia, Israel and the U.K., aims to make sure that never happens again. The better news is that it's finally coming to New York in the next few months.

GetTaxi [1] provides users an easy-to-use interface for digitally ordering a cab via their smartphones or desktop computers. Once an order is made, a cab driver using GetTaxi receives a notification that somebody's waiting at a certain location, and they hit the gas to pick up the fare. Smartphone users are even able to see their requested taxi finding its way to their location via GPS tracking on their mobile device the same way they can follow a pizza delivery [2].

New York City's Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) is accepting applications from companies such as GetTaxi who want to bring the service to the Big Apple. GetTaxi's founder and CEO, Jing Wang Herman, is jumping at the opportunity.

"GetTaxi will bring New York City a far superior user experience as far as taxis are concerned," Herman told *Mashable*. "Our users will be able to easily and securely book a taxi in one click."

Herman's not the only one who thinks taxis are overdue for digital disruption: Investors have put $20 million behind GetTaxi to give it gas for its planned New York City rollout.

GetTaxi will not have its own fleet of drivers, but rather it will compliment the service of existing taxi fleets. When a driver signs on to the platform, GetTaxi trains

them in the product and in customer service. Customer service lines will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Herman believes all of this will revolutionize the New York City taxi experience if her company is approved by the TLC.

“When a driver gets onto the grid, we educate them on what the getTaxi experience is all about and what the customer experience is all about,” said Herman. “In the countries where we are, we’ve changed how people view taxi drivers. We’ve heard lots of ‘wow’ stories about drivers going above and beyond. For example, a recent one involved a passenger leaving something in a taxi, and because we had her information, the driver was able to call the passenger directly and return the lost item to her.”

The platform is also business-friendly, with an option for companies to sign up to allow employees or guests to easily hail cabs on a company account.

“For a family or a business, it’s like having a phone plan you pay for on a monthly basis,” said Herman.

GetTaxi won’t immediately be available for New York City’s yellow taxis, which are legally prohibited from taking a booking through a radio device. Herman, however, is confident she’ll be able to persuade the relevant parties that what she called “digital dispatch” is superior to the on-the-ground hail.

As an example, she suggested that if a yellow cab driver knows a handful of people are all nearby and they want to go to a similar location, it’s more economically efficient to pick them all up.

“If everyone’s on the grid, we’ll be able to match you with other people trying to get to midtown for their morning meeting,” said Herman, who’s also hoping GetTaxi will be used with the recently announced outer borough green taxis, a partnership which she believes will vastly improve the ground transportation system outside Manhattan.

Herman said the thing that separates GetTaxi from other similar services is that her company wants to be an affordable product “for the masses, the 99%.”

While working on the New York City rollout, Herman will also be driving around the city in her own cab, for which she has a license, giving people free rides in exchange for hearing their thoughts on how the taxi experience could be improved.

“I love talking to strangers, so I’ll be driving around giving free rides and talking to New Yorkers about their taxi experience and what they’d love to see changed,” she said.

How can digital technology change the taxi experience for the better, not just in New York but anywhere? Share your thoughts with us in the comments.

Image courtesy of iStockphoto *[3],* gianlucabartoli *[4]*

www.mashable.com [5]

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