



The Most Important Advice You Will Ever Receive

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I've been using the same driver to take me to and from the airport for years. The last time, the car he picked me up in was not as clean as it normally was. He also usually had a few chilled bottles of water waiting for me (and a Diet Coke). This time, there was nothing.

The driver seemed a little agitated and wanted to talk about Uber:

"Have you heard of Uber?" he asked me.

I told him I had and had found it to be a useful service. Virtually anywhere I go, I can use Uber to summon a car within a few minutes.

- **It is convenient** (you can order a car from your app and accurately know the waiting time until its arrival as soon as you order it);
- **It is fairly priced** (it is getting more expensive, but unlike most car services, there is no minimum charge for just sitting in the car);
- **It is predictable** (you can order the quality of car you want with no hassle); and
- **You can complain about a driver if they suck and rate the drivers** (you generally cannot provide this type of feedback with a taxi or car service).

In contrast, I remember the days of calling a taxi. You could wait for 15 minutes – or it could be an hour. If things were really busy, you could be waiting for a few hours. Taxis vary in quality. I've ridden in taxis where the front seat of the taxi contained the driver's toiletries, and it appeared he might be living in the car. Many taxis smell bad, have hundreds of thousands of miles on them, do not have seatbelts and are dirty and uncomfortable. On a recent taxi ride, I was forced to sit in the back of a small Toyota Prius with my wife and three kids. I'm over six feet tall.

With Uber, you just look at your phone, and it shows where the car is en route to you. The cars I have ridden in were all Town Cars, clean, and the drivers were very polite. You know what you are going to get. There is consistency.

Uber also eliminates the risk of being ripped off. I do not know how many times I have been ripped off by car services and taxis.

- **One time, a car service took me from New York to New Jersey, about an hour car ride, for \$80.** When I returned, I ordered another car service, and the driver demanded \$350 for the same distance. When I told him I had paid \$80 earlier in the day, he told me he did not care, and threatened to have me arrested if I did not pay him \$350. There was no difference in the quality of the car service I took to New Jersey or took back to New York. There was only a difference in the price.
- **Another time in New York, I ordered a car service to take me to a seminar.** I was told over the phone that it would be \$80. I got in the car and, less than 30 seconds later, the car dropped me at my destination. I hadn't realized my seminar was only a block from the hotel I was staying in. The charge was still \$80. I was upset.

"That's our minimum charge!" the driver told me.

"You should have told me I could walk there!" I told him.

"That's not my job!" he replied.

With Uber, I wouldn't have been charged for my mistake, and I would only have spent a few dollars for the actual distance I was in the car.

I recently went to Seattle. When I got off the airplane, there was a long line of people waiting for taxis. I hit the Uber button on my phone and could see there were several cars circling the airport. I ordered a car with my phone, and a nice Cadillac Escalade pulled up almost immediately and took me to my hotel for probably the same price as a taxi would have cost. I'm sure I saved at least 15 minutes by not having to wait in the taxi line, and I got to ride in a much nicer and more comfortable car.

Uber's product is better than taxis and better than ordering a "traditional" car service (in my humble opinion).

I just came back from another trip, and my wife ordered a car to pick us up through a car service we've used before. She said something I thought was interesting, "The driver said that the cost of the ride is going to be \$100 plus tip..." I had never heard of a car service asking for a tip before. My thought right then was that he was asking for a tip because his business was declining (due to Uber), and he was looking for new sources of revenue. I gave the driver a tip, but knew this request would not have occurred had I used Uber.

As we rode in the car home from our trip, the driver started talking about how much he hated Uber.

"I'm never driving for them," my driver told me. He then started to list out a virtual litany of reasons that Uber was evil:

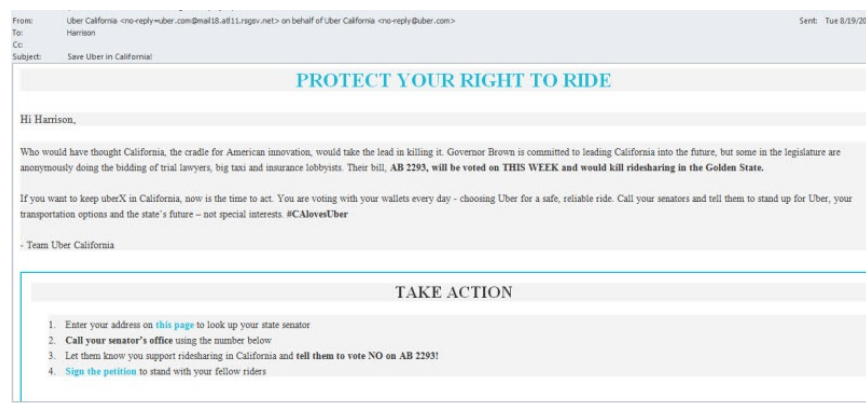
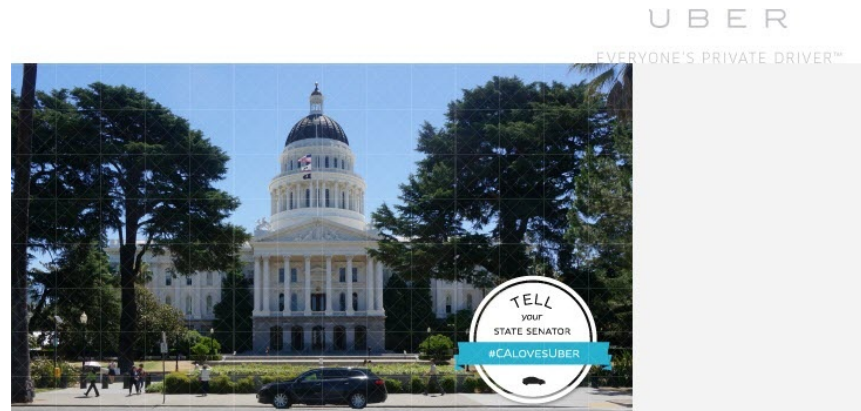
- **Uber does not qualify its drivers well enough.** A drunk woman in Los Angeles had reportedly been raped by an Uber driver.
- **Many people get picked up from clubs by Uber drivers and get into the wrong car.** They often get in the wrong car because so many people order these cars when the clubs close. They may be billed for someone else's ride.
- **Uber does not offer the same level of service as this driver's car.** You never know how old the car is going to be that picks you up.
- **Uber drivers are "disgusting" and go to the bathroom in porta-potties.** The Uber drivers use porta-potties at car lots

where car companies often wait for passengers at LAX. In contrast, my driver knew of various clean hotels around the area where he could use the bathroom and wash his hands. "Believe me ... you do not want them touching your luggage."

- **Uber is a 'rip off' for drivers.** Uber currently takes 25% of the fee, but they are going to start taking 40% of the fare and underpay the drivers. "It is not moral what they are doing!"
- **Uber drivers have to pay for an overpriced phone device each month to put in their cars.**
- **Uber drivers do not have to carry as much insurance as other drivers, and this means that passengers cannot recover as much if they are injured while in the car.**
- **Uber drivers are working illegally at the airport and do not have to buy the same "passes" that other drivers do.**

The list of his issues with Uber went on and on. In fact, I listened to his complaints the entire way home. When I got out of his car, I gave him a \$20 tip and figured next time I would use Uber. Uber is a better service, less expensive, and more convenient (I had to stand by the curb with my luggage for 25 minutes waiting for this car). Stories of rape and porta-potties did little to discourage me.

The driver, however, is not alone. As I was writing this article, I received the following email from Uber:



What do people do when they are comfortable in their positions but are faced with competition and something better coming along? They try and kill it! That's right. Instead of facing the fact that something better is out there, they try and stop it in its tracks by killing it off. People want to do everything they can to protect their comfort. Inefficiency breeds profit for the people operating under this inefficiency, and they often want to do everything they can to maintain their position.

Something better is always coming along. Some entrepreneur or other innovator is always going to figure out a way to improve products and services which may make existing businesses (or industries) extinct. This is generally a sign of progress. Businesses dying because of improvements and emerging efficiencies is a good thing.

Businesses and people can never get comfortable and expect the gravy train to keep rolling. Comfort is a sign you've got a good thing. If you have a good thing, people are going to want a piece of it – and they will take a piece of it if you let your guard down. Businesses and people need to keep innovating to offer more and more value. The ones who stay static end up dying:

- **Imagine if a computer manufacturing company was still manufacturing the same computers (with no modifications) today as it had made in 1980.** What would be the result?
- **Imagine if a person was dressing the same way today as he had dressed in 1975.** What would be the result?
- **Imagine if an automobile company was making the exact same car today as it had made in 1930.** What would be the result?
- **Imagine if a doctor who went to medical school in 1965 was using the same drugs and methods to treat patients today as he was using then.** What would be the result?

With innovation, companies and people go away and get killed off. It is as simple as that. You always need to be aware of changes, improving and doing your best to serve the big master out there (the economy and consumers' wants and needs). Someone wants what you have and is going to continually fight to take it away from you.

People and businesses generally take market share, attention, affection, and revenue from others by being more innovative than the other business. They may innovate by offering more for less money, improving the attractiveness of a product, or improving the function of a product.

Why is it that the most beautiful women are generally with the richest men? Is it because the men are very handsome, and the women want to be with someone equally as attractive? Is it because the women are also interested in business, crime, medicine or whatever business the rich men are in? I am not sure—and I do not really care about the reasons. What I do

notice, though, is that the man who has the most to offer the beautiful woman is usually the winner. While that may be wealth and access to a particular lifestyle, it also likely involves the fact that the rich man is often quite innovative and has figured out how to “woo” her attention in a variety of ways. It is not just the wealth. It is his innovative thinking and ability to position himself in a way that he appears better than the competition.

I’ve known several multi-millionaire men who inherited money and were actually very attractive. However, they still had trouble getting girlfriends because they only had money to offer but did not know how to market themselves.

It is innovation that matters personally and professionally to people.

A bookstore on the ground floor of the office complex I work in recently went out of business. Most bookstores are having an extremely hard time surviving due to the competition from Amazon. I used to love taking my kids to the bookstore every weekend and buying them various children’s books. I was also very happy that the bookstore was there because it gave me something educational to do with my children. I was happy to pay for books (even though they were almost twice as much as they cost on Amazon) because I enjoyed the experience of shopping in the bookstore.

However, Amazon is doing something better than the bookstore can do.

- **There is more selection on Amazon.** Amazon has millions of books and most bookstores might have thousands.
- **The books are much, much less expensive on Amazon.** The cost is often less than 50% on Amazon.
- **You can read countless book reviews on Amazon to determine if the book is something you will really want to read.** In a bookstore, about all you can do is ask a cashier about the book, even though the cashier may be 18-years old and a high school dropout.
- **Amazon knows the kinds of books you like and makes great recommendations.** They use statistics and various predictive engines to make calculations about the books you are likely to buy.
- **If you also want a tube of toothpaste [or how about some popcorn kernels!] with your book, you can buy that on Amazon at the same time. BONUS:** If you want them to auto-ship you a tube of toothpaste each month so you never run out, they will do that too.
- **Amazon shipping is amazing.** I’ve ordered stuff on Saturday night and received it on Sunday morning with no special shipping charges or anything.
- **If you really want to save money, Amazon even allows you to buy used books.** I’ve seen many books that are \$20 in the bookstore for sale for one cent on Amazon.
- **Amazon continually surprises me.** Several years ago, I wanted to buy a safe for a business I was operating. I went to a store that sold safes and was told the safe would cost \$800, and I would also need to pay \$300 for delivery, and it would be delivered a week later. On a hunch, I checked Amazon and ended up buying a better version of the safe on Amazon for \$500 and paying \$3.99 to get it delivered the next morning. Wow!

Because I read so much, I rarely bought books from the bookstore. I would have been crazy to unless I enjoyed throwing money away for fun.

I have an app installed on my phone that allows me to scan the books I like in the bookstore and get that same book (which is \$29.95 in the bookstore) on Amazon (often for a 50% savings—or used for 99 cents) instead of wasting money. (I have done this a few times but was embarrassed because the owner of the bookstore seemed to know that I and others were using this app).

When she would see someone using the app to scan a book, she would run over to them, **“Can I help you with something?”**

Since my children would often spend an hour or more inside the bookstore before choosing a number of books to buy each day, I would hear this scenario play out quite often. It sort of reverberated throughout the store like background noise every 15 minutes or so. The bookstore owner was always a little abrupt when she said these words, and you could tell the conversation involved the app (or some sort of online price comparison).

It was more like, “Can-I-Help-You-With-Something!?! Your stupid cell phone app is killing my business, and I want to kill it!” It wasn’t, “How’s it going? Is there anything I can do to help you ... just let me know... Thanks for stopping by today!”

I got to know the bookstore owner pretty well. She too – like the car driver – rallied against the evils of her competitor:

- **“There is no personal service!”** (No, Amazon provides INSTANT service. You can find and order a book in less than 30 seconds from bed and wake up the next morning and find it delivered to your door.)
- **“They cannot recommend a book as well as someone who knows you.”** (No, that’s right. Instead of this, they use millions of transactions, data scientists and others with PhDs to make predictions based on probably thousands of factors we’re not even aware of.)
- **“I would never trust an online company with my credit card!”** (That’s right! I am better off trusting a 19-year old who has a fondness for nose rings and works for minimum wage with my credit card.)

On one occasion, she tried to sell me the bookstore, noting that I might like it since I lived and worked nearby.

“Is it making any money?” I asked her.

“No, but if someone knew what they were doing, they could probably make it profitable.”

“How long have you owned bookstores?”

“Let me see. Since about 1980 I think. I used to have six stores.”

“What could I do differently? I am in the employment business.”

“I would do more advertising. More book signings. I used to do ‘story time’ on Saturdays, and that got a lot of kids to show up.”

My favorite was when I asked her if she had a book in stock I was interested in buying. She spent 15 minutes on her computer (and answering customer questions) before she told me she could “order” it for me, and it would arrive in one to two weeks. About two minutes into this process, I checked my app on my phone and realized Amazon would deliver the next day (a Sunday!) for half of what she was charging—I could also get it used if I wanted for \$1.99 (LIKE NEW! Ships from California) instead of \$18.95. I spent the next 15 minutes amusing myself at the experience of trying to order a book from the

bookstore and reflected on the ideas of innovation and businesses that no longer work or change.

I heard so many criticisms of Amazon from this bookstore owner that I cannot recall them all. Ultimately, though, Amazon provides a far better service to me than the local bookstore could. The local bookstore is closed, and Amazon is growing.

Everywhere, all the time, businesses are getting destroyed by other businesses who have figured out how to give people a better service at a better price. Many people are in jobs, careers, relationships and so forth where innovation is no longer occurring, and things are getting worse instead of better. If you get too comfortable with a person or with a business, it is likely to go away.

Everything requires constant innovation, improvement and growth. It is for this reason that companies like Apple were so popular during Steve Jobs' lifetime. It is why people prefer to work for companies that are doing new things. It is why most companies prefer to hire younger people with fresher ideas. It is why companies let people go who just do average work year in and year out.

Only innovation makes companies grow. You need to question everything. Questioning everything can save your career and life.

I recently got back from Hawaii, and when I returned, the lower part of my leg was infected from something in the water. Within less than a day, the infection had gotten so painful that I was taken to the emergency room at UCLA. I could not walk and was blacking out from pain. When the passenger door of the car was opened for me at the emergency room, I simply fell limp on the pavement.

I was admitted to the hospital and taken to intensive care. They believed I had a flesh-eating virus that is fatal over 25% of the time. I was injected with a ton of morphine and started on numerous IVs with antibiotics.

I'd been to the hospital before for minor stuff; however, this hospital was unlike anything I had ever seen. There were signs all over the hospital about how it was ranked #1 on the West Coast and was also the #5 best hospital overall in the United States.

When I was in the emergency room before being admitted to the hospital, I was in a bed next to an operating room. A few hours in, a meeting with all of the doctors was convened, and they started debating the treatment of each patient they were seeing. All of the doctors were very animated, many disagreed with others' diagnoses, and the back and forth went on for over an hour. I had never seen anything like it and, despite being under the influence of loads of morphine, was impressed. Suggestions were made to go to the medical library and do research. Other doctors were reminded of their nature to misdiagnose, and the doctors even discussed and analyzed various stress factors of patients that could be causing various conditions. This was all done in a cooperative manner where no one took anything too personally.

Over the several hours I was in the emergency room, I was seen by at least 20 to 25 doctors, interns, residents, surgeons and others.

When I was wheeled directly into intensive care, more doctors came and saw me. A team of seven or eight infectious disease specialists came by my room several times. One was apparently quite well known and examined me while being shadowed by several other doctors who seemed to be giving him a great deal of deference.

"It's the flesh-eating bacteria, necrotizing fasciitis. He has all the symptoms, and the CT scan showed bubbles where the bacteria have eaten the flesh. I am going to recommend immediate surgery."

Within minutes, another team of surgeons (at least 10 people) came hustling into my small room. The chief surgeon looked at my leg for a few minutes and left. He then started debating with the surgeons outside my room.

"You tell him I do not care what it is. If I cut his leg open, he might be disabled for a year. You have not tried everything to stop it yet, and you tell him to use everything he has first before I operate. I'm going to wait at least three hours before operating."

I then heard the surgeon fighting on the phone with the infectious disease specialists for several minutes. A few minutes later, a nurse and doctor came in with some special antibiotic which was so powerful I was warned it could permanently turn my teeth yellow. I also had to sign some forms about the severe side effects the antibiotic could create.

Within an hour of them putting the new antibiotic in my IV, the swelling went down. Four days later, I was discharged from the hospital. Although I have something called a "PICC Line" inserted into my chest running to a vein near my heart (to administer antibiotics via IV for the next few weeks), and need to have a nurse come by my home each day to administer drugs, I am okay.

What made this such a good hospital is that they were questioning everything. This constant questioning created innovation. Several doctors at the hospital told me that most surgeons would have simply cut the infected muscle out of my leg, and I might not have been able to ever walk properly again. The constant questioning of every single move and thing that was done created an atmosphere of innovation and constant improvement for every patient. That is why UCLA hospital is one of the best in the country. It is about how the caregivers interact with each other to advance the interests of their patients. It is not about one person's ego. It is about multiple opinions, constant debate and not accepting the status quo.

When you do things like everyone else, you are likely to be average. When you bring something better and different to the mix, everything changes for the better.

One of the best movies I have ever seen is called *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*. It is a documentary that takes place in a 10-seat sushi restaurant called Sukiyabashi Jiro located inside a Tokyo subway station. The restaurant is considered by many to be the best in the world.

What makes the restaurant so good? It is simply that the chef makes sure that everything that is done is done as well as possible.

- **The rice must be the best.** The rice itself is extremely hard to cook and takes years to learn how to cook properly. Only a certain rice broker has it.
- **The fish must be the best.** One person is dedicated to the fish market, and his career revolves around only finding the sort of fish Jiro will purchase. The quality is questioned constantly, and if there are any issues (even in the restaurant) the fish is disposed of.
- **The people must be the best.** The people are extremely closely supervised and everything they do is watched very closely. They are 100% dedicated to what they do and have a profound understanding of it.

- **The procedures must continually be questioned, improved and reinvented when needed.** Something that most restaurants might boil or marinate for one hour might be boiled or marinated for six hours at Jiro if it makes a small difference.
- **Procedures are followed and procedures are improved upon.** Every single thing is questioned and questioned again.
- **Corners are never cut.** With anything. Quality, time, price and so forth are never compromised.

The result is incredible food and service for the small number of people who eat at the restaurant each day. Like UCLA hospital, Amazon, and Uber, everything is improved upon and not taken for granted.

What is one to do with something like Jiro and his restaurant? Should they outlaw it like people have tried to do with Uber? Or should they just admit he has improved on something and continues to improve on something by his approach to his work.

What would someone like Steve Jobs think about someone like Jiro?

While you may have already reached your own conclusions regarding what is going on here, rest assured that if you understand the meaning of this article, you will never have problems finding, or keeping a job or a business. In fact, this is the most important advice you may ever receive in your career, business and life if you really understand it.

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>