Case Study: Taxi Driver - Henry

What do you do?

Rather than renting a cab from a dispatching company, I have my own car. And I only drive during daytime hours. There’s a lot of money to be made driving night hours, but I think it’s too risky.

I like to take a little extra time to help customers. I help them carry their shopping bags or luggage to the door, let them take their time, and even tell a few jokes while I’m driving. It only takes a little effort to make someone’s taxi ride an enjoyable experience.

What is your background?

When I was growing up, one of the people who lived in my road was a taxi driver. It always seemed to me like he had a great job because he was able to come and go throughout the day. He had his own car, and he made a good living. As I was finishing school, I looked into becoming a taxi driver. I’ve been driving a taxi for the past 20 years.

What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?

Being a taxi driver takes discipline, and respect for other people. Taxi drivers have a great deal of freedom, and they have to motivate themselves to work hard. You make money by taking on more fares. Sitting around all day won’t pay the bills.

Respect is important, and you would be surprised how much politeness is rewarded through tips.

What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?

Driving skills, not to mention a familiarity with the city, can be used in several other jobs. Apart from running a cab, you could be a courier, delivery driver or bus driver.

What changes will there be in the future?

I expect the demand for taxi drivers will be fairly stable.

As far as the way we do our job goes, new technology is already making the taxi drivers’ job easier. In-cab radios are now computerised, which makes pick-ups faster.

What are the biggest challenges in your job?

Bad drivers. If you let those aggressive losers get to you, you’ll just end up with a heart attack, or become a road rage case yourself.

Are there many opportunities to enter this career?

There is a fair bit of turnover in this field, opening up a lot of opportunities for new drivers. You just need to complete a course and get the appropriate licence. Cab owners look for drivers with a lot of driving experience and a good driving record.

What do you like about your job?

I like the freedom and flexibility. I can set my own schedule. If my family need me, I can head home in the middle of the day and I can work as much as I want. The harder I work, the more money I make.

I enjoy providing a service for people. I take pride in getting children to school on time every day, or getting someone across town to the hospital for an appointment, or helping an elderly person into her house with the groceries. And
it's nice to be able to put a smile on someone's face with a conversation or a joke.

Another good thing about being a taxi driver is that I learn the roads inside out. No matter what part of town I'm in, I know where to go for great food and coffee.

**What do you dislike about your job?**

Aggressive drivers. Drivers who cut you up, won't let you change lanes, or drive close to your bumper. Dealing with this all day, it's a struggle not to become an aggressive driver myself.

Having mechanical problems is another difficulty. It's no fun changing a tyre on the side of the road. Repairs are expensive and there's no money coming in during this time.

The toughest thing about making a living is the total lack of security. If I'm sick and can't work, I don't make any money.

**What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?**

If it's something you really want to do, you can't be lazy. You have to work very hard to make a decent living as a taxi driver.

**A day in the life**

9:00 am - 9:30 am
Choose a spot to park and wait for calls.

9:30 am - 12:30 pm
Drive someone to the hospital.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm
Lunch.

1:00 pm - 1:30 pm
Wait for calls.

1:30 pm - 2:00 pm
Drive someone to the airport.

2:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Return to the city with another fare.

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm
Take several people to different destinations.

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Pick up my children after school and drive them home.