This is a transcript of Episode 96: Surge Only Rideshare Driving in Los Angeles. You can find show notes, comments and more by [clicking here.](#) You can also listen to the podcast in [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

Harry Campbell: *So today we're gonna dive deep into the world of rideshare driving an interview, a driver in Los Angeles who's got a ton of experience, but he doesn't have the high ride counts that a lot of drivers have, but that's actually what makes his strategy so unique. Sergio is a longtime commenter on the Rideshare Guy blog and he finally agreed to let me interview him after years of prodding and he's going to share some of the strategies he uses to consistently earn $30 to $35 an hour and sometimes more driving in Los Angeles. So on today's podcast you're going to learn exactly what he does and doesn't do to double the earnings of your average Los Angeles drive.*

Announcer: *Welcome to the Rideshare Guy Podcast, the site that helps drivers earn more money by working smarter, not harder whether you drive for Lyft, Uber or anything in between. We've got you covered. And now here's your host Harry Campbell.*

Harry Campbell: *So today I'm chatting with Sergio, a rideshare driver with five years experience in Los Angeles and frequent commenter over at the Rideshare Guy. You know, he, he never fails to ask the tough questions about Uber or Lyft and even myself. So I have to give more a little Kudos for their, you know, I always appreciate active commenters and people who engage with the blog and with me specifically and do it in a constructive manner. Right. Obviously if you've ever participated in a comment board or on social media, some people can be real a-holes, right? But I think the ones who kinda channel are challenging but also bring up their own good points in a respectful way. Those are always the people I love to engage with even if I don't agree with them on everything. So thanks to Sergio and thanks to all of the other commenters and listeners out there who behave like that also.*

Harry Campbell: *And if you've ever read Sergio's comments and wondered if we would talk, well here we are and it's taken me a little while. I had to ask him quite a few times. I think at first he might've been a little hesitant to share his strategies, but once we met in person and then recorded this episode and I got to know him, he's definitely very similar to me in that, you know, he wants to help a lot of drivers. So I really appreciate him coming on and kind of, you know, this episode is going to get into the weeds a bit and go really nitty gritty. But I think also, uh, if you're a driver or* *even someone who just wants to understand the mind of a driver and how they think about making more money, this episode is going to be super helpful for you.*

Harry Campbell: *Now, there are a bunch of references to LA specifically. But I think that if you guys are confused at all, you could probably pull up a map, but for the most part we tried to keep it so that you could still understand what we were talking about and, you know, get good info there. So lots of fun stuff to discuss. And, uh, you know, also if you guys do enjoy Sergio's commentary and strategies, we launched a page for Rideshare coaching, which you can find at the https://therideshareguy.com/coaching/ that has a little more info about that with guys like Sergio and Jay, all of these expert fulltime drivers. So make sure you stay tuned to the end too because I'll ask Sergio about how new programs like Uber's new flat rate surge and Lyts personal power zones might affect his strategies, right?*

Harry Campbell: *His strategies that he's using today, you know, things change, right? And so how is he going to adapt to that? And you know, I, speaking of higher earnings, I'm really excited to announce our newest sponsor for the podcast. And this is a company called ZUM, that's Z, U M, if you've never heard of them, they're actually a rideshare service for kids. So Zum says that drivers can earn up to $32 an hour with them and many make $750 a week. It's a little different than Uber and Lyft driving a little bit more of a vetting process, right? Because you're transporting minors, you still get that, some of that schedule flexibility, but you also get repeat rides, right? And you can, you know, the Times that you're driving are different. So one of the reasons why I really like this company and why I'm excited to have them sponsor the podcast and a few other areas around the site is because you know for drivers, you know this episode dovetails nicely if you're looking to make more money, there are opportunities out there, right?*

Harry Campbell: *If you just go out there and drive and turn the APP on and take every request you get, you're going to be an average driver. But my whole site, my whole business, my whole podcast is about helping you be better than average. And I think as Sergio is going to show today and opportunities like Zum shows, if you're a good driver and you're in demand, you definitely make more money if that's what you're looking for. And I think a lot of us are looking for that. So definitely check out the rideshareguy.com/zum that's Z U M and let them know that we sent you and let me know how you like it. So this episode and show notes can be found at therideshareguy.com/episode96 all right, let's get started.*

Interview with Sergio from LA

Harry Campbell: *All right, Sergio, how are you doing today?*

Sergio Avedian: *Good morning.*

Harry Campbell: *I'm doing well. I'm excited to talk with you. You're a veteran driver here in LA, so hopefully I'm gonna learn a lot and maybe even a pick up a couple of strategies for myself.*

Sergio Avedia: *Absolutely.*

Harry Campbell: *Awesome. So the first thing I want to ask you to get things started is, you know, you've got a lot of experience and I think that one of the reasons why I wanted to interview is cause you have a unique take on rideshare driving. So what's one thing that you think most drivers, they don't realize or maybe they don't think about when it comes to driving for Uber and Lyft?*

Sergio Avedian: *Well as far as I'm concerned, I've been driving for, I would say close to three years with an approaching 4,000 rides on Uber and probably about, $1,100 less. I would say the most important thing for a rideshare driver is as simple as it may sound, is patience. Patience is something that I've learned obviously after about a year or so, meaning not accepting every single thing that comes your way.*

Harry Campbell: *Gotcha.*

Sergio Avedian: *And there will be another one around the corner. I mean, the demand is there, just take advantage of it.*

Harry Campbell: *It kind of reminds me of a Richard Branson quote that I think something opportunity is like about like buses, there's always another one coming, right?*

Sergio Avedian: *No question about it. And that is practically with all the drivers that I've tried to coach or help them out in the past, that's one thing that they're lacking, that they're thinking, if I don't accept this ride, I may just wait another 10 - 15 minutes* *for a pain. In Los Angeles, that is not valid. Now, in other cities or rural areas, obviously it's a different story. But in Los Angeles, there was no shortage of things.*

Harry Campbell: *Interesting. Okay, so I'd love to learn, you know, we're going to dig into, you know, sort of why patience is so important and you know, even some of those strategies that you're employing in Los Angeles a little bit later. But before we do that, I'd love to know a little bit more about you. You mentioned that you have a driving for three or four years. You've got around 5,000 plus trips on both platforms. So can you tell us a little bit about you and kind of really how you got started driving and why?*

Sergio Avedian: *Sure. I have a finance degree from a major southern California University. I was working for a Wall Street firm for about 18 years. It's a business that you burn out after a while. I'm not a couch potato. I like doing things. Even after that I got my, PGA certified coaching license. So I teach golf quite a bit. So, thought, why be a couch potato? Just get out and meet people. I'm an extrovert. I like talking to people and, make some money. On the side, maybe take the kids or a family to an extra vacation here and there. So I thought, yeah, this sounds good. It's a side gig. But everything, like everything else I do, I try to do it some with a, with a clear thought process. I treat the, the rideshare driving as a business, as my own small business as opposed to just turning the app on and aimlessly driving for 10 hours. I tried to, set my plan and have a clear strategy and, and tried to implement that plan. Obviously I have no control over it of where Uber and Lyft send me. But knowing your city obviously helps a lot in that manner.*

Harry Campbell: *Gotcha. So do you consider yourself retired or still working or active?*

Sergio Avedian: *I invest in stocks still and I tried to give advice to a few friends here and there. One day asked me, I don't volunteer anything obviously. Yeah, I would say I would say semi retired.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah. I guess my question is more along the motivation driving for Uber and Lyft and even also your, your PGA, right. Cause that's one thing that I find that everyone is doing Uber and Lyft for different reason. I mean they all sort of revolt. Everyone is doing it because they want to make money. But I'm just curious to know is this a, you know, is you're driving, do you need the money or is this sort of like you said, hey, it's, it's extra and if you know, if you had to quit tomorrow, you know, and that's what it is.*

Sergio Avedian: *Yeah. I don't need the money, I thought if I have a few hours to earn some extra cash and like I said, to take the family or kids to extra vacation a year. That's how it all started. And then it became a meaningful part of my income. To be honest with you. I have cut my hours obviously with the price cuts that have occurred over the last two, three years now I would call myself a very part time driver. I would say not more than 20 hours a week.*

Harry Campbell: *Gotcha.*

Sergio Avedian: *On both platforms.*

Harry Campbell: *Okay. So what would you describe yourself? Like what type of driver would you describe yourself as sort of what is the driving strategy that you're looking to employee?*

Sergio Avedian: *Well first let me say that this is not a nine to five job. You have to have that clear mindset. If you consider it a nine to five job and the hours of your driving is going to be pretty much instead of a side Gig or driving work demand is or when demand is, you need to adapt to that. You need to understand that as long as you are driving, when there is demand, your income is going to be higher. That's, that's an obvious. Now if you drive between midnight and 6:00 AM obviously there's not going to be any rights unless you do the bar hopping scheduled that most people try to do because it's surges, is quite a bit. So first of all you need to set your own parameters. I mean it flexibility is something that Uber and Lyft are both selling very heavily for most people.*

Sergio Avedian: *That's what they like. Well, I liked that. I like to set my own schedule. Obviously what I've discovered over the last, over the last couple of years especially is that I have to pick up my kid from school at three o'clock so okay, well when do I drive? Well, what a good time for me to drive is early, let's say from 4:30 AM 5:00 AM to maybe 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM when when the city's surging, when a lot of people are going to work on, a lot of people are going to school and obviously a lot of people travel. So there was a lot of LAX rights happening at those hours and I tried to be finished by 10 in the old days I used to do split shifts, meaning I would do 5:00 AM to 10:00 AM take a break, pick up my kids, come home and then work and other maybe half a shift from let's say 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM so to me, most drivers need to understand that if you're going to, if it's a part time gig for you, tried to adjust your hours.*

Sergio Avedian: *If you're doing this as a full time, tried to do split shifts because there's dead zones during the day. If you're going to work from let's say 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM take a break, take a break for three, four hours in between, do your other chores, other things that you planned for the day, but tried to take advantage of it, of the surge, because I'm mainly a surge only driver or surge, mostly driver. That's the hours that LA core is surging and take advantage of it. So that's number one. Number two for me is if you want to maximize earnings think like the passenger where our passengers going and when are they going? When are they most likely to use Uber and Lyft? While it's going to be obviously in the mornings and after work, going out for dinners or again, LAX. LAX is a big part of my income base. It really is. But you have to know what you're doing at LAX. Otherwise as an ex driver, you're going to be collecting crumbs basically.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah. So what is your strategy around LAX then?*

Airport Driving Strategy

Sergio Avedian: *Well, LAX is, I try to not go to the waiting line. So the reason for that is Uber and Lyft both haven't implemented strategy, especially on Uber. When it's surging at LAX, they allow higher-class cars to drop down to x level. When they do you know you will be at LAX, you will see you moving up in queue. Yes. Now you're at let's say 10 to 15 but then at a certain surge rate select cars, which are, I mean I don't know how many select cars there are, but it seems like.*

Harry Campbell: *There's a few.*

Sergio Avedian: *Endless select cars out there and what they do is they dropped down to x and they collect all the surge ride. Especially when the surge hits 1.8 to 2.0 they dropped down because at that moment they're taking all the rights from the x drivers. And you know how people complain about, oh I've been to LAX, I've been in que for half hour, it's surging. And then by the time my ride comes around the surge down to 1.2 well that's because Uber, Uber is feeding all the select cars that have dropped down to x level with the surge rides. So to me, when I do go to LAX, if I don't get a rematch on surge or get a rematch with open freeways, I usually get out of there. There was no reason to wait. So that's number one as far as LAX is concerned.*

Harry Campbell: *Okay, Gotcha. So basically it sounds like, you know, kind of avoiding the waiting lines, but are there specific times or places you found, I mean you talked about the early morning airport runs I mean is that really just the strategy? It's kind of positioning yourself in the early mornings to get rides to their airports?*

Sergio Avedian: *Well, let me, let me give you an example of how my day starts. Number one, you have to, I mean obviously some people are partial to Lyft or Uber, but as far as I'm concerned, if you don't have both apps working for you, you're not going to do as well as I do. Obviously most people don't live in the core. When I say core, right? LA Core downtown, let's say take from downtown Los Angeles all the way to Santa Monica up to Beverly Hills, and let's include LAX in that zone. Well, I live in the San Fernando Valley, which is 30 miles from LAX. There aren't that many rights from the San Fernando Valley at 4:00 AM in the morning. Right?*

Harry Campbell: *Right.*

Sergio Avedian: *So, so what I do is I try to use Lyfts, scheduled rides in order for me to get out of this hole, right? So when I'm not working, when I'm taking my son to soccer practice or any other thing that I'm doing, I love the Lyft APP on, and I'm constantly checking for scheduled rides, especially early run to LAX with Lyft. To me it seems like it's, they're scheduled ride system for drivers is a lot better than Uber's, so yeah,*

Harry Campbell: *Definitely.*

Sergio Avedian: *What I'll do is, yeah, what I'll do is I'll just pick myself a schedule ride before the four or five that comes to a parking lot, which is right about 5:15 - 5:30 AM in the morning and I tried to put myself into core that way. If I don't have a scheduled ride, then it becomes a tougher issue obviously. Then I may have to dead mile the first 10 12 miles, get down to four or five and we'll share around UCLA somewhere to pick myself a ride. But I tried to stop, start my days with a scheduled ride on this. That is practically one of the most important things. And for people especially who don't live in the core.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah, I mean I guess because not only are you getting paid for those miles because heading the miles to which 30 miles that can be a bit. And I think that for a lot of drivers in pretty much every major city, you know, it's pretty expensive to live in the core areas where all the rides are happening. So there are a lot of drivers* *in your situation that, you know, live outside the core and need to commute in and out every single day. Right.*

Sergio Avedian: *No question about it. I mean, it's scheduled ride from where I live too. LAX Is, I would say I get paid right around on average, between $20 and $32 that's without the tip. And most Lyft passengers as we know, tip a little bit better than over Uber passengers. So yeah, I mean I'm starting my day with no traffic and putting myself into the core and getting paid $30 well, that, that's how you also keep your dollars per ride average high. And once I'm in the core, then I know exactly what I'm, what, what I have to do. I basically have planned my day, all I have to do in is execute it.*

A Day in the Life of an LA Driver

Harry Campbell: *You know, I'm ready to learn about what it's like a day in a life of Sergio. So, I like this path we're headed on right now. You've got your, you know, you try to start the day with a scheduled ride to LAX. Do you use a destination filter at all? I mean it sounds like it's not all that helpful in the mornings, right? Just because there aren't a ton of people going in the direction you want to go.*

Sergio Avedian: *The destination filter is something that is probably one of the most important parts of my strategy driving strategy.*

Harry Campbell: *But to get into the core area.*

Sergio Avedian: *Yeah, into the core area, I know I don't use it. I tried to save those to position myself in the core, but if I don't have a scheduled ride, I will burn one. Let's say on Lyft, wait for 15 minutes because I think it's 15 to 20 minutes after that, you know, you'll get the text saying, sorry we couldn't find you a match or whatever. So to me he's like, I will burn one Uber. I will not, I will keep my Uber df since we only have two.*

Harry Campbell: *Okay. Let's say that you get a ride over to LAX and now you've dropped off your passenger at LAX. What do you do next?*

Sergio Avedian: *Obviously, if it's all list of scheduled ride on Lyft, I will keep my app on. If I'm getting to LAX about five 15, 5:30 AM if there is a rematch, I will take that. Again. The freeways are open. Obviously Lyft rates being still at 80 cents a mile and 12 cents a minute. That ride may put me absolutely what I need to go, which most rides are going to take you either to West Hollywood, even up to Santa Monica, right.*

Harry Campbell: *From LA.*

Sergio Avedian: *Yeah, from LAX right now if you do catch a bad one for, for your strategy, obviously it happens once in a while. If I'm going to go south, then there will be other people coming from the south back to LAX, then I will start deploying my DF.*

Harry Campbell: *Got it. So it sounds like it's sort of about to start the day, you're kind of trying to position yourself in that core area. So if you got a ride, you know, okay, now you're at LAX, you get a ride into the core area. Now you're in this core area, you know, I guess it sounds like early morning. What do you do from there?*

Sergio Avedian: *Before we get to that? I also, as I told you, I treat this as a small business, right? And it's about building relationships. Obviously we know Uber and Lyft don't match passengers with drivers for various reasons. But what I tried to do is if I have a decent, you know, ride in the car and the person is talkative, although it's 4:35 in the morning.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah.*

Sergio Avedian: *What else do, what I'll try to do is I'll try to sense if they're business travelers, if they're traveling from my area too, LAX quite a bit, and I'll probe into me picking them up for their next ride on the platform. You know, I'll tell them, look, you live in miles from my house. You go to LAX once or twice a week or maybe once every other week. But for me, I tried to create my own database. If they like me, they like my car, they liked the way I drive. They liked the service. Well, why not have them use me again in, in all likelihood to Uber and Lyft algorithms are not going to match you with that same passenger again. So, but if everything works out, I'll tell them, look, I'll give him my cell phone number, I'll come to your house. The day before you let me know when your flight is, you'll get in my car, your order, your eyes, it, it'll be on the platform.*

Sergio Avedian: *If you're using it as a business expense, obviously you still can do it and lift is getting a ride. But I'm getting an easy ride back to the core. So I have built* *relationships like this over the last couple of years and you know, people like my car, people liked the way I drive. So they'll shoot me a text the day before and say, well tomorrow I'm leaving in 5:00 AM can you pick? Yup. I'll tell them. Sure. I'll go there. And, and you know, I don't think it's anything illegal, right? So they'll use the platform, we'll look, makes their money. I make my own money and then it puts me into the core.*

Harry Campbell: *It's tough because you really, you know, you are running your business and sort of sometimes the better you do as a driver, you're not necessarily benefiting yourself. Right. A high rating. You know, I guess there there's the Uber pro program, but for the most part a high rating doesn't get you anything extra. It doesn't make you anything extra, but you've sort of found a nice way to take advantage of the fact that you're a good driver. You know what you're doing, you have a nicer car, you have a good rating and now you can kind of leverage that to start your mornings and you know, whether it's a scheduled ride from Lyft or just a scheduled ride with one of your favorite passengers, you're sort of now putting yourself in a, in a better position to succeed just to start every single day. Right?*

Sergio Avedian: *Absolutely. Yeah. I mean I I think the most important thing is I don't know why, even if passengers were to request the same driver. I think if Uber and Lyft implemented a strategy like that, there are a lot of high rated drivers with good cars and there are a lot of let's say less than average cars with less than average drivers and if a passenger, I think they should give the passenger the choice of giving their repeat business to the same driver. I don't see any harm in debt, but for some reason they have chosen not to do it. So my day, let's say I'm at LAX now at five in the morning, if I don't get every match, while we know not too many flights come in until they accent 5:00 AM, there was some Hawaii flights that are coming in. Obviously it's good to know the flight schedule at LAX for early morning flights.*

Sergio Avedian: *From there, if I do get a rematch, it puts me into the car. I'll buy some coffee, I'll take a half hour break, then I'll wait for the morning search. Now my strategy has always depended on surge or prime time. I am one of the drivers, it's not called quantity over quality for me. I'd rather do one ride an hour for $30 then four rides an hour for $30 I mean you've mentioned this in your book as well. Work Smart, not hard, but most drivers obviously are chasing quest chasing consecutive streak, all kinds of stuff. Honestly, I have never attempted, even in the days of one quests were very high on Uber and Lyft. I have not chased it. I think it's good for Uber and Lyft and they talk about utilization rates and all kinds of stuff. To me it never made sense to me. I've always been a surge only drivers surge, mostly driver. I'm going to stick to it until they take it away.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah, well I like it you said to sometimes that Uber, you know the programs are the incentives that Uber and Lyft dangle in front of drivers there usually most beneficial to Uber and Lyft. Right? So, even though a quest bonus may seem enticing, hey, you know, come out and drive 80 trips and make $120 or do three trips in a row and make $10 $5 whatever it is, you know, whatever these various bonuses are, Uber and Lyft, they know what they're doing. And I guess it sounds like you've found for the most part, that you can actually make more by doing your own thing versus, you know, kind of doing what Uber and Lyft want you to do*

Sergio Avedian: *Without a question. I mean, I, you know, I drove, I drove over on left sparingly last few weeks when I drove for Uber specifically after the cut the last cut from 80 cents to 60 cents a mile, I still averaged between 30 and $35 per hour per app on our, and then, you know, there's obviously various metrics to look at. You can figure out your door to door hours, which I do because I'm out there. I could be sitting on my couch, but I'm in my car. To me, door to door is the most important. You know hour metric you can look at, it can look at. Then I look at my dollar per ride amount, which I tried to keep anywhere between and $20 per ride. Obviously how many miles you've driven for that day including all dead miles and pick up miles, so there's various ways to look at it.*

Sergio Avedian: *The way I look at it is I am not going to kill my car, kill my brain, deal with four passengers in an hour and a half. I'd rather deal with one passenger on a high surge ride that I positioned myself correctly that I get that ride and obviously that comes with passing on a lot of pings and that's where the patience comes into play. Especially if you know your search patterns in your city, which after a while, I mean for a starting driver I would say take screenshots constantly and then kind of memorize it because search to me is like a tornado. Don't chase the surge. Obviously you're going to get hurt, but let let the surge come to you. I mean it happens because the patterns upsurge are repetitive. I mean if, if Uber is putting on a surge and you're sitting in the middle of, you know, a lot of people I hear on a lot of, you know, chat rooms complain about while I'm in the middle of the surge, I'm not getting a surge ride. Well that means there is no demand. Uber is putting on the surge to attract drivers for the upcoming surge that is going to be in half an hour. They have so much information that they're able to do that obviously. So to me it's like I'd rather do one ride for $30 an hour, then do for rights for $30 an hour.*

Harry Campbell: *I'd love to know more about 30 to $35 an hour. And obviously maybe not obviously, but we have met in person and you know, I can kind of back up* *and verify all of your numbers and screenshots. That's why, you know, I think that um, a lot of people talk about ways to earn more or do this or do that. But I like that you're actually sharing the specific strategies of, you know, so what's one time or you mean, what's an example that you would say have, you know, sort of being patient and uh, you know, kind of waiting out that surge. How might that play out in real life?*

Sergio Avedian: *Okay, so I'll, I'll give you a perfect example from yesterday. Yesterday morning I had a scheduled ride at 4:00 AM from two miles from my house to LAX, obviously not LAX. Okay. It's early, it's before five, not too many flights coming in. But then I wasn't one to five in the LAX Q for Uber and that was one to 10 in the lift queue. Both apps on both apps on, and I positioned myself to receive airport rides because if I were to go into the city or if I were to drive from there up to let's say Marina del Rey, well most things are going to take me right back to LAX and I don't want to do that. So I took a break, sat there for half hour. Sure enough, I got a base rating on Uber. It took me to sunset. So now it's five 30 I'm on sunset, I contact, I dropped it, dropped off at the standard, and then uh, write about five 30.*

Sergio Avedian: *I take another short break, six o'clock start surging, right about six o'clock on sunset. I Take Your Ping at, I think it was a 1.8 or 1.9 right back to LAX. So now it's six six 36 45 I'm back at LAX. That was a nice ride. Very nice gentlemen, business traveler, a 45 minute ride. I got paid close to $37 and then sure enough, I'm at LAX now. Now from there you have to be careful with what you're doing. Obviously one of the most important things I can tell to any new driver is when you do accept any kind of ride, turn your app off, meaning no more new requests because then Uber and Lyft are going to stack you for, with some most likely a crappy ride. And then you end up canceling it and then you know how they look at cancellations. So I always, always drive with my app off. And before I forget, I use twi cell phones. Now most people may or may not be able to afford that, but with unlimited plans now as being so cheap, go buy yourself a cheap.*

Sergio Avedian: *Second phone. The reason for that, for me, the way it works is if I'm on an Uber Ride, obviously you won't be able to see where your dropoff zone if it's surging or not. While on this one, in this case, I know what I'm driving into a, I have my app off or new requests turned off. I'm driving into a zone where it's surging. Sure enough, at mile before I drop off, I started accepting new new requests again, but I need to know if it's surging. Obviously would one phone, you can see if it's surging on Lyft primetime, but since, since we're, you know, since we're in this, in the days of lifts, taken away primetime from most drivers. Now that's not gonna work. But to see on your own, on Uber, if it's surging, where you're dropoff zone is, is a very important* *issue for me because I only started writing. So it's something I think it's a decent strategy on over to have two phones. I mean new phones are like you can go to best buy and get one for 100 bucks.*

Harry Campbell: *Let's say you're giving to a location, you're going to pull up on the second phone. What are you going to pull up to see whether it's surging or not. If you pull up the driver App, are you still able to see certain zones even though you're on a trip on the first phone?*

Sergio Avedian: *Absolutely. You just do just logged on. You're, I'm not logged on, I'm only logged on on the phone that I'm giving her a ride on. But then once I turned the APP on, you can see the surge. You don't need to have the APP on at all. Just turned to, you know, click on on the Uber App and then it will give you the exact same map just just for the fact, now that's a little bit deeper, right? But for starters, I used that. I've been using two phones for the last couple of years. It works for me because? Because I'm basically a surge driver now. If you're a quest chaser or a streak chaser, you're going to accept every ride anyway. I don't think it makes sense for you, but to me it has made quite a bit of a difference.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah, that was really interesting. You said that you took a 30 minute break and I don't think there's too many drivers that will sort of think that, oh, if I take a break, you know I can actually kind of wait till the surge builds, for example. And obviously you kind of have to know the surge patterns and know the timing and all that, but it sounds like you're pretty okay with just sitting back for 30 minutes. You know, it depends if the timing is right.*

Sergio Avedian: *I have no problem waiting. Seriously. I mean that's, that's where the patients comes in. Yeah. That's obviously, as you mentioned, you have to know your city, you have to know where it's going to surge on. It's going to surge. And to me, I have no problem waiting. Literally. I mean, I'd rather take wait a half hour, take a surge right to LAX then except the next ride and take a base right to LAX. It's just a matter of, for, for some people that they don't like sitting, if they have six hours that they're going to drive, they want their wheels turning with the passenger in the car. Well, you know, there's two ways to look at it. Again, I want to work smart, not hard. I want to make more money than most drivers do and it works for me. I mean to me, Surge only driving especially with 60 cents a mile and gas at $4 and 20 cents now is the only way to work to be honest with you, until they take that away obviously. But um, you know, aimlessly driving all over the place at $4 and 20 cents and you know, gas, it's just ridiculous. I mean, you're losing money.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah. Well I liked the way you think about it because what I often tell drivers is, you know, you really only want your wheels to be moving when you have a passenger in the car. You know, that's the time you want to maximize, you want to minimize the time that you're driving around without a passenger in the car, but you sort of take it one step further. You want to minimize or maximize the amount of time you have with the passenger in the car when it's surging. You don't even want them in the car at base rates. You want them in the car when it's surging and that's kind of the time you're trying to maximize in. It sounds like it's working pretty well.*

Sergio Avedian: *Yeah. Well, I mean it was working pretty well. Obviously, you know, when I sent you my screenshots, you know that for that week I only drove older. I did 30 rides. I have close to $20 a ride. I was online for about 17 and a half hours and I grow $600. Right? So, okay, that's about 33 to $35 an hour to me before the cuts. Obviously you can figure that out. It would have been probably 15 to 20% higher. Right. So before all these cuts, I mean, I used to average over $40 an hour with this strategy and, but now obviously I can't do it, you know, they're only paying me 60 cents a mile to me. Now quality over quantity has more of an importance with 60 cents a mile and 21 cents a minute than ever before.*

Harry Campbell: *How'd your day finish out?*

Sergio Avedian: *Yeah, from, from LAX. Now it's at six 30. While there are too many exit routes when LAX without traffic at six 30 so, uh, you have to figure out, you have to figure out, let's get back on Lincoln. Let's drive about four miles up to pass Marina del Rey. And then once I got into the surge area, which is surging, about six 30 in the mornings, the killer ride from there would be a trip back to LAX. Then you're dead. Your Day's finished. Literally it's finished. I mean support as it's a parking lot. Lincoln is a parking lot. So I positioned myself correctly. Search, start building. Of course, I'm in a 1.8 zone. Uber sent me the first king as base rate. Always. It's going to be a base rate. That's where the patience comes in. The second thing was a medium surgery, which I've, of course I declined and then the next one was exactly what I wanted.*

Sergio Avedian: *Now at the same time though, what I did was right before seven Uber still allows you to use your destination filters right at seven o'clock they cut you off all the way to 10 o'clock now, so I don't want to get it to take a trip back to LAX because that's my desk now. So what do I do? I set one on my Uber DFS to downtown Los Angeles. Even if I piecemeal it right, I'm going to get fewer trips going towards that direction instead of going back to LAX. So not only that helps me stay out of LAX* *for the next few shifts, but what it's going to do is, you know you have the streak bonuses. Yesterday they had a streak bonus three rides for seven extra dollars for me. I don't know. Some people may have a bigger numbers or less while sure enough, I completed two streaks going from Santa Monica. It took me all the way close to downtown actually to Korea town, which always surges and not only I completed my streaks, all those three rides, we're kind of medium to shortest rides. But then with the streak, it brought me up to close to 33 $34 an hour and they were all surge rides because the core is surging for those two, two and a half hours. So that's one way to use your ds.*

Harry Campbell: *You really use a lot of people use destination filter to go somewhere. You kind of used it though. Avoid going to LAX, which I like.*

Sergio Avedian: *I go home with one d, I didn't do my job, I burned all of them. There is, if I'm going to work four hours, I have eight potential DF to burn. I will burn all of them. I will put my lift DF on just to go five miles, turn at a different location, you know, to position myself for the next surging ride, use it if you have it used it. And I very rarely use my df to go home. I'd rather the all surge rides increase my earnings and dead Mile Honda last 15 miles as opposed to put on a DF sit there, which they're not going to give you that TF anyway. What's the point of using the have to go home? I'd rather dead mile the last 15 minutes because I made enough money doing today with deploying the f correctly. So most drivers use it to go home. I burn all of them. I don't use it to go home.*

Harry Campbell: *Obviously there is, you can control as a driver, but there are also things that Uber and Lyft determine rates and you know, changing programs and bonuses. So, you know, how do you think things are changing and how are you planning on adapting your strategies to, you know, whatever Uber and Lyft throw down the pipe?*

Sergio Avedian: *Well, as long as the surge is maintained with Uber and the flat rates are just not implemented, I'm going to obviously still do surge, only rides and stay with Uber, although it's 60 cents a mile, which is ridiculous. But it is what it is with Lyft, they took my prime time away. Now what I need to do is I need to figure this new personal power zones that they introduced, which I have quite a bit of following and and friends who I text with and talk to. None of them have done Lyft, not, I wouldn't have done Lyft since they introduced this*

Harry Campbell: *Just for background because not everyone may know that you know, obviously most people are familiar with Lyft primetime and Uber surge, but in a lot of places, some places Uber has started rolling out new flat rate surge and Lyft is rolling out the same thing, but they call it personal power zone and basically instead of getting a multiplier on the surge ride like you did in the past, you know, two x or three x, now you get a fixed flat fee. So you might only get two or $3 on the on the fair whether it goes one mile or whether it goes 50 miles. Right,*

Sergio Avedian: *Right. That's correct. A couple of my friends got it three weeks ago. Another friend of mine got it two weeks ago. I got it this week. So I don't know what their purposes. Maybe there they're seeing what kind of rejection they're getting from drivers. I will not use Lyft other than scheduled rides and DF until I figure out what this personal power zone is. Look, they have introduced many different things, but then you have to adapt with it. I mean, you can not just lay down and say, oh well I'm dead. I'm not going to use it. You know, there's something called Rpb. Uh, both companies use RPB has got grabbing it percentage per booking when Lyft was 17% four years ago and now it's up to over 30%. That's another way to increase RPB yeah.*

Harry Campbell: *Amount of money they're taking from me.*

Sergio Avedian: *Exactly. Yeah. I understand what they're doing, but I think they're going to get a lot of rejection.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah. It does seem like the new flat rate surge in the Lyft, it have not been well received by drivers, but, uh, I think, like you said, that, you know, things are always changing, so you do kind of have to adapt your strategy and I think that, I'm sure you'll find a way to make it work. Uh, you know, kind of wrapping up the, the last question I wanted to ask you that I think would be a good one to close out with is, you know, what's your general outlook on Uber and Lyft since obviously you've been driving for them for four years, and I think that you put a lot of thought into your driving and you also have this finance background. So I'm curious to know what you think, about the general outlook of both companies going forward.*

Thoughts on Uber and Lyft

Sergio Avedian: *Well, obviously both companies are in a push to become profitable. They're going public. When they had private investors, they got funded basically. I mean, their model has been, I have a 50 cent hamburger, but I'm willing to sell it for 10 cents and tried to get as many customers as I can. Well, you know, that's going to end at some point. I mean, Wall Street doesn't look kindly on just top line growth. At some point you have to be profitable until they figure out how to make money and charge for rides, what the ride is truly worth. I don't see a way for them to be profitable. While the only way for them to be profitable is for them to raise that RPV which is going to come at the drivers expense. To be honest with you. I mean we're seeing that we're seeing with the personal power zones. The funniest thing is that the email that they sent me to introduce me to their personal power zones says that as per your feedback, we're introducing personal power zones. I was like, listen, that was not my thing.*

Harry Campbell: *It seems that Uber and Lyft can be I think I just got an email about Uber pro and they changed some thing that I didn't think was good and they say, you know, we listened to your feedback and we changed this and I was thinking myself who gave this feedback because it doesn't really seem like a good.*

Sergio Avedian: *Guy in Iowa gave you a personal powers on feedback in a rural area. I didn't give you this feedback. Actually. The other thing I got from a friend of mine the other day is that Lyft is going to start testing, giving you destination and duration of a ride. If you have 90% acceptance rate. He got it. I didn't get it because obviously my acceptance rate on both platforms, you know, run about 20% they didn't send me that, but they sent him that because I think he accepts every single ride that comes his way. That could be something that we're looking forward to. But you know, to come back to your question, I think both companies have a lot of work to do and it's going to come at, you know, the drivers expense. They said that in their s one before they went IPO. What does that mean?*

Sergio Avedian: *Cut rates for us, keep the rates or raise the rates for the passengers and become profitable. I think the writing has been on the wall for a long, long time. Right? I mean, just looking at the rate cuts. Uh, but you know, look, they still have a lot of people out there driving for them. Although I do read your blog religiously and the last person that you had on your, on one of your podcasts was that at some point, uh, the politicians will get involved like they did in New York. And as far as these companies finances, you know, it's going to be detrimental. I mean, if politicians get involved and set rules as far as minimum wage requirements or capping, I read somewhere the other day that New York is capping new applications now, new drivers, well this is all against, uh, you know how they're going to become profitable. I* *don't think, I don't see profits coming around. You know, they're driverless cars are the answer. While we don't know how that's going to be about another five to 10 years minimum.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah, a lot of question marks.*

Sergio Avedian: *You know, I'm all for the drivers. I think these companies built tremendous amount of wealth for a certain group of so people, and it was done on the back of the drivers. I mean, without a driver, there is no Uber or Lyft as far as I'm concerned. Yes. Do you still have to write code, but you depend on us and cheat us a little bit better. Pay us a little bit better. Maybe I look, I'm not complaining as far as my own pay, but I think I'm in the maybe 1%.*

Harry Campbell: *Definitely, yeah.*

Sergio Avedian: *That implement these kinds of strategies. And put some thought into it, but you know, my parting words would be use your brain, use your brain is still worth something. Don't just accept everything that the algorithm throws at you. You're a human being. Use your brain.*

Harry Campbell: *Yeah, definitely. Well I appreciate you coming on and sharing all your insights. I know you mentioned to me off air to that we could share your contact info in the show notes so that if drivers do have any questions, maybe they can ping you and reach out. You know, I know you've been very helpful to me and also I appreciate you coming on and sharing all your info. So, um, we'll share all that contact info in the show notes. Sound good, Sergio.*

Sergio Avedian: *Sounds Good Harry. I appreciate it.*

Harry Campbell: *All right, take care.*

Sergio Avedian: *Take care now.*

Outro

Harry Campbell: *All right, big thanks to Sergio for coming on the podcast and if you want to reach out to him directly, we'll leave his contact info in the show notes page or you can also leave a comment on the website @ therideshareguy.com/episode96. Really enjoyed my conversation with Sergio. And I think what I like most about his strategies is that he's thoughtful and you know, he brought up several times that patience is the key. And I think, you know, that's probably just good advice for life, right? Being patient as a ride share driver can make you more money, but also just being patient in general and listening and understanding and recognizing patterns and then opportunities and figuring out the best ways that you can take advantage of them. Especially here in Los Angeles where you know, there are strikes going on and protests because Uber just cut the per mile rate by 25% and of course every driver including myself is pretty upset about this.*

Harry Campbell: *And you know, I met with Sergio a couple of weeks after this price cut and he hadn't driven for a while because he was pretty upset too. And he showed me his earnings, he was still right there, you know, he wasn't earning as much as he had in the past, but he's still in that $30 to $35 an hour range just driving Uber just doing surge. Only. So you know, just to show you right that if you kind of, you know, go out there and employ these strategies and really think about what you're doing and learn from the top drivers in the top people out there, you can double your earnings literally. So that's kind of you know, why I love presenting his feedback and sort of his strategies. Cause you know, some, a lot of people I feel like may not want to share their strategies and that's kind of what my whole business is about and helping you guys and girls find these people like Sergio because I'm not a full time driver.*

Harry Campbell: *A lot of this stuff that Sergio told me, you know, I would never be able to share just because of the nature. You know, I've always been doing it part time and I'm not doing it every single day and at the Times that Sergio is driving. So very cool to learn from him. And as I mentioned at the beginning, if you guys are interested in rideshare coaching, this is something that we are testing out and we want to see sort of how it goes. But you can head to the rideshareguy.com/coaching and this is really a new service we're offering, but we'll kind of try to match you up with a top 1% driver like Sergio in LA or Jay Cradeur in San Francisco and you'll get to pick their brain on a coaching call. If you're a brand new driver too and you haven't signed up with Uber or Lyft, we actually have an opportunity for you to get free coaching too if you use our signup link.*

Harry Campbell: *So head to the rideshareguy.com/coaching to learn more about that. And I also want to thank our sponsor for this episode. Zum. You can head to the* *ridesharequy.com/zum Z U M if you're interested in learning more about this ride share service for kids, which is a great opportunity and I think you can definitely boost your earnings and kind of take advantage of that high rating that you might have or that expertise that you might have. Cause once you have that experience, it's all about figuring out ways to get paid for it. So if you guys have any questions, feel free to hit me up, over email, social media. You know how to find me. All right. Have a great week everyone. And don't forget to drive smarter, not harder.*

Show Notes

- *Rideshare Driver Coaching*
- *Learn more about Zum*

This is a transcript of Episode 96: Surge Only Rideshare Driving in Los Angeles. You can find show notes, comments and more by clicking here. You can also listen to the podcast in iTunes, Stitcher or wherever you get your podcasts.