**Whipster: The Inception.**

Los Angeles, May 2014. Friends were flying from various locations attending a wedding. On the day of the wedding several of us (Frankie, Tyler, myself), all friends of the groom, were in the lobby of our hotel figuring out transportation options to get to the ceremony. Frankie said he would bring up Uber. I said I would bring up Lyft. Tyler was going to call a taxi. As the three of us set upon our individual tasks Frankie casually said “Man, wouldn’t it be great…” and sensing his thoughts I finished his sentence for him “...if there was just one app that could do this for us.” Quite often, the most successful businesses are solving a simple problem or fulfilling a basic need. And just like that, the idea for Whipster was born – a rideshare aggregation app. The Trivago of Rideshares.

The seed was planted, but it would be another 6 months mulling over the idea before any real action began. The idea not only wouldn’t go away but it continued to grow and grow to such a point that I found myself no longer able to ignore it. In late 2014 I began to seriously analyze the rideshare market, evaluate coding options, develop the concept into an actionable plan and formulate the business model to support this endeavor. As a front end developer I knew I was going to need a native coder who could do what I could not - develop in both Java (Android) and Xcode (iPhone). After months of not being able to find that person to join me, in April 2015 I decided to sit down and teach myself these languages and code the app myself.

I was still working as a full time IT Security consultant, so I had to do all this on the side. As I began teaching myself these languages I miraculously stumbled across the world of hybrid apps. Hybrid app: a web-based front end program that would compile universally across multiple platforms. I ditched the native app languages and invested all my resources into learning the hybrid environments: Cordova, NodeJS, Ionic, AngularJS and a few others. Within 3 months I managed to get the first functioning version up on Android.

As time went by I realized a few truths. The rideshare industry was not going away but at the same time it also needed to grow in order for an aggregation app to be of any relevance to users. At that time, there were three rideshare companies: Uber, Lyft and Sidecar. Uber was everywhere, Lyft was in most US markets and Sidecar was content with only focusing on California cities. If it was just primarily Uber and maybe eventually Lyft nationwide then what would be the value of an aggregation app that featured only two options. The concept for Whipster is sound but the industry would need to grow in order to make that concept a viable app.

So I quietly continued to develop Whipster focusing on the elements I could control. Essentially I went forward with the infamous idea of “build it and they will come.” In this case, ‘they’ is the rideshare industry. It would need to continue to grow and more rideshare companies will need to enter the market. While waiting for the rideshare industry to catch up to my idea I became aware of a local bikeshare in my home town of Tampa. After a little research I discovered bikeshares were popping up all over the country. Even better, I discovered a method for adding bikeshares into Whipster. The bikeshare revelation made me re-evaluate what Whipster is…and could be. I then researched integrating traditional Taxi’s and Public Transit systems and quite quickly the idea of Whipster as just a rideshare aggregation app had morphed into a full ground transportation aggregation platform.

Then in June of 2016, big news rocked the rideshare industry. Uber and Lyft pulled out of Austin, TX due to local city ordinances that both companies did not want to comply with. Maybe a mistake on their part, but it was a boon for the Rideshare industry…and for Whipster. Within 45 days of the big pull out, 6 new rideshare companies jumped into the Austin market to fill the void that Uber and Lyft had created. Quite suddenly the concept of Whipster as a rideshare aggregator was now very relevant. Eight rideshare companies now existed…two nationally, 6 regionally (Sidecar had closed its doors by this time). The most important lesson Austin taught the world was that new rideshare companies could exist, and compete, against the mighty Uber and Lyft.

Fast forward to today and nearly 30 rideshare companies now exist across the United States alone. Dozens more internationally. Almost $25B has been invested in these companies. The lion share of that investment ($18B) is in Uber and Lyft but that means over $6B has been invested into the growth of the rideshare industry in the United States. Last time I checked, $6B is not chump change. This is a very healthy investor display of confidence in a young and emerging industry. The Rideshare industry is here to stay. With nearly 30 companies another truth has become extremely apparent; users need a simple method of evaluating and comparing those 30 rideshare options. No user is going to do that effort manually. No user is going to flip between two or three vendor apps to compare prices and availability; let alone 30. Aggregation apps like Whipster aren’t simply going to be a user convenience; they are going to be a necessity for a thriving rideshare market.

With corporate services, a proprietary taxi/black car scheduling service in the works and a bevy of other user and business services Whipster aims to be the dominant rideshare aggregation service. There will be competitors, but the travel industry has shown us that dozens of airfare, car rental, and hotel aggregation businesses can all successfully coexist. From Whipster’s point of view competition is welcomed, it validates our concept and business model. This young rideshare industry will continue to grow and morph. Uber has stumbled, Lyft has grown, smaller companies are popping up, major international players (like Gett) have made hefty expansion investments into the US and all the while legacy Taxi cab companies are figuring out ways to stay relevant. It will be some time before the dust settles and we see who the clear winners and losers are.