

Uber skids have Lyft steering for passing lane

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As Uber's gets dented by controversies, on-demand ride rival Lyft is accelerating expansion and out to pick up converts by appearing a friendlier, more sympathetic alternative.

US-based Lyft lets people summon rides using smartphone apps as does Uber, but has cultivated a reputation as a more socially responsible and driver-friendly version of the service.

Lyft even mocked Uber in an advertising campaign late last year, depicting leaders of an imaginary "RideCorp" firm that appeared to be a reference to its market-leading competitor.

The supposed executives sat in a black-walled conference room discussing how to defeat Lyft. Each short video clip focused on undermining what Lyft touts as advantages, such as extensiveness driver background checks and letting passengers tip drivers (something Uber has firmly opposed).

Lyft also took a stand in January against US President Donald Trump's first anti-immigration executive order, announcing a million-dollar donation to the American Civil Liberties Union to help fund legal opposition.

Meanwhile, Uber chief executive Travis Kalanick was on track to be part of a Trump business advisory group and a movement grew to dump the ride-sharing service because of his connection to the administration.

Kalanick quit the group, putting out word in an email to employees that the move was not meant as an "endorsement of the president or his agenda."

Uber also took heat for how the service reacted to a taxi strike at a major New York City airport to protest Trump's initial anti-immigration order, winding up accused of trying to undermine the protest. Uber said its response was misinterpreted.

Lyft saw downloads of its mobile application climb as a "DeleteUber

campaign picked up speed on Twitter.

The campaign got renewed momentum in recent weeks after accusations of sexism, cut-throat management, and a toxic work environment at Uber surfaced.

Last week, Uber acknowledged the use of a secret software program to steer drivers away from trouble, including sting operations by local authorities to catch law-breakers.

Lyft was founded in 2012, three years after Uber, and is also based in San Francisco but is smaller.

Lyft has attracted a few investors, including General Motors, Alibaba, and Saudi Arabia's Kingdom Holding.

The company is currently seeking to raise an additional \$500 million in a funding round that would value the company about \$6 billion, less than a tenth the valuation of Uber.

While Uber has expanded internationally, Lyft has concentrated mostly on the US.

Early this year, Lyft expanded to a hundred more US cities, bringing the total to about 300.

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