

## Powerplay Consulting

| <u>Team Member name</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Major</u>            |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Payton Felix            | 2026        | Business Administration |
| Ryan Mahlmiester        | 2026        | Business Administration |
| Sean O’Gorman           | 2025        | Business Administration |
| John Werber             | 2025        | Business Administration |

**Advisor(s):** Dr. Ed J Portugal

**Topic:** Ethical Issues of Uber Drivers

**Division:** Undergraduate

**Audience:** Board of Uber

### Sustainable Development Goal

SDG #8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

### Executive Summary

The Board of Directors of Uber faces a significant ethical challenge in how to maintain operational flexibility while ensuring the fair and ethical treatment of the company’s drivers. Uber’s current practice of classifying drivers as independent contractors excludes them from essential employment protections, including minimum wage guarantees, health insurance, paid leave, and safeguards against unjust deactivation. While this model has contributed to Uber’s rapid growth, it raises serious ethical concerns about equity, accountability, and alignment with the company’s stated values. Uber has publicly committed to principles of fairness, sustainability, and stakeholder responsibility. However, its current labor model creates a disconnect between those values and the realities faced by many of its drivers. Without access to basic benefits or formal avenues for negotiation, drivers often face unpredictable earnings, job insecurity, and limited protection conditions that undermine both individual well-being and broader social equity. Ethically, this presents a conflict between maximizing efficiency and honoring the dignity and rights of workers, who are essential to the company’s success. These concerns are not only moral but also practical. In recent years, Uber has faced increasing legal scrutiny, reputational pressure, and calls for stronger regulation. Public perception around worker treatment is shifting, and companies that lead with ethical practices are gaining long-term support from consumers, investors, and regulators. Failing to address this issue may risk driver dissatisfaction, brand damage, and lost market share in a competitive mobility landscape. We recommend that Uber offer drivers a clear choice: to continue as flexible, part-time contractors without benefits, or to opt into full-time employment with access to benefits such as guaranteed minimum wage, health insurance, paid time off, and a transparent deactivation process. This two-path model respects individual preferences while extending meaningful protections to those who seek them. It reflects an ethical balance between independence and fairness, one that acknowledges the diversity of Uber’s workforce and the company’s responsibility to treat all workers with dignity. These changes would not only address key ethical concerns but also support long-term business performance by reducing turnover, strengthening public trust, and minimizing legal and reputational risk.