

# Wake App! A robotics expert from Japan is saving the lives of Uber/Lyft drivers and their passengers with his new app.

Kazu, a young Japanese roboticist, has been hard at work preserving the safety of the American public. When he first came to California about ten years ago, he was surprised how awful the public transportation was compared with Tokyo. Upon his return last year he experienced the ride-sharing revolution as a solution to the transit problem. But this solution came with its own set of compromises.

In November 2015, Kazu's life forever changed. While using a ride sharing service, he narrowly avoided an accident as his driver swerved away from oncoming traffic at the last minute. "I asked the driver if he was okay and he said that he had fallen asleep at the wheel!" Kazu recalls. "I was in shock. It was as if my driver told me he was driving drunk!"

According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, drowsy driving causes over 328 thousand accidents annually, and more than 6 thousand are fatal. Research by the National Sleep Foundation reveals over 170 millions of drivers feel sleepy while driving and over 100 million fall asleep. It has become well accepted that drowsy driving deserves the same attention as drunk driving and carries similar risks.

Kazu's mission was clear - the safety of the American public was in the hands of a fleet of amateur drivers and he had the expertise to help. "What I learned so far in Silicon Valley is to not criticize or regulate just because an accident happens, but to develop the solution yourself. We must not stop this marvelous sharing economy movement...", Kazu offers.

Drowsy Alarm launched on the App Store last month and uses the front facing camera of a smartphone to detect your face and eyes based on computer vision technology. When you get drowsy, it wakes you up with an alarm. Drivers

simply mount their phone on their dash and turn on the app. No additional hardware is required.

Kazu's perspective is colored by his experience back home. Visitors to Japan are surprised at how advanced taxis are, delivering a level of service one might expect from a personal butler! Donning white gloves, they open the door in a polite manner, know the way around town perfectly and accelerate/decelerate silently. Thanks to their professional training, they are never in situations where they fall asleep at the wheel - a level of safety Kazu hopes can be brought to the American consumer.

His career as a robot and automotive expert began when he helped design solutions for Nissan Motor during his graduate study. After researching driving assistant systems and autonomous driving, he became a management and technology consultant and advised Japanese companies on the future of transportation systems and new business opportunities related to the autonomous driving field. He is proud to have recognition in the US, recently winning AT&T's Smart City Hackathon.

Adoption of solutions is critical as time is of the essence. Transportation experts believe that the number of traffic accidents will increase because driving time per driver is increasing even though more people have stopped driving for themselves because of the ride-sharing economy. Uber and Lyft are working on auto insurance for ridesharing drivers, but insurance doesn't save lives. "Drowsy Alarm" is now available for free on the App Store. Kazu's future vision is an integrated solution for connected cars to reduce the chances of accidents on the road. He is now in talks with accelerators and venture capitals.