

Surviving COVID-19: Into the Unknown

If there's an anthem that cabbies can sing in the face of COVID-19, it will be the song from Disney's popular movie, Frozen 2.

For cabbies, providing point-to-point transport has always been their source of livelihood.

But, with the COVID-19 pandemic, many had to step out of their comfort zone and take up jobs that they have never imagined doing before – some of which do not even involve ferrying passengers.

Cabby Ho Sean Yeow is one such cabby. Where it used to be passengers on the backseat of his taxi, Cabby Ho Sean Yeow now drives with parcels in his taxi boot.

Cabby Ho has been delivering parcels with Ninja Van since April. While finding the delivery job manageable, the 39-year-old admits that it doesn't come without challenges – one of it being rainy days.

"I have to plan my route to ensure that the parcels do not get wet. When it rains heavily, I will have to park at sheltered car parks and walk through covered walkways so delivery will take a longer time," he said. "But I am still able to clear all the parcels for the day."

Cabby Ho also doubles up as a safe distancing ambassador when he isn't delivering parcels – a role he had reservations doing at first.

"I was a little concerned about the risks involved initially but after going through the training on safety procedures and precautions, I felt more at ease and confident to take on the job. At least with these two jobs, I'm assured of a steady income for my family," he said.

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For Cabby Ramalingam S/O Kulanthaivel, an alternative job is one that doesn't even involve driving a taxi.

As a Transport Ambassador at the Punggol LRT Line, the 62-year-old keeps a look out to ensure commuters wear masks and maintain at least 1m apart at stations and on trains.

But, Cabby Ramalingam didn't think the two roles are different as the key is to handle people with tact. He now splits his time between taxi-driving and being a Transport Ambassador and continues to maintain a positive attitude despite these challenging times.

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Ferrying passengers is something that Cabby Chua Jun Jie is familiar with.

But with the COVID-19 pandemic, Cabby Chua is not just ferrying any passengers but suspected COVID-19 patients to the hospitals, putting himself on the frontline.



The 39-year-old is able to do so with the full support of his wife and two children. He said: "When my family learned that I wanted to do this, they gave me their full support, so I'm not worried. We went through training on medical and safety protocol by the Singapore Civil Defence Force before we started. Each time I ferry patients, I take all necessary safety precautions and disinfect my taxi after each trip."

Making the biggest switch at 54 is Ms Tan Soek Hwee, ex-cabby, who signed up to become an SBS Transit bus captain (BC) when the Company opened up the opportunity for ComfortDelGro cabbies to do so.

That was during the time when there were no passengers at all. Ms Tan, a cabby of four years, had almost given up hope. But, when she received the call from SBS Transit that she was to go for a medical check-up, she cried with joy.

"I was never happier receiving that phone call. At first, I had no hope. But with that call, I had hope!" she recalled.

Ms Tan is now in the midst of undergoing training, attending it from 8am to 5pm six days a week, and learning a mix of both theory and practical skills.

She said: "I'm very lucky and thankful to the Company for giving me this chance to switch career. Training has been fun and our trainers are engaging and helpful. I'm looking forward to finishing my training and be on the roads again, but this time as an SBS Transit BC!"

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Tan Soek Hwee