

# 60 SECONDS WITH...2010 NSW TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR WINNER, FRANK DIAB



Don't let innocent remarks from your customer get under your skin. Sometimes, what you might view as overstepping the bounds of privacy, might be just your customer's way of making conversation.

We all know those questions, the ones about how much money you make, your background, country of origin and the like. Such as "driver, where are you from?" It's not the question that matters, it's the answer!

METER asked the 2010 NSW Taxi Driver of the Year Winner, Frank Diab and Runner Up Sonny Lama how they deal with personal questions.

"I never give away personal information, but happily talk to people about whatever they like to talk about" says Frank Diab. "If a passenger gets too personal in their questions, I just politely steer the conversation to another topic."

"If they ask me how much money I make, I don't give a dollar amount of course, but instead talk to them about the ups and downs in our business."

Sonny Lama, says "wherever you are in the world, if you have an accent, people ask you where you are from. It's human nature; the person is just trying to take an interest and we shouldn't take offence."

"The difficult customers are often the best customers. I always put myself in their position, and try to give them better service and usually end up with a good tip," said Sonny.

"If it looks like I have taken offence at what a passenger says, this makes for an unpleasant ride and there is no chance of a tip." "I just smile and agree."

Senior Sergeant Mick Timms from the NSW Police Transport Policy Unit calls this tactic "verbal judo." Whenever there is a conversation that could provoke an argument, whatever the passenger says, simply agree.

Passenger "The US should stay out of other people's business."

Driver "Yes they should."

Another Passenger "If it wasn't for the US, where would the world be?"

Driver "Yes you are right."

Another Passenger might ask "How about those Panthers? The BEST team ever!"

Driver (a huge Parramatta Eels fan) "Go the Panthers!"

It doesn't matter what your personal opinion is, agree, agree, agree. People generally like it when you do agree with them. And for the ones that don't, they were looking for an argument anyway, and an argument never makes you more money and can lead to further conflict.

## DO...



- **Treat your passenger with respect. They might not always do the same for you, but you are a Taxi Industry professional so you don't let it bother you.**
- **Accept differences in culture, language, religion etc. People have different views on what is socially appropriate and acceptable.**
- **Maintain a relaxed, positive attitude and start your shift happy and rested. It's hard to get upset or angry if you are happy.**
- **Think about the money. Think about the fare, and do your best to keep your customer happy. Happy customers pay better.**

## DON'T ...



- **Provoke drug/alcohol affected customers. You'll never win an argument with someone who has had too much to drink. Don't waste your energy trying.**
- **Use inappropriate language. Always take a professional and polite approach, even if the passenger does not do the same to you.**
- **Take comments from passengers personally.**
- **The average passenger is only in your taxi for a few minutes, don't let whatever they say bother you.**