

**Interview of JUDE COX by DEXTER EARLEY
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Abstract: Jude is a college student in New Orleans who picked up work delivering food for Doordash about a year ago in 2021, which became his main source of income. In an interview that would certainly be helpful to any new “Dasher” he talks about strategy for making a good wage when working, as well as some of the difficulties inherent in the Doordash drivers’ app coming from the clash between its design and the interest of its workers. While food delivery app driving is sometimes frustrating, he cites having freedom to choose when you work as one benefit of gig work, though he also shares thoughts about how food delivery in general is unnecessary. Throughout, he shares some anecdotes about the interactions that come from being a gig worker, both from IRL experiences and in online communities. Finally, he gives his perspective on the present and future state of gig delivery.

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[00:00:01.02] Dexter Earley: So, who are you, what's your name?

[00:00:04.15] Just Cox: I am Jude Cox. That is that's my name, it's true.

[00:00:12.15] D.E.: Where are you from?

[00:00:12.15] J.C.: I am from Slidell, Louisiana, which is like the next city over from New Orleans.

[00:00:25.03] D.E.: So you have been doing some kind of doordash? Or...

[00:00:26.17] J.C.: Yes I've been doing doordash for about a year now.

[00:00:36.04] D.E.: Is that your primary source of income?

[00:00:37.10] J.C.: For the moment, yes.

[00:01:14.19] D.E.: Let's take a break right now. I'm not sure what to say next.

[00:01:14.19] J.C.: Okay take your time. I'm assuming you can edit all this right? You're gonna edit it down? Okay all right.

[00:01:14.19] D.E.: So is that your primary source of income

[00:01:42.09] J.C.: Mm-hm. It is.

[00:01:21.20] D.E.: What do you think about that.

[00:01:22.18] J.C.: Well I can... want me to make up some questions? Like, do you how does it compare to other jobs, what

kind of income are you making, yeah, have you considered other services, what's your day-to-day experience like, have you had any like individual customer experiences, where do you doordash... all kinds of stuff. What times are better, do you notice different stuff throughout the year, you know, stuff like that.

[00:01:48.09] D.E.: Those are all good questions. Wow.

[00:01:53.17] J.C.: How did you get into doordashing...

[00:02:01.13] D.E.: So how did you get into doordashing?

[00:02:06.09] J.C.: Well about this time last year I kind of needed some money, but, with my current life situation in school and everything I really just couldn't have like a regular job with set hours every week, and so my friend Dronze, he recently started doordashing and I asked him about it and he helped me get set up. So the good thing about doordash is you can pretty much make your own hours, there's no one time you have to do it, and you're not required to do it for a certain amount of time a week, you could do it one time and just stop and you'll be fine.

[00:02:44.14] D.E.: So where do you go usually?

[00:02:46.22] J.C.: Usually I go back to my hometown of Slidell to doordash, because I've tried doordashing around here, in New Orleans and Metairie but the problem with that is the distance between the restaurants and the residences I'm delivering to is usually quite high, because in a big city everyone lives far apart from everything, and it's long distances, long drives, busy. So when I go back home to Slidell— which is like a mid-sized city— I get a lot better results because I'm usually driving for shorter distances for the same amount of money.

[00:03:32.20] D.E.: Do you usually do it at night or during the daytime?

[00:03:33.16] J.C.: Well over the summer I would try and schedule it to do like from like lunchtime all the way until dinner. But if I had to say, it's most profitable at night time around dinner time. It's a bit spotty, it's on and off during lunch time, and it is pretty much not good to do it on breakfast time. Like if you really need the extra money you can do it during breakfast but it's just— you're not gonna get a lot.

[00:04:06.21] D.E.: What kind of money do you make doing that?

[00:04:08.18] J.C.: Well it usually depends on the kind of day I'm having but whenever I commit and have like a full day usually I'd say not including gas or anything I'm making between 15 and 20 dollars an hour, sometimes more on a good day.

[00:04:37.00] D.E.: this is kind of an oddball question but what's the most interesting thing you've ever seen while doordashing?

[00:04:48.00] J.C.: Well I've had some. If you want a good story I've had some animal encounters on doordash, a lot of dog encounters. One time I was just delivering a pizza and I knock on the door. I have the pizza and a kid, a little kid opens the door and right in front of me is the biggest pit bull I've ever seen, just staring at me. And my heart literally drops, I freeze because you know I don't know what this dog's gonna do, and the kid just grabs the pizza, says thank you. Pit bull's just standing there. And just shuts the door. And I've had other things, where I'm walking in and then there's a dog coming at me, and I get back at the car and I gotta call, like "hey can you come get your dog?"

[00:05:38.19] D.E.: Do a lot of people have dogs?

[00:05:40.21] J.C.: Yeah a lot of people have dogs. A lot of dog encounters.

[00:05:46.17] D.E.: It's a doggy dog world

[00:05:46.17] J.C.: Ha. Haha.

[00:05:53.03] D.E.: What do you think the world is going to think about all this in 10 years?

[00:05:55.13] J.C.: If I had to make a guess, as time goes on it seems like doordashing is becoming worse over time. Because I just feel like that's kind of that with all jobs. But I'm in like online doordash communities, people talk about how it's harder to get good orders and how the rules keep changing and how it's harder to get slots. Well sometimes you can Dash any time of the day but sometimes you have to schedule slots to dash, I've noticed that as time goes on it's harder to get good slots. So for why I think that is because more people are doordashing and so the more people that are on the road the less opportunities are available to each individual doordasher. I will have times where an alert says it's extremely busy in your city right now, Go doordash. And I'm getting zero orders even though the busy level they have on the app is at the max height, because it's an oversaturation. So the more people learn about it the worse it gets.

[00:07:10.05] D.E.: I've heard that from other places as well that it's kind of gotten less profitable over time. Yeah. kind of want to go broad here, do you have any thoughts about the state of the world in general?

[00:07:33.05] J.C.: of the world? Well, state of the world is not the best, I mean prices are rising. It's harder to find decent work so

that's not awesome. I mean I started doing doordash right before all the gas prices went up, so I was like you know what? I'm making a lot of money, I'm liking this. And now I'm a little more humbled now that gas, it's like forty dollars to fill up a tank when it was like 15 or so January this year. So I mean your tank costs eat directly into your doordash profits, because they don't compensate you on that.

[00:08:23.17] D.E.: so with all these Rising prices, what do you think that means?

[00:08:34.10] J.C.: Well for for doordash, I think it means more people are gonna try and do it. Because you can do doordash on top of a job you already have, because it's it's schedule free, you can just do it whenever you're available. And so that's gonna lead to more people doing it and then it's going to make the individual experience worse and worse overall and then... What I can kind of see happening is that more people add on and then it becomes worse, so then a lot of people drop off and then it becomes good again and then people add on. It might just be a never-ending cycle

[00:09:08.05] D.E.: Do you think that more jobs are going to become gig-based like this?

[00:09:12.01] J.C.: I can- I can see that, though, I know there's some like lawsuits or something to force doordash to treat it's users like actual employees.

[00:09:28.11] D.E.: Yeah

[00:09:28.11] J.C.: because I I know that in California they do it, in California when you do doordash you get paid a set amount per hour on top of the money you're already getting it. It seems like

that's where they have it the best because you're a private contractor when you do doordash, you're not employed by anybody.

[00:09:45.09] J.C.: But yeah this could definitely lead to like a rise in gig based jobs, especially for uneducated or, like, under-experienced people. Because the only thing they checked for for me is that if I had a license and then if I had no police record of anything. And so that's it! That's all I did and I was able to start working. Very little like vetting besides that and so these kind of jobs are very easy to get because all you need is a car and people already have cars.

[00:10:25.23] D.E.: I have a question about the source of this job. Do you think more people are getting food delivered?

[00:10:33.01] J.C.: Well me personally even though I work for doordash— I mean, not work for doordash, I do doordash— I would never order anything from doordash. Because I think, with the delivery fees, I think it's really just more worth it to go and get the food yourself. You know? Like maybe if you have a lot of money then I guess... it's a bit of a bit of a luxury thing.

[00:11:01.18] J.C.: But I would I would personally never. I think it's just a waste of money. Because I will frequently get an order for something that's like half a mile away— it's like, you could have walked there. The order that perplexes me the most is was ordered from this one local restaurant, and the restaurant was delivering to a business, like an order for a bunch of employees. And it was 0.1 miles away. After I got there I took a picture of both the business and the restaurant in the same frame, literally on the same street. Their parking lots are right across from each other. I mean I guess if you can afford this, if you want to waste that money, go ahead.

[00:11:50.01] D.E.: Yeah I think part of the business model for doordash and these type of companies is that they just want to make it as commonplace, and get people as used to ordering as possible. Just become normalized.

[00:12:06.11] J.C.: Dexter, something I would like to talk about... Ask me about like what the experience of it is like, because I have some good insightful stuff about that.

[00:12:11.20] D.E.: Okay Jude I'd like to hear about what your experience is like.

[00:12:19.04] J.C.: You mean day-to-day doordashing, what's it like?

[00:12:21.20] D.E.: Yeah.

[00:12:22.08] J.C.: Okay so how it works is you have this app on your phone— the Dasher app. And it'll give you a GPS map. And it has red areas on the map of where the busy spots are. And whenever you're not currently taking an order you will receive order opportunities. It will give you the order, it'll tell you the restaurant, and how many miles do I need to drive for it. And it'll tell you how much money you're being offered for this order. Now the thing is, since you're a private contractor you're not obligated to do it. And so what you do is you take a look at it, you can accept it or decline it, and more and more often than not, you decline it. Because most of the time it's bad orders. Usually it's like 3.5 dollars to go, like, five miles, which really isn't worth it. My Philosophy is, the minimum order I'll take for any reason is five dollars. But a five dollar has to be a mile or less. I'll do a six dollar for a mile and a half or less, I'll do a seven dollar for two miles or less, or an eight dollar for three or less and so on. But you have

this process of, accepting and declining orders. It'll show you an acceptance rate, which shows you the the amount of the past 100 orders that you've accepted. Now, my acceptance rate is about 20 percent. And they really try and guilt you. Like once your acceptance rate is under 50 it'll turn red— like, oh no, it's red what are you gonna do? and they'll be like if you get more than 50 percent you'll have better orders— which from my research isn't really true. And they have something called the top Dasher program where if you have over a 70 acceptance rate you will be allowed to dash whenever you want, no need for any schedules or anything. Now you could technically Dash when you want, because the schedules launch at like three o'clock one week before, so if you just stay up and like right on the dot you can usually get it but this is relieves that stress, Or, if you have a spur of the moment Dash you want to do. But it's a big fraud because to get it you're going to have to lose money, because to get 70 percent you'll have to take all these really really crappy orders. Like, oh, for six miles get only 2.75 cents. You know? And so I feel there's a lot of manipulation and almost lying, that goes on to you. Because like my first few days of doing doordash— yeah I took those out of, like, Oh no! they're gonna do something bad to me if my acceptance rate goes down. But after looking online, no, all the highest earning Dashers online have like one to ten percent acceptance rates. Yeah they try to manipulate you into delivering the worst possible orders

[00:15:31.07] D.E.: I feel like they have so much access to all the information that goes on.

[00:15:38.05] J.C.: No that's not even the worst of it, the worst of it is that as a way to try and trick you into taking more orders, shi— I'm sorry, I don't want to swear, crappy orders, one out of every three or four orders you take, the amount of money you receive will actually be more. Like yesterday I took a 14 dollar order and

after I delivered, it surprise! It's actually \$16.25. And so it'll condition you into taking lower orders just on the case of, oh, maybe this crappy order is actually a good order, that we're just not telling you. So the money you see at the beginning is the minimum you're going to be paid. And about 30 percent of the time you actually get more. And this this function of the doordash app serves no purpose other than to manipulate and condition the driver, which I think is a really horrible thing to do.

[00:16:32.10] D.E.: Yeah, totally what it sounds like.

[00:16:36.13] D.E.: What do they do if everybody says no to a particular order?

[00:16:40.13] J.C.: So how it works with the No order is that, I believe, they add 25 cents to the order and then give it to the next person available. And so it'll slowly add more money and keep going around. But I see this all the time— I'm on the doordash subreddit where, people post about the Dashing they do— and I see all the time, orders with no tips— we call them no-tips— after they're prepared they will take like an hour before they're delivered because nobody's accepting them. Like oh. Five dollar order for 12 miles? no one's taking that. So it's gonna sit on the McDonald's shelf and get cold as hell because no one's taking it.\

[00:17:30.01] D.E.: Yeah I see.

[00:17:30.01] J.C.: And you know, some people might have hard Financial Solutions, they might not be pressured to tip. You know, I don't know your situation, but I mean, you are getting doordash. But that's besides that, that's besides that, what doordash needs to be doing is just paying people a fair amount of money. Because I mean they're a massive corporate Corporation, they're making millions of dollars, they can definitely afford to pay us better.

[00:17:53.13] D.E.: Would you think it would be possible to have some sort of doordash union?

[00:17:58.09] J.C.: Well you can't do a union because you're a private contractor. And so that's that's why... There's lawsuits and stuff trying to get get them legally recognized as employees

[00:18:10.22] D.E.: Yeah, I think there is something going on right now with the FTC...

[00:18:16.05] J.C.: Mm-hmm.

[00:18:18.21] J.C.: Now, here's the thing. I feel like it's a double-edged sword, because I believe that if this goes through and we get marked as employees then they're going to start becoming a lot more selective of who will be on the app. And that might lead to a lot of people being let off. Because, me, I've doordashed very little since school started. I just don't have free time. But I did do it heavily during the summer, so if you're not doing it during a certain amount of time they might just fire you. That's what I could imagine happening. You know, because they're going to be stingy with their money.

[00:18:53.04] D.E.: Yeah they would want to just select the most loyal...

[00:18:57.15] J.C.: Exactly, only the most loyal. And the appeal of doordash to me is that when I'm in school I can just take a break from it and come back when I have a break. Right, so it's a double-edged sword. On one hand they'll get treated a lot better, but on the other hand they'll be a lot more picky with who stays on.

[00:19:22.10] D.E.: What would that even look like?

[00:19:22.10] J.C.: I really don't even know to be honest. I mean, I guess they would keep track of your hours and then pay you by the hours, on top of any tips or anything you get.

[00:19:34.11] D.E.: I'm gonna look at this computer just hold on.

[00:19:51.15] D.E.: Haha, look at this. It's a site that people in my class posted their questions that they could ask... One just says dogs. But you told some dog stories.

[00:19:57.09] J.C.: I told some dog stories yeah.

[00:20:00.03] D.E.: Do you have health insurance?

[00:20:02.10] J.C.: I mean, I do as part of my parents health insurance plan but it's completely independent of doordash. No I believe that— I could be wrong about this, but I believe— some level of insurance is part of the top Dasher plan where you get more than 70 percent. So it's another way for them to coax you into taking on the worst orders.

[00:20:39.13] D.E.: has there been any dangerous situations that you've been in?

[00:20:44.20] J.C.: Hmm, definitely had some sketchy doordash delivery situations.

[00:20:56.18] J.C.: I have one but it might be a little NSFW.

[00:20:59.22] D.E.: you can still tell it it's okay

[00:21:01.09] J.C.: Want me to tell it? Yeah okay, you can edit out if you're not, but one time I had an order where the customer put the wrong street address in. I was on the right street but way on the other side of the street and so it was this kind of neighborhood — wasn't the best neighborhood— and this address that was wrong. My GPS is telling me go on this off-road area down to this like a little shack, way off the road. And I knock on the door and this woman comes out, it's like who are you what are you doing!? I'm like oh, I'm doordash! got food! It's like, "I didn't get any doordash." And she like, ran me off. And then I just start checking like the next house over. And there's a truck outside and there's people in the truck, they're doing something I can't see. I'm like okay this might be, this might be the food. So I get out to the truck and I wave at them. and I could see like a woman like kind of Rise Up from being slumped over. And I'm like, did you get doordash? She just looks at me and shakes her head. And the guy, they're just looking at me, and. Ah. And I'm 90 percent sure I uh, ran in on them having oral sex.

[00:22:33.23] J.C.: But yeah but I do try to avoid sketchy situations. I don't doordash in the main New Orleans area, the only area in New Orleans I'll doordash in is Metairie, and then besides that I'll doordash in Slidell or Covington or something.

[00:22:51.08] D.E.: Well probably just a few more few more questions here. Because you've said a lot of really good information, so thank you.

[00:23:03.21] D.E.: I want to say, has it been stressful for you overall?

[00:23:07.06] J.C.: No I would not say it's been stressful. Although, I am at the moment trying to ditch doordash for ubereats, because my friend D'ronze, who does doordash much

more professionally than I do, much more often, recently switched over to ubereats. And he says he makes a lot more money. And I've ridden with him when he does ubereats and he looks like he gets much better orders and they treat him a lot better. But my problem is I when I submitted my information to Uber Eats I had some incorrect information on my driver's license. And like, "oh you're not approved." No, let me fix the information and— "we can't fix this"— but it's it's changed, I had it wrong. And so I'm in like the middle of this month-long customer support battle to get myself approved over a little mistake. And so I'm still fighting because what I've seen from my friend, Uber Eats pays a lot better, it's a much better experience, at least in the city, than doordash.

[00:24:18.13] D.E.: I just want to ask if you have any like overall statements

[00:24:24.22] J.C.: Well, one time I was on an online comment section and someone brought up this thing about doordash. I forgot I forgot what it was it was. Like, man, I don't know how to how to treat doordash people right... and I said oh yeah, I'm a doordash driver and you know, I get bull crap all the time. And the guy was like, how can we help you more than we help the corporation? Because a lot of times, people say the tips go to the company and not you. And I'm like well if you really want to help out you could maybe tip both in the app and in cash and that post got like 15 down votes. So people are like "how can we help you?" Oh, help me by giving me more money. And they're like no. We're not gonna do that. So yeah, in all honesty, the amount of the tip you give a doordash or Uber driver more likely than not will have a direct effect on how pleasant an experience you get. It will definitely affect how fast your food comes.

[00:25:29.01] D.E.: Yeah and does the company keep the tip?

[00:25:34.20] J.C.: No, no. But what the problem is is that sometimes the third party system that links the restaurant and the company— that the restaurant will keep some of the tips sometimes. That happens sometimes.

[00:25:57.16] D.E.: I mean, restaurants deserve to be getting fairly paid too.

[00:26:00.04] J.C.: Yeah but actually there's a whole topic about how doordash and these apps are actually really bad for restaurants yeah because a lot of these times these these restaurants do have their own professional delivery service independent of any apps. But they have to partner with doordash because they're more well known and most people just don't know they have their own delivery services. And then doordash takes a cut of the revenue, it's just bad for business overall. And I kind of feel bad about that because I sympathize for the businesses, but I'm also a doordash driver trying to make money so it's like— oh man, I'm part of the problem.

[00:26:35.17] D.E.: I heard an interesting story one time on a podcast. Basically it was like, this pizza restaurant out in like Nebraska or something, didn't voluntarily sign up for doordash, but doordash signed them up for it.

[00:26:53.10] J.C.: Oh, against their will?

[00:26:53.23] D.E.: Against their will, basically. But they found out — the guy in the pizza restaurant found out— that if you order a pizza through the restaurant, through doordash, it costs less than the restaurant actually charges for a pizza inside the restaurant. Because doordash was doing a promotion. So the the restaurant

owner basically just ended up ordering himself pizzas on doordash all day and just making free money off of it.

[00:27:20.02] J.C.: I wish I could do that that. It sounds incredible

[00:27:23.22] D.E.: It was really funny.

[00:27:24.23] J.C.: Did they ever, fight him back on that?

[00:27:29.01] D.E.: They stopped it eventually..

[00:27:31.03] J.C.: But you got to keep all that free money he made?

[00:27:31.03] D.E.: Yeah.

[00:27:32.00] J.C.: Oh, that sounds wonderful.

[00:27:38.00] D.E.: Thanks for doing this. Is there any final things? sounds like you're on the internet, like in doordash communities and stuff... it just makes me think, it's a modern type of company it's an internet company, and so they have these.

[00:28:03.20] J.C.: Well to be fair the doordash online communities are not run by doordash, they're run by Dashers, and they they talk bad about the company all the time. So they're not officially by doordash.

[00:28:17.19] D.E.: Right and it's, like, modern problems require modern solutions.

[00:28:27.06] D.E.: Well, I hope that someday they'll figure out the problem of getting people a fair wage, for their work.

[00:28:35.02] J.C.: The solution is probably just, the CEO takes a zero off their paycheck. You know. But that's never going to happen, so...

[00:28:49.22] D.E.: I have to take a picture of you.

[00:28:49.22] J.C.: All right, you can take a picture of me.