

# 得不償失

*de2 bu4 chang2 shi1*

Cab-hailing service Uber is introducing UberX to Hong Kong. It charges less than taxi services, so consumers are happy to have an additional choice. But taxi operators are, again, up in arms.

Apart from protesting noisily, some taxi operators are asking the government for a fare rise to make up for lost revenue due to the new competition. But those who have a clear head in the trade have warned that increasing fares will be “得不償失” (*de2 bu4 chang2 shi1*).

“得” (*de2*) is “to get,” “to obtain,” “to gain,” “不” (*bu4*) “no,” “not,” “償” (*chang2*) “to pay back” and “失” (*shi1*) “a mistake,” or “to lose.” Literally, “得不償失” (*de2 bu4 chang2 shi1*) is “gain not pay for loss.” It means “more a loss than a gain.”

Taxis would be “得不償失” (*de2 bu4 chang2 shi1*) if they raise fares because while they

## Idiom by Lon Yan

would “得” (*de2*) gain additional revenue, they would push more people to use the Uber service. In the end, they would “失” (*shi1*) lose customers, and the loss could be greater than the gain.

This idiom is used in respect of situations in which there is gain, or hope of gain, as well as a loss. Investing in a stock that pays dividends but drops more in share price can be said to be “得不償失” (*de2 bu4 chang2 shi1*). Another scenario is winning an argument with your boss who then becomes so angry that he fires you!

### Terms containing the character “償” (*chang2*) include:

償債 (*chang2 zhai4*) – repay debt

賠償 (*pei2 chang2*) – to indemnify

索償 (*suo3 chang2*) – to demand compensation

償命 (*chang2 ming4*) – to repay with life