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Telecommunication juggernaut AT&T has an anti-texting-and-driving campaign, in which people are able to pledge that they will abstain from texting and driving. So far, over 14 million people have made this commitment, but why haven't more people pledged? How can we reduce the number of people who continue to risk their lives by texting and driving? How can we get them to make a change that make the world a safer place for everyone?

Texting and driving has become' an epidemic in the United States. In fact, "Almost 6,000 highway deaths each year involve distracted driving" (Copeland). With this staggering number, it is incomprehensible that more have not taken action to reduce the problem. One contributing factor is the increased ownership of smartphones. According to *distraction.gov*, "In 2011, 52 percent of drivers reported owning a smartphone, and by 2014 that number had grown to 80 percent." With increased purchases and usage of smartphones, there is a higher risk for accidents involving people who are distracted by using their phones in some way. Stephanie Hanes of *Christian Science Monitor* reports that "A 2009 AAA Foundation study found that 91.5 percent of drivers considered talking on the phone while driving a serious threat to their safety... two-thirds of those people admitted talking on their own phones... and 1 in 7 have texted while driving" (Hanes).

I believe that there is a simple resolution to this social issue. When young, or soon-to-be drivers see people texting and driving, they believe that it is okay to do so, too. If we target teenagers planning to drive, we may be able to shape their behavior to never text and drive. Life-like simulators have been created to show the consequences of distracted driving, and I believe we should give teens the opportunity to use these machines. Hopefully, from experiencing simulated, real-life scenarios, they will get a strong, first-hand experience of the consequences from making poor decisions behind the wheel. An article written by Larry Copeland in *USA Today*, describes how certain teens went to Indianapolis Motor Speedway and got driving instruction from some of auto racing's best drivers. They were able to "learn advanced skills... in minimizing distractions" (Copeland). Stock car drivers are considered some of the best drivers in the world; in order to be the best, they must have total focus on the job at hand- driving. If they are distracted they could cause a massive crash or end up losing the race. Another idea is creating virtual smartphone apps that reward positive driving behaviors with coins (e.g. not stopping and texting at a red light), and deducts coins for negative driving behaviors, such as talking on the phone while driving. You would be able to compete against friends and see whom can collect the most coins. This might be able to promote more safe driving.

Think of texting and driving like smoking: people who begin smoking at a young age are most likely to become addicted for life, whereas people who do not smoke at a young age will not become addicted or might not smoke at all. This may be the same for younger drivers. If they start texting and driving from a young age, they will continue to risk their lives by being distracted. Furthermore, if people do not start texting and driving from a young age, the number of distracted drivers will decrease significantly.

Works Cited

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