

DRI For Life

Enhancing the Value of Membership

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As many bar associations and other trade organizations wilt under the twin pressures of member apathy and a tepid economy, DRI welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate the value of membership. As long-term tenure at defense law firms and even in-house defense positions becomes increasingly uncertain, and the overall job satisfaction and physical and emotional wellbeing of lawyers as a group appears to be in free fall, DRI is increasingly becoming the primary enduring professional relationship of the defense lawyer by broadly catering to all the defense lawyer's critical needs over the course of the lawyer's career.

"I am a DRI Lawyer" means more than just an identification with DRI's mission goals and core values; It means more than an embodiment of DRI's highest standards of professional excellence and personal integrity. The DRI brand is becoming as relevant to the emerging values of younger lawyers as it is to the growing cadre of active senior lawyers; as significant for its new Veterans Committee as it is for its robust Women in the Law Committee. The DRI brand also encompasses the notion that DRI is an abiding resource throughout a defense lawyer's career to provide necessary support in good times and in bad; to provide a helping hand to every member defense lawyer as well as an opportunity for the lawyer to give back to DRI and the community at large.

DRI will focus on the whole defense lawyer in all facets of his and her wellbeing, not just providing CLE and business development networking. DRI will continue to focus on career advancement, yes, and financial rewards, certainly, but DRI also will create positive programs to develop its members and lead the defense bar in promoting the defense lawyer's health, as well as the defense lawyer's relationships with family, friends, and community.

To accelerate this process, DRI has created the DRI For Life Task Force to explore and recommend implementation of additional initiatives designed to broaden and deepen the value DRI brings to each "DRI Lawyer."

- "I am a DRI Lawyer" should evoke a sense of belonging to an organization of like-minded individuals who care about you and your wellbeing and provide numerous programs to support, nurture, and develop the defense lawyer where defense law firms and corporate employers, large and small, often do not.

- "I am a DRI Lawyer" also should evoke a sense of leadership of the defense bar in striking a healthy balance among the important, competing sectors of each defense lawyer's life.

- "I am a DRI Lawyer" also should evoke a sense of commitment to DRI itself and to the other DRI lawyers that will motivate each DRI lawyer not only to look for ways to serve the DRI organization, but also to help other DRI lawyers wherever feasible, setting aside personal rivalries and professional competition in favor of collaboration and mutually beneficial personal relationships based on the transcendent identity of being a DRI Lawyer.

DRI is evolving in a rapidly changing environment. The legal industry in general is contracting at the same time the traditional work of DRI members is shrinking as a result of ADR, tort reform, reduced court budgets, more sophisticated case handling measures, and a number of other factors, not the least of which is an uncertain economy. As downward pressures on law firm and individual lawyer expense budgets grow, DRI's primary stock in trade—face-to-face gatherings of professionals for continuing legal education and networking—is being supplemented by additional offerings.

To flourish in these challenging times, DRI is innovating, building new lines of value for its members upon the solid foundation of DRI's successful traditional offerings. Through the longstanding leadership demonstrate by DRI through its Diversity Committee, Women in the Law Committee, and the like, DRI has often examined the broader issues important to the wellbeing of its members. The DRI For Life Task Force would build upon these programs to create similar initiatives.

- As the population enjoys longer productive careers, our senior lawyers are looking for opportunities to continue making a contribution well into their sixties, if not seventies. DRI will tailor a Senior Lawyers program to our over age 55 lawyers that would celebrate the experience and expertise of this group and promote their effectiveness and efficiency.

- DRI could become a resource center for its members, providing information and guidance on balancing competing obligations of work with child care, elder care, and similar needs. DRI could provide access to resources

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for financial planning and similar needs of its members over their career lives.

- DRI could lead in providing health and wellness programs, beginning with healthier food choices available at its events, exercise promotions and opportunities, as well as encouragement, information, and guidance on obtaining appropriate health maintenance support. DRI events and activities should be planned and structured to promote a healthy lifestyle, not undermine it.
- DRI can become the primary resource where its members can go in times of crisis, including not just catastrophic acts of God, but also foreseeable adversities such as unemployment and illness. DRI

Lawyers should be able to turn to DRI to find employment opportunities, including not just active jobs postings and jobs fairs, but also career counseling, resume support, and interview coaching.

- DRI could offer an array of insurance and similar products for its members, whether directly or indirectly, to help DRI Lawyers with unemployment, health care, long-term disability, and life insurance where law firm or corporate programs are no longer as reliable throughout one's career.
- DRI could provide programs to support its members with their struggles with our profession's silent killers: depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, as well as obesity and a sedentary lifestyle.

DRI is becoming the primary enduring professional relationship in the lives of defense lawyers. DRI will lead its substantive law committees, state and local defense organizations, and its sister organizations (FDCC, IADC, and ADTA) in focusing on defense lawyers as whole beings and providing programs to develop and support defense lawyers in all areas of their lives. The DRI For Life Task Force will explore the above initiatives, coordinate with interested constituencies within the DRI and broader defense and bar communities, investigate the offerings of other competing groups, and recommend additional offerings for DRI members. We welcome your suggestions on how DRI can enhance the value of membership for you. 