



Bvvrrr... Woosh... Ping

Connecting, Coping, and Caring While Working at Home

By Emily G. Coughlin



Like many of you, last week was the first time our small law firm went completely virtual. At 6 a.m., I grabbed my morning cup of coffee and a glass of water as the torrent of morning emails, texts, and calendar invites filled the air. With each *Bvvrrr* of vibrating texts and emails, I responded with a tap and a *Woosh!* As each client, firm member, or colleague demanded attention on a case, new COVID-19 challenge, or DRI business, I became more focused and less aware that I was still in my pajamas, sitting at my dining room table. Eventually, it slowed down a bit and I looked up at the clock. It was noon, my cup of coffee still full but cold, and the water untouched. Before

grabbing a new cup of coffee, I took one more call, but this time the call was interrupted by a *Ping... Ping* and another... *Ping* in the background. When I hung up, I noticed that the *Pings* were an endless stream of text messages from DRI friends from all over the country. I scrolled and read the text messages. They were not about business. Rather, they were filled with comfort and humor to help us connect, cope, and smile. Suddenly, the busy stress-filled morning faded.

Connecting is important. I don't like the term "social distancing." I hope the media begins to drift away from it. The term should be replaced with "physical distancing." We are social beings and the texts and calls from family and friends reveal how important staying socially connected really is. Although virtual, a community of friends is still there to help us cope. Even though it's through a text message, I can still see the personalities and faces behind each.

Togetherness and shared experiences help us cope, but humor helps us heal and rejuvenate to keep going. From the off-color memes, to the cross-continent recipes of various alcohol-infused elixirs, to sharing the challenges of working from home, each text brings its own comfort with warmth, a virtual hug, and a smile. When Sara Turner, DRI Retail and Hospitality Committee Chair, texted a description of her upcoming online DRI series on "effectively working from home, managing teams from home, staying sane, etc." (stay tuned for details) the following responses *Pinged* through my phone:

- "Great idea... Working from home while homeschooling 3 kids... challenging my sanity, for sure."
- "Same here... keep worrying if things are clean enough and it takes me away from my work to clean some more."

Connecting, Coping, and Caring While Working at Home, *cont.*

- “How am I supposed to work when I just heard the boys say close the door so it doesn’t explode into the hallway?”
- “I don’t EVER leave these conversations except when I’m doing yoga live streamed on my phone.”

Ironically, although we are physically distant, these *Pings* help us cope—even laugh—and share how much we care.

For me, each text is not an interruption but a friend checking in to see how I am and an opportunity for me to check in on him or her. While we may be distant, we are not apart. A DRI friend from Canada took a break yesterday from her workday to say, “Hello, my friend.” That text, traveling across the border from someone I met years ago when we were both DRI state representatives, helped warmly remind me that DRI is far more than a professional organization. We are a community of friends and families that are connected through thick and thin to care for each other both personally and professionally. Let’s use this organization to help us all get through the challenges that lie ahead. For example, DRI has developed a Coronavirus Information Center available on the DRI website that contains a range of resources to assist you with navigating the COVID-19 crisis. Please keep checking back, as it will be updated regularly. <https://dri.org/about/coronavirus-resources>.



In addition, on Monday, March 23, at 12:00 p.m. EDT, I began hosting a Zoom Meeting to connect as many of us as possible on a daily basis for a hot cup of coffee and a warm “Hello, my friend.” Going forward, I will be present for fifteen minutes of Community Coffee each day with all of you, my friends across the nation and around the world, at DRI. I hope to see your smiling faces on my screen.

To connect with DRI COMMUNITY COFFEE each day at 12:00 PM EDT (no password or ID required), join Zoom Meeting at <https://zoom.us/j/832258568>.

DRI President-Elect [Emily G. Coughlin](#) is a founding partner of the firm of **Coughlin Betke LLP** in Boston. Her practice concentration includes over 25 years of broad-ranging civil litigation experience and trying cases on behalf of small and large businesses, healthcare providers, and insurers. Her extensive state and federal court trial experience includes cases involving construction-related litigation, employment liability, professional liability, products liability and premises litigation.