

Phoning It In

By Reg P. Wydeven
November 22, 2015

A few weeks ago I wrote about the growing use of emoticons and emojis, and the resulting intervention of courtrooms having to interpret their meanings. A common theme of my legal column is the struggle for the law to keep up with technology.

It seems that everyone, especially our youngsters, is constantly staring into a cell phone. People are texting or tweeting each other, snapping selfies or catching up on Facebook. Folks use their phones to shop, watch movies or even as a GPS. There are even apps for dating. One site, Tinder, allows you to view pictures of potential mates and either connect with them or 'swipe right' to move on to the next suitor.

As a curmudgeon, it makes me fighting mad that everyone is so dependent upon their phones. Well, it turns out there's also an app for that.

Last week, Rumblr was introduced. Like Tinder, the app allows you to peruse potential candidates, only the goal is not a love connection, but rather a fist fight.

The app's website explained that, "Rumblr is an app for recreational fighters to find, meet and fight other brawl enthusiasts nearby." The app seemed to draw inspiration from the movie 'Fight Club,' only the rule in the film is to not talk about fight club, while the app allows you to talk trash to your opponent over the Internet.

It turns out that the app was actually a hoax. The idea was actually the brainchild of a startup PR firm. The company released a statement saying, "Rumblr started as a portfolio project to help us launch our creative consulting agency, von Hughes. We're a team of college dropouts with backgrounds in marketing, design, and engineering. Rumblr came about organically as a funny idea amongst a group of friends, but quickly budded into an opportunity to showcase our branding skills."

After I found out the app was a fraud, I found myself alone under the viaduct with no one to fight. So I used another app, Uber, to get a ride home. This app puts me in contact with folks in my neighborhood who are willing to drive me around town for a fee.

When I got home, I was so embarrassed that I was duped, I couldn't show my face in public. Because I was hungry, I used yet another new app, DoorDash, to rustle up some grub. Like Uber, DoorDash pays residents of my neighborhood to drive to my favorite restaurant, pick up my order, and deliver it to my door. The company boasts that its revolutionary logistics technology allows me to get meals in under 45 minutes from restaurants that don't deliver.

Not everyone is a fan, however. California-based In-N-Out Burger is suing DoorDash, claiming its brand is damaged by the app's delivery methods. The suit demands that DoorDash stop delivering In-N-Out Burger food, citing concerns about temperature and food-handling practices. The fast food joint also accuses DoorDash of "copyright infringement" by using the In-N-Out logo on its website and app.

Other restaurants have embraced DoorDash, however. They claim the app brings their food to customers that may not have actually come into the restaurant.

While restaurants must abide by strict guidelines for how they handle food, tech-driven delivery services, such as DoorDash, are not regulated. But as their popularity grows, that's sure to change.

People don't engage with one another now because of cell phones. If apps like DoorDash continue, people may never leave their homes again. I can't imagine how crabby I'll be then.

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