THE BUSINESS JOURNAL FOR REALTOR® ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES

FALL 2019

REALTOR® AE

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Promote Using a REALTOR®

New ways to ramp up your consumer outreach and boost members' business.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of REALTORS®

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Plan Now to Support 2020 Initiatives

Duncan MacKenzie, RCE,
Association Executives
Committee Chair,
CEO, New York State
Association of REALTORS®

NAR always hosts a great program each August in Chicago, the annual Leadership Summit, and this year was no exception. AEs and their incoming presidents got a chance to not only build a strong partnership but strengthen their association's relationship with NAR.

One of the most helpful takeaways from this event for me is a better understanding of NAR's priorities for the coming year. Incoming NAR President Vince Malta shared with us NAR's upcoming strategic priorities for 2020. There are four guiding principles that NAR will focus on:

- **Collaborating for positive impacts on housing equality and affordability.**
- **Driving community development.**
- **Retaining REALTORS®' role as the best source of property information for consumers.**
- **Enhancing the value of membership.**

The last priority, enhancing the value of membership, will require a coordinated NAR, state, and local effort. As outlined at the summit: "NAR will focus on understanding the members on a deeper level in order to deliver relevant content and services based on their individual wants and needs." Achieving this goal will require NAR to work hand in hand with us at the state and local level to improve the way we collect and share member data.

There is so much more we can learn about our members. As AEs, we work every day to enhance the member experience and deliver value, so more and accurate data can only help our cause.

It has been a busy year for the AE Committee. Workgroups tackled a wide array of topics from core standards to global business councils to AEI 2.0. All of these groups were powered by the amazing NAR staff and a great group of AE colleagues who were willing to share their time and expertise. My thanks to all involved for a wonderful effort.

New this year was the decision to split the AEC Committee meeting from the AE Forum. It was our view that running the two programs simultaneously robbed both of their maximum effectiveness. The first go-through at the May Legislative Meetings in Washington, D.C., was positive enough for us to try it again at the NAR convention in San Francisco.

As I close out my term as the AEC chair, I have so many people to thank. Our vice chair, John Sebree, RCE, CEO of the Missouri Association of REALTORS®, was instrumental in every decision made this year. The AEC will be well guided by John in 2020 along with Vice Chair Janet Kane, RCE, CAE, CEO of the MetroTex Association of REALTORS®.

2020 NAR President Vince Malta

The chairs and vice chairs of the AEC workgroups did a wonderful job turning discussion items into actionable proposals and goals. Congratulations to Ryan Conrad, Jim Haisler, and the AEI Governors for a fantastic event in Austin, Texas, this past year. The NAR staff led by the incomparable Cindy Sampalis was and is amazing.

And last, but not least, a thank you to NAR's Leadership. President John Smaby, President-elect Vince Malta, First Vice President Charlie Oppler, Immediate Past President Elizabeth Mendenhall, Treasurer John Flor, and NAR CEO Bob Goldberg were accessible and supportive throughout the year. As a team, we worked together to ultimately enhance the value of REALTOR® membership.

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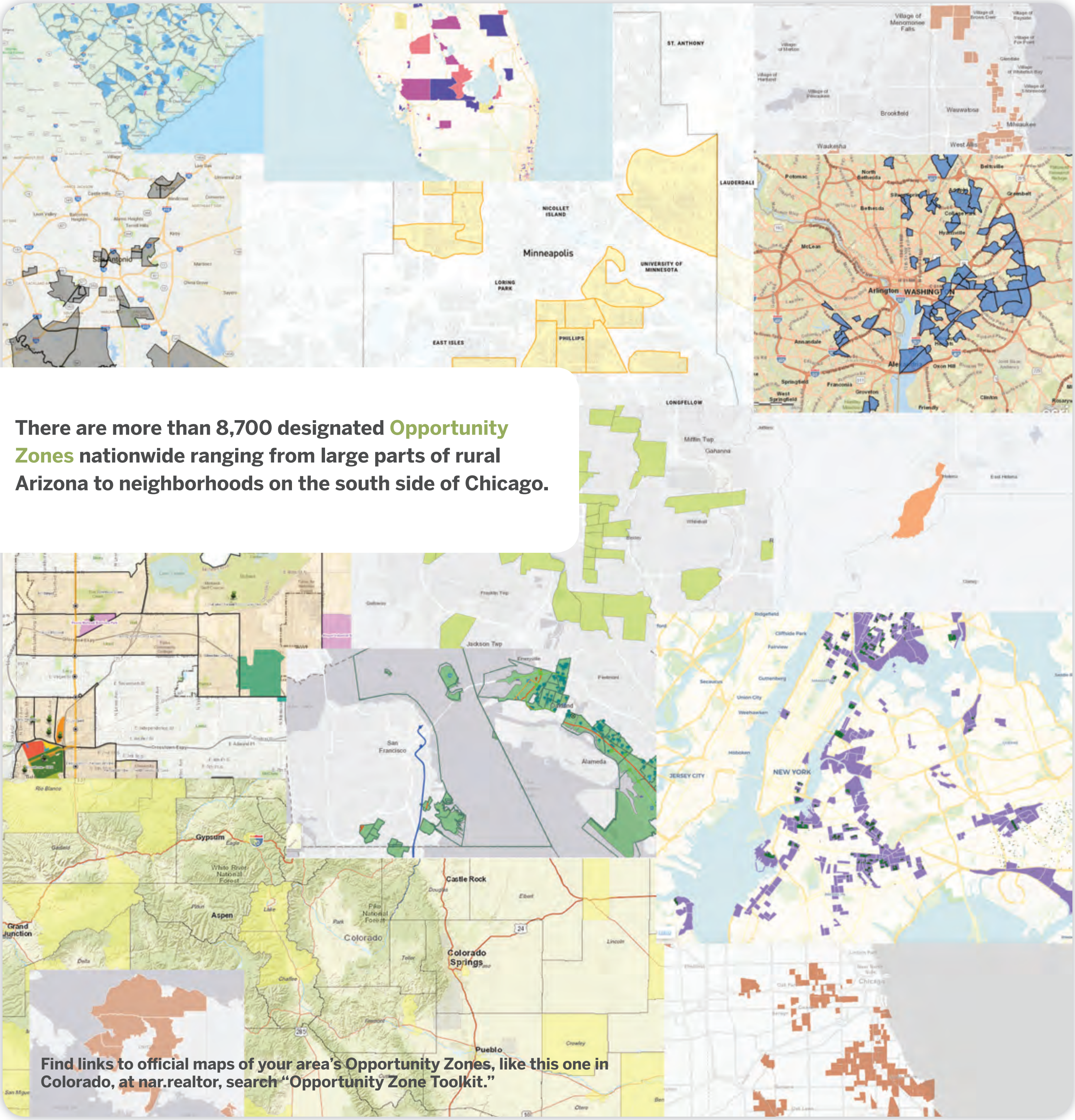
Champion Your Opportunity Zones

REALTOR® association executives have a new way to boost members' business and help drive community revitalization.



There are more than 8,700 designated Opportunity Zones nationwide ranging from large parts of rural Arizona to neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago.

Find links to official maps of your area's Opportunity Zones, like this one in Colorado, at nar.realtor, search "Opportunity Zone Toolkit."

Your local association can lead the charge for improved quality of life in your area through the Qualified Opportunity Zone program, a federal government tax incentive that aims to revitalize economically depressed communities nationwide through residential and commercial real estate investment.

"Through Opportunity Zones we can bring local, state, and national stakeholders here to show them why they should invest in our area," says Bruce King, government affairs director at the REALTORS® Association of Northwestern Wisconsin. "We intend to engage the Native American community—since the largest Opportunity Zones in our area are located on their land—with development experts plus our own members to generate ideas for what development projects are wanted and needed."

Dozens of REALTOR® associations nationwide have already begun engaging local experts, including members, economic development organizations, community foundations, legislators, and others in dialogue about how to revitalize the designated Opportunity Zones in their areas.

From new mass transit and affordable housing to new office spaces and redesigned community spaces, there's a lot of potential in your opportunity zones and a lot of reasons to get involved in the process.

There are more than 8,700 designated Opportunity Zones nationwide ranging from large parts of rural Arizona to neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago. The U.S. Treasury Department expects $100 billion in private capital will be invested through the program.

Bring the zone message to members

For state and local associations eager to get involved, NAR created the "Qualified Opportunity Zones Toolkit" on nar.realtor that includes the fundamentals on the program, a one-hour long "Planning for Opportunity Zone Investments" video, recently issued regulatory guidance, and links to maps of all local Opportunity Zones.

NAR launched a grant program earlier this year to provide funding for REALTOR® associations that wanted to hold Opportunity Zone events. More than 40 associations received grants totaling $175,000 for events like the one scheduled for Nov. 18 hosted by the Central Panhandle Association of REALTORS®.

"Our event will bring together a wide range of community leaders, chambers of commerce, mayors, and commissioners to hear guest speaker Christopher A. Coes, vice president of land use and development at Smart Growth America, and others, discuss local growth through Opportunity Zones," says Debbie Ashbrook, association CEO.

Ashbrook says she hopes the Opportunity Zone investment incentive brings long overdue redevelopment to local areas affected by Hurricane Michael in 2018, as well as commercial growth, new jobs, and increased property values.

Ensure Opportunity Zone investments strengthen local communities

Critics of the Opportunity Zone program point to the possibilities of development projects displacing local residents through gentrification or ignoring a community's highest priority needs for developments that are the most profitable projects for investors.

"This is exactly the reason that REALTORS® need to be involved in the conversations," says Dawn Kennedy, RCE, GREEN, CEO of the Birmingham Association of REALTORS®. Kennedy's association held an event in early August for members, community leaders, and legislative representatives aimed to position REALTORS® as the go-to resource for property expertise. The event, held in an Opportunity Zone, was such a success that it attracted the attention of Scott Turner, executive director of the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council—the office tasked with helping to implement and optimize federal resources connected to the Opportunity Zone incentive.

The Chicago Association of REALTORS®' online resource for members (at chicagorealtor.com/what-you-need-to-know-opportunity-zones) includes this handy map.

"Turner then came to speak with our members and local legislators about how important Opportunity Zones are in terms of social impact, and he praised our association for jumping in feet first to promote this program to members and the communities they serve," says Kennedy.

Opportunity Zone experts, resources, and tools

Another NAR tool to help members be the voice for real estate in the Opportunity Zone discussion is available from the Realtors Property Resource®. The new data layer on both the residential and commercial sides of RPR enables members to analyze all properties that fall within Opportunity Zones, including their economic and demographic statistics, and create reports for investors about the buying potential and marketability.

Upon request, NAR staff can also provide webinars for associations and recommendations for local speakers or officials for association events. For Opportunity Zone updates, materials, and news, visit nar.realtor and search: "Qualified Opportunity Zones."

— by Carolyn Schwaar

◁ How are you perceived by the people around you? Are you known for getting things done, being reliable, or the go-to person? If not, that's a great indication that it might be time to reset your personal brand.

—*Your Someday Is Now. What Are You Waiting For?*

Rebranded and Rut-free

Reader: L. Nicci Haynie, RCE, Texas REALTORS®

One of life's biggest challenges is personal reinvention. I recently experienced a series of traumatic losses that rewrote my reality. Moving past those moments meant I needed to figure out how to fit into my own world again. This year's AE Institute in Austin, Texas, gave me an invaluable tool to help me do that at just the right time.

It was Gail Lowney Alofsin's session, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours! Seven Non-negotiables of Customer Service." It was here where she talked about her book, *Your Someday Is Now. What Are You Waiting For?,* which focuses is on maximizing your time and establishing your personal brand. The book's layout is workbook-style, with questions at the end of each chapter and advice from more than a hundred business professionals just like us. I recommend you take your time going through it, making notes and highlighting what resonates with you. There are a lot of excellent points, but I am going to select a few things that helped me break my slump and improve my own productivity exponentially.

But before I dive into that, I want to mention a quick read Alofsin also recommended: *Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time*, by Brian Tracy.

Procrastination is the enemy of time management, and it affects many of us, preventing us from being the best version of ourselves. *Eat That Frog* gives a series of 21 recommendations on how to beat the procrastination bug and get things done. It starts with taking the toughest thing on your to-do list and conquering that first. This thing is called the frog.

When I joined the U.S. Army at age 20, one of the first activities was to go into a small, enclosed room and experience the effects of tear gas so that we would be motivated to take the immediate required actions to protect ourselves and our fellow soldiers. It was horrible. After that experience, I could do absolutely anything as long as I did not have to do that again.

The concept of *Eat That Frog* works the same way. Make that phone call. Organize those files. Type those meeting minutes. You will not have to anticipate them anymore. As Alofsin said, "Your day can only get better from there!"

Now Back to Alofsin's Book

The first point I loved in the book is a simple reminder that we all have the exact same amount of time in a day, week, month, and year. No more, no less. The only thing in time we can control is how we apply it.

Because we have only a set amount of time, it is impossible to do everything. If you have many projects and deadlines, you will have to put some things off in order to succeed overall. This is where "creative procrastination" comes into play. In order to procrastinate creatively, you must pick your projects. Your success will greatly improve if you choose to procrastinate on the things that are easier to accomplish, rather than the more difficult ones.

Chapter 4, "Busy is Not a Contest," points out that no matter our experience level, there are many of us who just cannot say no. However, a politely delivered no is a vital tool in our arsenal of success. "Busy for the sake of busy" benefits no one and can burn you out quickly. Instead of running yourself into the ground, perhaps delegating or scheduling tasks for a time when your calendar is less full will help you better meet your goals for success.

Chapters 11 and 12 are perfect together because they focus on who you are. How are you perceived by the people around you? Are you known for getting things done, being reliable, or the go-to person? If not, that's a great indication that it might be time to reset your personal brand.

Rebranding isn't an easy process, as anyone who has been through it will tell you. It takes looking at who you are in the moment. Throughout our lives, we might discover ourselves in a rut at one time or another. If that's the case for you, don't despair. It just means that it's time to rebrand. These two chapters give practical advice on where to begin and offer a step-by-step path out of the rut.

This book, and the opportunity to speak with Alofsin at the AE Institute, helped shake off my cobwebs. Rebranding is a tough process, not for the faint of heart, but it is well worth the effort.

For more information, visit gailalofsin.com.

Miami Association of REALTORS® Expands Global Referral Network

While exhibiting at MIPIM, the world's largest real estate conference and expo, held annually in Cannes, France, the Miami Association of REALTORS® signed six new international agreements with fellow members of FIABCI, the International Real Estate Federation. Miami's new partnerships with FIABCI chapters representing the Americas, Bulgaria, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Ukraine expand the association's International Referral Network linking South Florida properties with more than 1 million real estate professionals around the world. For a full list of Miami International Partners, visit MiamiRealtors.com/internationalpartners.

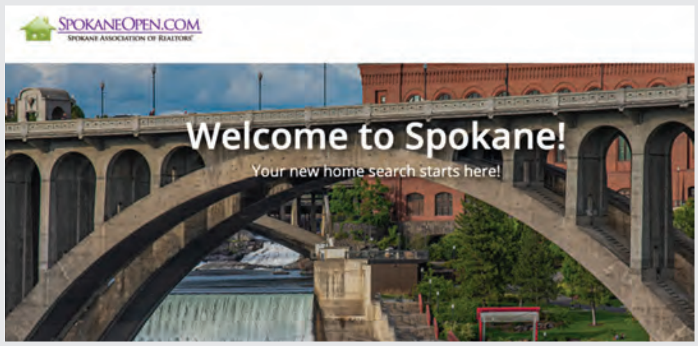
Photo by GreatLIFE KC

Kansas City Helps REALTORS® Get Fit

The Kansas City Regional Association of REALTORS® is looking out for its members' health and wellbeing by negotiating a new fitness program member benefit. KCRAR members have access to seven fitness facilities and 16 golf courses throughout the Kansas City metro through GreatLife Golf and Fitness for just $9 a month. "Because GreatLife understands that REALTORS® are tremendous ambassadors to sellers moving and buyers relocating to the area, they have created an unheard-of pricing structure just for our members," said Kipp Cooper, CEO of KCRAR.

Michael Graziano at Prince George's County Association of REALTORS®, Md., found an attractive and economical way to decorate his classroom; **program and product posters** from NAR. Currently, 11 posters are available for free digital download in the REALTOR® Store at store.realtor.org.

The 600-member Northern Rhode Island Board of REALTORS® launched a **video series to promote RPAC** featuring its President Michael Lambrese and RPAC Chair Alexander Parmenidez. "We were able to use these videos as a new touch point to engage our members and ultimately get very close to our goal of 50% member participation—a new high for us," says Maria Glanvill, Northern Rhode Island Board of REALTORS®. View the videos on YouTube; search for NRI Board of REALTORS®.



The Spokane Association of REALTORS® launched its new and improved **website dedicated exclusively to open houses**, spokaneopen.com, in April in conjunction with its popular open house weekend event, which is heavily advertised to consumers.

news: outreach & advocacy success stories


Henriquez Architects via SDCI

Consumer Advocacy Outreach Program Helps Seattle King County REALTORS® Share Advocacy Success

After years of stagnant condominium construction in the Seattle region, a coalition led by the Washington Association of REALTORS® was finally able to convince the state legislature to ease the legal restrictions that have discouraged development of this key "missing middle" housing. The National Association's Consumer Advocacy Outreach Program helped the Seattle King County Association give credit where credit was due—to REALTORS®.

Nebraska REALTOR® Association Takes REALTOR® Party Show on the Road

REALTOR® associations of large, less populous states like Nebraska often undertake "road shows" to connect with members of distant local boards. This summer, the Nebraska REALTOR® Association took the REALTOR® Party on the road to acquaint members with all its efforts, accomplishments, and opportunities, receiving warm welcomes from North Platte to Scottsbluff.

Delaware REALTORS® Win Legislative Victory With Advocacy and Research

REALTORS® in Delaware used to be subjected to business licensing fees at the municipal level in addition to the state level. Using research to determine how much revenue was at stake, the state association took the results to the legislature via Advocacy Everywhere and face-to-face advocacy. HB 235 was signed into law in July 2019, eliminating municipal licensing for REALTORS®. NAR's Advocacy Everywhere program is designed to expand the influence of NAR, state, and local associations on public policy and to increase member and consumer participation in calls for action (visit realtorparty.realtor/member-consumer/advocacy-everywhere).

Pacific Southwest REALTORS® Help Create Homeless Resources Website

Using a Housing Opportunity grant from the National Association of REALTORS®, the Pacific Southwest Association of REALTORS® has sponsored the development of a website serving as a one-stop resource for those experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness in the San Diego area. The project honors the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act.


Getty Images

Advocacy Everywhere Helps D.C. Association of REALTORS® Keep Property Taxes at Bay

When the District of Columbia Association of REALTORS® learned on the eve of a budget vote that a city council member was planning to introduce an "emergency amendment" taxing homes valued at more than $1 million, it dropped everything and called in the REALTOR® Party. A timely Call for Action got a strong message through to council members, and the "mansion tax" proposal was shelved—for the time being.


Getty Images

Mississippi REALTORS® Secure Broader Broadband Access

REALTORS® know better than anyone that expanded internet access is the only way to increase economic opportunity and connect communities in rural and underserved areas. Harnessing the power of Advocacy Everywhere, Mississippi REALTORS® rallied voters to support the Mississippi Broadband Enabling Act, which finally permits electric cooperatives to provide broadband services in addition to electric power.

Lincoln REALTORS® Mobilize Voters to Support Roadway Improvements

Many of Lincoln, Nebraska's streets were in disrepair, some to the point of impassibility. Using an Issues Mobilization grant, the REALTORS® Association of Lincoln took the lead in supporting a ballot initiative to fund critical road repairs.

Read more about these and other REALTOR® association community outreach and advocacy success stories at realtorparty.realtor/success-stories.

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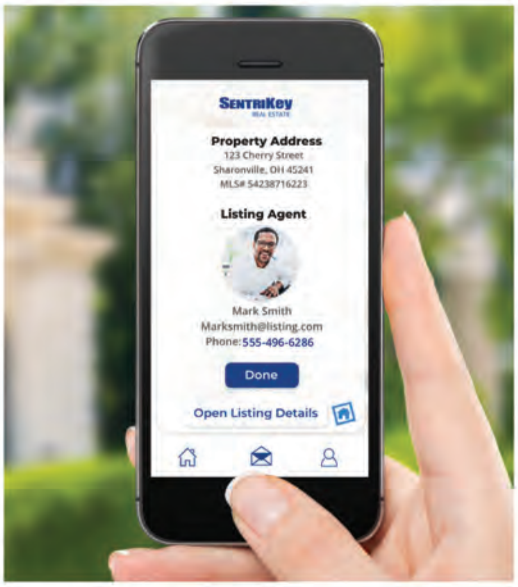

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SENTRILOCK® | REALTOR® NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* REALTORS®
REALTOR Benefits® Program

NAR's Official Lockbox Solution

The National Association of REALTORS®' ad campaign differentiates REALTORS® from other practitioners, as well as from technologies that assist in the home sales process.

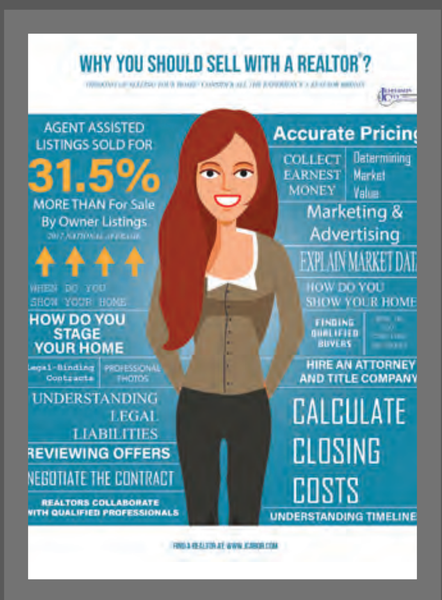
"Why You Should Hire a REALTOR®"

New ways associations are ramping up promoting REALTOR® value to consumers.

Today's home buyers and home sellers demand increased efficiency, simplicity, and speed of service. They want to go online to find the best home. They want to use technology to market their home widely and for the highest price. They want quick and painless electronic closings. Today's REALTORS® can help with all this and more. So, how are you getting this message out to consumers in your community?

Associations have long championed the use of a REALTOR® over selling a home without one and told consumers how REALTORS® are different from other licensees. Most associations have at least a webpage devoted to the topic—and many have an entire site (realtorsmakeitright.com, realstorynj.com).

Today, REALTOR® associations are ramping up their efforts to promote members in response to perceived competition for clients from certain iBuyers and other technology-enabled entities that claim to streamline buying and the for-sale-by-owner process.



Left: New public awareness campaign poster from the Jefferson City Association of REALTORS®, Mo.
Top: Social media material from the California Desert Association of REALTORS®.
Right: Maryland REALTORS®' four-page PDF list promoting the use of a REALTOR®.

Push out the value message via social media

The Jefferson City Association of REALTORS®, Mo., recently launched a public awareness campaign to promote the value of using a REALTOR® locally. "Despite the reported low number of FSBOs nationwide, we have a fairly large number of them," says Donna Stone, RCE, association CEO. "This campaign will hopefully counteract that and bring the value of a REALTOR® to the forefront."

The association hired a social media marketing company to produce REALTOR® value–driven Facebook and Google ads. "We also created pieces that our local lenders and title companies could make available in their offices and our members could use on their social media and marketing," says Stone. "Our lenders and title companies are vocal advocates of using a REALTOR® because FSBOs often seek their advice and counsel on issues outside their expertise."

Going all in to support members

To better promote the value that members bring to buying and selling a home, the Baldwin Association of REALTORS®, Ala., didn't just launch a campaign or seat a committee; it rebranded its entire association late last year.

"During our strategic planning, leadership, along with other members, proposed a new mission as well as a new vision [for the association]," says Allison Woodham, Baldwin REALTORS® communication director. The idea was to transition the association from being member-facing to a consumer-facing advocate for REALTORS® and real estate.

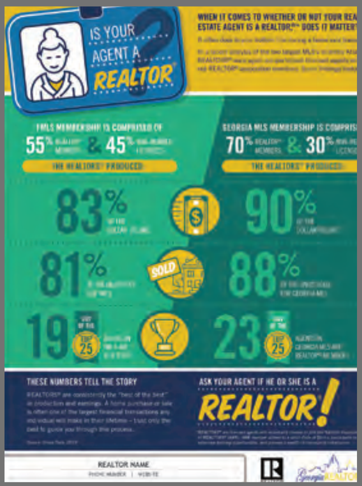
The first step in the association's conversion was a name change. Originally the Baldwin Association of REALTORS®, the name was shortened to Baldwin REALTORS® to emphasize that the organization is a group of local professionals, not an entity that regulates them. Next came the tagline: REAL Experts. REAL Advisors. REAL Advocates. Only a REALTOR®.

Baldwin REALTORS®' new public awareness ads promote members' unique skills.

"We have invested heavily in social media, billboards, radio, and email blasts and other ways to promote the REALTOR® as the person to help consumers with every need [related to a sale]," says association CEO Sheila Dodson, RCE. "The messaging was strategically built to promote a REALTOR®'s invaluable expertise and knowledge, which directly benefit home buyers and sellers, as well as the Baldwin REALTORS® MLS [public home search], which offers real-time accurate listing data for local properties."

The effort is paying off. Association data shows that since the rebranding and relaunching, there has been a 178% increase in new users to BaldwinRealtors.com. There's been a 368% increase in users searching for homes from the Baldwin REALTORS® consumer search at the site, and on the

Left: Florida REALTORS® infographic promoting members.
Top: Video still from Wisconsin REALTORS®' 2018 REALTOR® value video.
Right: One of many infographics the California Association of REALTORS® makes available to members to post and distribute.



Georgia REALTORS®' new public awareness ads highlight research showing that REALTOR® participants of large Georgia MLSs sell more than nonmember participants.

social media front, there's been a 266% increase in Facebook engagement and an 80% increase in Instagram followers.

"Our members have embraced the change and are using the collateral materials in their own marketing," says Dodson. "We have also wrapped a vehicle that is getting rave reviews and getting noticed at public meetings and government meetings, especially."

Data backs the facts of REALTOR® value

Data from NAR's Home Buyers and Sellers surveys consistently detail how much less for-sale-by-owner properties sell for compared with those sold by a REALTOR®. The Georgia REALTORS® wanted local data: a comparison of homes sold by their members to those by non-REALTOR® licensees in the state.

"We hired a firm to analyze production and sales volume between REALTORS® and non-member licensees in our two largest MLSs to see how the two groups compared," says Brandie Miner, the association's director of communications. The results were convincing. REALTORS® make up 70% of participants in the Georgia MLS but are responsible for 90% of sales volume. Just more than half the participants in the First Multiple Listing Service are REALTORS®, but they account for 81% of the units sold. "REALTORS® vastly outperformed licensees in our study, and we think this is important for the public to know when they start the process of buying or selling their home."

Georgia REALTORS® produced an infographic flyer detailing the study's results to post online and for members to personalize and use as a part of their listing package.

What's your message to consumers?

Although members of the REALTOR® Association of Central Massachusetts haven't specifically asked the association to promote the use of a REALTOR®, it's implicit in the organization's strategic plan, says Berkeley Wlodarczak, director of marketing.

The association's most recent campaign to promote the value of a REALTOR® was a staff-driven initiative, says Wlodarczak. "We realized that the types of handouts we had to offer to the general public were only related to becoming a REALTOR® or to the benefits specific to our REALTOR® association, so we developed a new pamphlet about using a REALTOR® versus a nonmember."

Top left: Lexington-Bluegrass Association of REALTORS® currently runs two different local television and social media ads promoting REALTORS®. **Top right:** West Michigan Association of REALTORS®' logo car makes frequent appearances at community events. **Left:** Central Missouri Board of REALTORS®' recently posted this "use a REALTOR®" video licensed from the New Jersey REALTORS®. **Right:** A new pamphlet promoting members from the REALTOR® Association of Central Massachusetts.

The pamphlet is available to members as a PDF and was also recently placed in 500 REALTOR®-branded bags distributed in an impoverished area of the community as part of a partner program with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

No need to reinvent the wheel

Local REALTOR® associations have great pride in their locally developed REALTOR® value campaigns, and most are willing to share their materials and ideas.

The National Association of REALTORS®' consumer campaign, "That's Who We R," encourages local adoption and has spawned a wave of associations across the country leveraging the campaign's wide range of free materials to showcase the difference REALTORS® make.

The Pennsylvania Association of REALTORS®, for example, used the campaign materials on digital billboards this past spring, and countless associations have printed T-shirts with the campaign's slogan, pushed out the "That's Who We R" videos and ads via social media, and placed print material in local publications.

"We've moved from producing our own creative to branding the social ads provided by NAR," says Eric Berman, communications director of the Massachusetts Association of REALTORS®. "Because of the That's Who We R campaign, we've been able to boost our statewide consumer awareness advertising and track the results, which have been very positive. The volunteers of our Consumer Awareness Task Force and members in general have been very excited about the campaign direction."

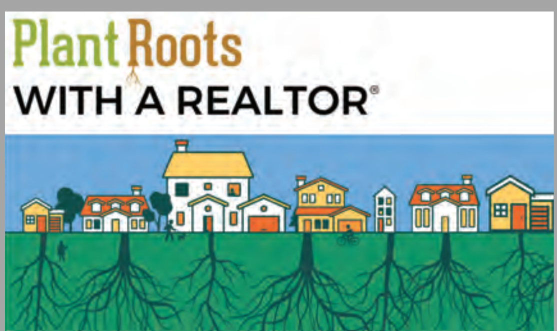
REALTOR® associations nationwide have put their marketing dollars behind promoting the National Association's consumer campaign, That's Who We R locally. Find free customizable materials and more information at ThatsWhoWeR.realtor.

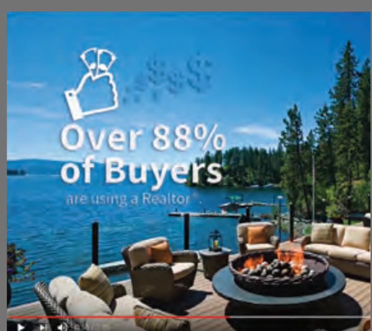
Show members you've got their back

As perceived competition for clients and sources of accurate listing data heats up, show members that their association is proactively educating consumers and the media about the REALTOR® difference and why it pays to work with a REALTOR®.

—by Carolyn Schwaar

Far left: Colorado REALTORS®' public awareness campaign promotes member value with facts. **Left:** Nevada REALTORS® promotes its member value video via social media. **Bottom left:** Although not new, New Jersey REALTORS®' dedicated website, realstorynj.com, is one example of a REALTOR® value site members can direct their prospects to. **Bottom middle:** Coeur d'Alene REALTOR® Association (Idaho) created a two-minute video that highlights the beauty of the area. **Bottom right:** Oklahoma City Metro Association of REALTORS® new member-value video.





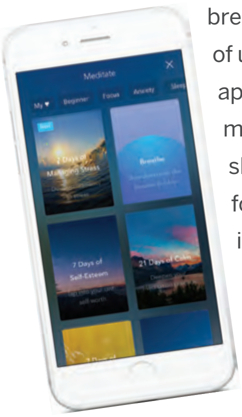
Tech to Boost Wellness

Feeling stressed out? Try app-based self-help.

Being an AE is both rewarding and stressful, so balancing work with wellness has become a top priority for me in the past few years. Since I am never too far from my phone, I've begun exploring a variety of wellness apps to help me relax, sleep, and balance priorities. Whether you're looking to cure insomnia, monitor your well-being, learn meditation, or track eating habits and exercise goals, there is a wide range of app choices. Here are my top five.

CALM

Although I rarely have trouble falling asleep, staying that way is another matter. My go-to app to lull me back to sleep is Calm. When I find my to-do list churning in my head in the wee hours, I go right to the Calm app. The main screen starts with a satisfyingly blue background and the words "Take a deep breath." Good advice for all of us. Choices within the app are sleep, meditate, music, and more. The sleep section is designed for middle-of-the-night insomniacs like me. A series of narrators reads stories to fall asleep to. John McEnroe reads the rules of tennis in the most monotone voice. Or choose Blue Gold, where the narrator, Stephen Fry, reads a story about lavender fields in the South of France. I confess I've never heard more than the first five minutes of any of the stories. They work like a charm.



WELLTORY

Welltory is the most fascinating app in the group by far, recommended to me by a fellow AE. Welltory promises to help you manage your energy (not your time) by measuring your heart rate variability to analyze nervous system activity and stress, then providing actions to reset the body. Just put your index finger over your phone's camera and hold still while the phone measures. Once the measurements are taken, you receive customized advice based on the readings.

On a recent measurement I was feeling under the weather and slept badly. The app advised, "Slow, calm and easy … that's what you need to aim for today. Take a break from screens and gadgets." The app also told me that my regulatory systems are struggling, and my sympathetic nervous system isn't affecting my sinoatrial node. I'm not sure I know what that really means, but the message to take it easy and refrain from screens and gadgets was spot on.

If you're not comfortable using your fingerprint, you can sync to data from other devices, such as a heart rate monitor.

HEADSPACE

Headspace, launched in 2010, provides audio-guided meditations and mindfulness exercises designed for your personal goals. Its self-described mission is to "improve the health and happiness of the world." For me, meditation is akin to taking vitamins; I know it is a good idea, but I don't always remember. Headspace has that covered. Morning and evening reminders will help build meditation into your daily routine. The newbie to meditation is eased in with three-minute sessions. As you become more comfortable with the process, select longer sessions for maximum destressing.

Headspace app ▸

NOOM

Noom promises its users long-term weight management results through behavior change, not restrictive dieting. Its slogan is "Lose Weight for Good." The app is a one-stop shop for tracking your weight, food, exercise, blood pressure and blood sugar. Making your health a priority is always a good idea, and Noom has a lot of loyal users. I've found that these apps are great when I consistently input everything I eat and drink into an app all day, but, I'll admit, that becomes tedious and I tend to lose interest in the process.

FITBIT

The Fitbit device (or the app on your phone) is one of the most popular fitness trackers, with 25.4 million users. I've been one of them for about three years. This device has changed my life. I'm much more aware of whether I am moving and taking movement breaks during the day. Most AEs spend a lot of time sitting at a desk, so the reminder to get up and take at least 250 steps an hour is a good one both from a physical and psychological point of view. The ability to use the app to set up challenges and monitor friends and coworkers appeals to my competitive side, too. I will walk down the hall to a separate printer to add steps to the day if a Fitbit friend is close to my top number.

Elizabeth S. Breen is the AE at the Santa Ynez Valley Association of REALTORS®, Calif. Contact her at 805-688-7744 or assocexec@syvaor.com.

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Grass Roots & Grass Tops

Don't worry: this is not a horticulture discussion. But not unlike the work it takes to make your lawn lush and green, the cultivation of REALTOR® advocates takes know-how and patience.

Taking a look at the lawn

Grass roots are where we begin because they are the bedrock of any REALTOR® association advocacy effort. These are your members who pick up the phone whenever you call and the ones who show up to every association event without fail. Like the roots of a lawn, grassroots REALTOR® advocates are there to underpin it all.

Because grass roots are below the surface, they can be in the dark on the details of certain REALTOR® advocacy efforts and may need more work to bring them to the surface. In other words, they want to help; they're just not sure how or how the system works.

Although it may not be easy to educate and nurture grassroots advocates, without them your efforts to support or battle state of local policies are unlikely to flourish.

In North Carolina, we engage our grass roots through our advocacy arm, the North Carolina Homeowners Alliance, a group of thousands of REALTORS® and homeowners committed to representing the interests of property owners and raising awareness of issues and legislation that affect consumers' most important investment: their home. They have engaged on issues such as homeowners insurance rates and improving infrastructure.

Keeping your grass green

Grass tops are what most people see. These are your leaders and others who are highly informed or engaged in advocacy, such as elected officials, lobbyists, and media figures. You as the AE are also a member of the grass tops.

Even in the healthiest of lawns, there are always fewer grass tops than grass roots. The benefit of working to cultivate and support this group is that they will be the first thing people see when they come to look at your lawn. Your grass tops have to be strong. This means you have to work to keep them informed and engaged. For the nonmember grass tops, add them to your newsletter list, identify members who are close to them, and invite them to your events. And for those within your organization, make sure you provide training, resources, and opportunities to flourish. Grasstops engagement is a key part of the work of Government Affairs Directors, but that doesn't mean AEs don't have a role. Even if you don't have a GAD, you can still engage in these efforts through showing up to town council meetings and public forums or just sending out email blasts when you need these grass tops to hear from you.

Supporting grass tops may be the easiest return on investment based on time and resources, especially for groups with small budgets and teams. However, go back to the lawn analogy: What happens to the grass tops from time to time? They get cut off and replaced by other tops (association presidents' terms expire, elected leaders cycle in and out); but the grass roots remain. That's why, as we look at building a robust and long-lasting advocacy platform (or lawn, if you will) it's important to ensure that you have an equal balance. More importantly, not all grass roots remain below the ground forever. Many of them will rise to become a grass top, even if it is only for a brief time.

The grass roots of your advocacy are your engaged members who respond to calls for action, show up at legislative events, and invest in RPAC.

Strategies to grow your advocacy lawn.

Keeping your lawn healthy

We all know that if you don't water your lawn every now and then, and fertilize it when you can, you will lose your lawn quickly. Before you know it, it will be brown and dry, it will take a huge amount of time and money to revive it, and it may never be as lush as it was before.

That's not too different from engaging with advocates. They need consistent content, support, and reinforcement to make sure they can be as strong as you need them to be. This can be through newsletters, letters to the editor, speaking at public forums, or hosting NAR-supported programs including Smart Growth in the 21st Century or the Transforming Neighborhoods class. Protecting your advocacy lawn is not something to think about when you have an issue on the horizon. It should be a perennial and thoughtful process that is a component of your annual strategic plan.

So what types of tools are best to engage with these groups, and is it the same for both of them?

Engaging grassroots advocates comes down first to meeting them where they are. Present them with information and requests for engagement in the easiest, most commonly used way possible. That could be email, Facebook, in-person meetings, or even mail. If it reaches

> The grass tops of your advocacy are your leaders, legislators, and others who have high professional or public profiles and can raise attention or influence decision-makers.

them and resonates with them, you can count it as a win. Once you reach them, you need to make sure you have a clear objective or action request. This can be as simple as asking them to read your communications to stay informed on issues or requesting that they send an email or show up to an event. Keep communications short and action-oriented. They will thank you because it helps them, and it will hopefully result in more action. Don't just engage with them when you need them, make it a regular part of your work so that it is something they can count on.

Grasstops advocacy blends many of these ideas and amps them up because these advocates are already engaged and informed. These are the professionals with specific experiences even within the real estate business. They are the ones who expect to be asked for their opinion on issues and the ones who aren't shy about sharing their thoughts. In most cases, they are the decision-makers that drive the action you desire, such as commissioners or legislators, and may be the very people that the work of your grassroots advocacy is pointed toward. These folks need to hear the high-level details and the options inherently tied to decisions. Many appreciate more complicated conversations, detailed white papers, or events because they have the time for them or at least the subordinates to pass them off to for summary.

Due to the higher expectations of the group, you may have to bring in professional "landscapers" to make sure you treat them in a way that keeps them engaged over the long term. These landscapers are your government affairs staff or staff at the National Association of REALTORS®, but can also be contract lobbyists, campaign strategists, or communications professionals, each tasked with presenting the important issues in a way that resonates directly with the grass tops.

When thinking about these lawn characteristics, it's clear they are mutually dependent. Without a strong, engaged root base, the tops can't grow. Without the tops standing up and being noticed, it isn't likely that your advocacy efforts will be successful.

Seth Palmer is the director of regulatory affairs and external communications for North Carolina REALTORS®. Reach him at 919-573-0992 or spalmer@ncrealtors.org.

Taming the Core Standards Beast

Best practices for making your compliance efforts easier.

It's autumn and the days are getting cooler. In the distance you can hear the high school marching band practicing for Friday night's football game. Then, suddenly, the terror of a giant, ferocious beast disturbs your calm, and, in sweat-drenched fear, you realize: "I haven't started working on my Core Standards certification!"

That was me before I came up with a plan to help get though Core Standards with ease. Here are some tips.

Get Organized

My January calendar reminds me to print out the Core Standards compliance tool every year. I print it out and keep it in a colored folder on my desk because, often, I don't have time to open the online tool and upload something the moment it comes to mind. It's more convenient for me to take a printed event flyer with attached notes, such as from a legislative outreach luncheon, and file it in the advocacy section of my folder. I also prepopulate the folder with the events I know are scheduled for the year. By adding these things to the folder as they occur, I do not spend valuable time searching for them or trying to remember them later.

I live by paper and sticky notes, but what works for me may not work for you. However, keeping Core Standards a part of your regular work (not just an end-of-the-year activity) should work for everyone.

Learn From Experience

This is my seventh year as the AE here in northeast Louisiana, and it is my fifth cycle of the Core Standards certification. My routine now is to read through the tool in January and highlight the things I know will be easily achieved. For example, I submit a quarterly market update to the local newspaper, which satisfies No. 17 under Section III, Consumer Outreach. I also consider Section IV, Unification Efforts, to be one of the easier sections because you fill in the blanks, so to speak, about the business of the association. In No. 49, I am verifying our legal counsel contact information, and in No. 50, the date of the last filing of the state and federal tax returns. This is the easy stuff. Don't leave it until the last minute.

> I plan early to ensure that we will promote and host the necessary activities to comply with the advocacy section so that I am not wringing my hands in November and December trying to complete the requirements.

Next, I find the areas that are the most challenging and make a plan to meet the requirements.

I have learned that Section II, the advocacy section, can be the most challenging for my association and the area where we've needed to improve most. I begin surveying the layout of the year to make sure that we have planned events for the members to participate in. I plan early to ensure that we will promote and host the necessary activities to comply with the advocacy section so


OUR EXPERTS FIND YOU A HOUSE, YOU MAKE IT A HOME.
FIND A REALTOR®
THAT'S WHO WE
REALTOR
FROM OPEN HOUSE TO OPEN CONCEPT
REALTOR® EXPERTISE MAKES IT HAPPEN

that I am not wringing my hands in November and December trying to complete the requirements.

Set Goals

If you're like me, you keep a to-do list on your desk at all times, checking off tasks once they're accomplished. Include a Core Standards task on the list at all times and, once you have marked it finished, add another until you are ready to submit your information for certification.

Update Quarterly

My paper Core Standards folder can become jam-packed with notes and reminders, so every quarter I set aside time to populate the online tool with the items and information I have collected. In November I try to complete the remainder so that I can submit by the first week in December. By committing 30 minutes a quarter to working in the Core Standards tool, I don't feel so rushed at the end of the year when I'm deep in the dungeons of collecting annual dues and counseling the members who have waited until the last minute to complete their continuing education requirements.

> As much as I may have wanted to resist the implementation of Core Standards in the beginning, it has certainly benefited my association.

Spread the Love

I want every member of my staff to understand the importance of obtaining Core Standards certification and why so much time and effort is dedicated to it. When a new staff member comes on board, I explain the six areas of competency, which also helps them understand how the three-tiered REALTOR® organization works. Although it is my responsibility to make sure the tool is loaded with the correct information and submitted on time, I assign tasks for other association staff members to complete and forward to me so that the burden isn't quite so heavy. I have never assigned any of the tasks to the association's volunteers or leadership but, if I were the sole employee of the association, I would definitely consider it.

Educate the Masses

Core Standards requirements are covered in every new board member orientation so that the officers and directors who serve the association understand that programs and promotions are necessary to adhere to the NAR mandate. We also include information about Core Standards in our new-member orientation. This has heightened awareness with our members that we have annual goals and that member participation, such as with Calls for Action, is vital to reaching some of those goals.

Embrace Change

When Core Standards was introduced, I still considered myself a newbie as an AE and I remember thinking, "Seriously? More work for me?" However, as much as I may have wanted to resist the implementation of Core Standards in the beginning, it has certainly benefited my association. It has taken some time, but we are now meeting RPAC participation goals with membership renewals, and we have consistently met or exceeded our fundraising goals for RPAC since the introduction of Core Standards. We also have been recognized for excelling by winning the President's Cup and the Triple Crown Award. This accomplishment was the result of everyone working together to elevate member awareness of the value advocacy brings to the real estate business and homeownership, and it may not have happened without Core Standards. I can say, without reservation, that Core Standards is making our association stronger and better.

Celebrate the Victory

Nothing messes up your Friday more than realizing it's Wednesday, and nothing messes up a New Year's Eve celebration more than spending the holiday working on completing the Core Standards compliance tool. Plan ahead, keeping a steady pace, and you will find that the Core Standards giant is nothing to fear.

UPDATE

Revisions to Core Standards for State Associations

The AEC Core Standards for State Associations Work Group was appointed this year to consider revisions to the current Core Standards criteria specific to state associations. Led by co-chairs Maranda DeSanto, RCE, CEO, Duluth Area Association of REALTORS® and Angela Shields, CEO, Tennessee REALTORS®, with input from state AEs, the work group is proposing changes to be submitted to the AEC at the REALTORS® Conference in November. If approved by the AEC and the Board of Directors, these customized state standards will be effective with the sixth Core Standards cycle, which begins January 1, 2020.

Alice Clark, RCE, is CEO of the Northeast Louisiana Association of REALTORS®. Contact her at 318-387-6800 or aclark@nelarealtors.com.

Make Your Arbitration Decisions Stick

Follow the NAR arbitration instruction manual to avoid wasting time and money to clean up the mess of overturned judgments.

There are two types of Ikea customers: those who follow instructions and those who don't. I was in the latter category. After spending an inordinate amount of time studying the instructions, assembling, disassembling, and reassembling parts to build my desk, I decided to abandon the directions and follow my gut. Through pure ingenuity, it took less than 20 minutes and I didn't worry all the dowels, screws, and nuts that were obviously unnecessary. I was proud of that desk. It appeared to be sturdy. I placed my computer and books on it and watched as it creaked and then snapped, sending everything crashing to the floor.

Now I know. Following instructions can save you time, money, and a big mess. Choosing not to follow even the small steps can make a big difference. This is especially true when it comes to the arbitration and ethical hearing proceedings of the National Association of REALTORS® Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual.

Since its adoption in 1913, the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards has been a guiding light helping REALTORS® serve the best interests of consumers, create and administer cooperative arrangements, and resolve disputes. Enforcement of the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards is a privilege and responsibility of each local REALTOR® association. REALTOR® members and their clients rely on associations to fairly resolve their arbitration disputes and ethical grievances by adhering to the rules and procedures set forth in NAR's Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual. Courts have upheld those arbitration judgments when the NAR process was followed and the hearing was fair but have overturned them when procedures weren't followed.

For example, a 2008 North Central Mississippi Board of REALTORS® ethics panel found two members, a broker and an agent, guilty of violating the Code of Ethics. The ethical violation centered around an agent who input two properties into the MLS without the seller's authorization and the broker who failed to stop the action. The members were sanctioned with a $1,500 fine, a 45-day suspension for the broker, and expulsion of membership for one year for the agent. The members argued that the input was a clerical error and, once discovered, the listings were removed.

The members sued the association and the court reversed the decision, ruling that the association failed to follow the guidelines set forth by NAR for conducting ethics hearings and that the penalty was arbitrary and harsh.

On the flip side, two arbitration decisions were upheld by the courts in 2015. In *Sotheby's International Realty Inc. v. Relocation Group LLC*, the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the arbitration award issued by the Greenwich Association of REALTORS®, Conn. There, the court noted that great deference is shown to an arbitration panel's decision unless some egregious impropriety on the part of the arbitrators is found.

In *The Maine Real Estate Network v. E to P LLC*, the respondent filed a motion to vacate the $4,750 award it was ordered to pay in arbitration on the grounds that the arbitrators did not make any findings of fact or conclusions of the law to support the award and declined to release the tape of the arbitration proceedings. Yet the court upheld the arbitration award, finding that arbitrators are not required, under the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual*, to make findings of fact and conclusions of the law.

As you can see from these cases, following the rules and procedures set forth in NAR's *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* will protect your association from having your arbitration decisions overturned in court. It also imbues more trust and confidence from REALTOR® members and their clients in the arbitration and professional standards hearing processes.

Here are some practical tips for boards and associations to follow: 1) Make sure the administrator for your professional standards process has completed their training on professional standards administration. 2) Select an impartial panel. 3) Treat everyone fairly and equally. 4) Work with legal counsel. 5) Know the rules, procedures, and best practices. 6) Contact NAR staff with any questions.

Charlie Lee is an associate counsel at the National Association of REALTORS®. Contact him at 312-329-8373 or clee@realtors.org.

Financial advice that makes dollars and sense.

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Financial Source Webinar Series from the Center for REALTOR® Financial Wellness

This new resource is designed to help REALTORS® understand financial topics on a deeper level. Presenters include subject matter experts who will provide tips, planning options, and an array of valuable information for REALTORS®. No matter their career stage or level of financial planning, these webinars are helpful and informative to all members.

Encourage your members to register for the upcoming monthly webinars at **NAR.realtor/FinancialWellness/Webinars**.

Upcoming Topics Include:

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By SASid, Inc., Administrator for NAR's REALTORS® Insurance Marketplace

Insurance for Your Members

Like most Americans, price and convenience continue to be the top priorities for NAR members when it comes to healthcare coverage.

We at REALTORS® Insurance Marketplace are here to help: our online comparative shopping site, designed to simplify the insurance-buying process, brings together a broad range of health plans and coverage solutions that make sense for most budgets and lifestyles. Here, your members can browse and compare plans, obtain quotes and enroll within minutes.

Navigating the insurance landscape can be tricky. We provide personal assistance for those needing guidance to compare plans. Our licensed benefit specialists are available to provide complimentary consultative services to NAR members, and can give advice on cost-saving strategies. This is all available exclusively to NAR members through the REALTOR Benefits® Program and is administered by SASid, Inc., a trusted and long-term NAR partner.

Custom Resources, Just for You

We know that as state and local association executives you're often tasked with helping your members find workable coverage solutions. We're here to help: we've dedicated ourselves to helping your members navigate the ever-changing insurance landscape and have built a variety of resources to assist you in sharing this resource.

We're here to help: we've dedicated ourselves to helping your members navigate the ever changing insurance landscape and have built a variety of resources to assist you in sharing this resource.

Within the Marketplace website there's a page just for you containing a variety of branded educational materials such as PDFs and product brochures, and information about how we can work with you to set up a complimentary and customized personal healthcare options page on your association website.

Get started at
RealtorsInsuranceMarketplace.com/ae.
From the AE tab on the site, you can request a FREE customized benefits page (we do the work, you get the link!), download materials and a quick benefits video, and request supplies for meetings, new member welcome kits, etc.

> **"Getting our delivery of brochures and fun supplies feels like Christmas. It makes it so easy for me to share information with our members about the coverage plans available to them. I'll give these out during our next quarterly breakfast!"**

Lauri Rottmayer, Association Executive
North Central Board of REALTORS®, Mountain Home, Ark.

A wide variety of plans available through REALTORS® Insurance Marketplace include:

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The private Members Health Insurance Exchange provides access to qualified ACA (government) major medical plans and flexible term major medical plans. The Medicare Supplement Insurance Options Exchange provides a one-stop shop for Medicare-eligible NAR members who wish to explore and expand their supplemental coverage after obtaining Original Medicare through the federal government.

Additional Coverage Options, Available Year-round:

REALTORS® Dental and REALTORS® Vision Insurance plans provide group coverage for REALTORS® and their families, with the benefit of group rates.

In addition to group dental and vision options, our Marketplace offers supplemental health coverage solutions designed to compliment major medical plans. One such solution is Members TeleHealth, an innovative healthcare solution that provides access to U.S. board-certified physicians at any time of day or night via telephone, smartphone or tablet app, web chat, or email. Telemedicine is the hottest trend in digital medicine.

Members Accident Protection is a plan that provides coverage in the event of an accident, and REALTORS® Core Health Insurance (RCHI) is an innovative alternative health coverage option providing cost-effective and workable alternative coverage compared to pricier ACA options. RCHI is a guaranteed acceptance, Limited Medical insurance plan that provides coverage for everyday healthcare needs.

Finally, Pet Health Insurance provides coverage for cats and dogs. These plans help members be prepared for unexpected or expensive vet care bills before they even happen.

We also provide easy links to solutions from other providers for errors and omissions coverage, auto, home and renters insurance plans, and there is more to come.

Major Medical and Medicare Open Enrollment

Open Enrollment is the period of time when you can enroll in a new plan or make changes to your current plan. If you miss Open Enrollment, you may not be able to make changes to your ACA plan or Medicare coverage for another year.

Major Medical Open Enrollment:
November 1 - December 15, 2019

Medicare Open Enrollment:
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Our licensed benefit specialists are available to provide complimentary consultative services to NAR members, and can give advice on cost-saving strategies.

For additional information contact Paula Colling, Account Manager
paula@sasid.com | 833.254.0661 ext. 5116

Update: A Brief Word on Association Health Plans

In 2018, the Department of Labor (DOL) issued a new rule opening the door for small employers and self-employed individuals to participate in association group health plans, but a federal district court struck down parts of the rule earlier this year. NAR supports the final rule and is working with the DOL to appeal the decision. Learn more at NAR.realtor/health-care-reform.

*Product availability and eligibility requirements vary by product. See website for details, terms and conditions.

Membership for Licensees With a Criminal Past?

NAR answers your questions on policy, bylaws, and procedures.

Applicants must have the opportunity to provide mitigating factors related to a criminal history and the association must consider the information provided.

Q. We received an application from someone with a criminal history. Can we deny membership based on that alone?
The bases upon which an applicant for REALTOR® membership may be denied are established in your association's bylaws and clarified in NAR's membership qualification criteria. If the association has adopted language in its bylaws stating "no record of criminal convictions" or "no record of official sanctions," then the association may consider convictions within the past seven years involving crimes that reasonably relate to the real estate business or put clients, customers, or other real estate professionals at risk. Any criminal conviction older than seven years cannot be considered by an association.

Whether a crime reasonably relates to the real estate business or puts others at risk is a determination for each association. A crime "reasonably relates to the real estate business" if it affects the individual's ability to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations of a real estate professional and uphold the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, such as embezzlement. A crime reasonably "puts clients, customers, or other real estate professionals at risk" if it involves dishonest, deceptive, or violent acts.

If the association determines the crime does relate to real estate or puts others at risk, the applicant must have the opportunity to provide mitigating factors, and the association must take this information into consideration. Associations must apply the criminal history component of the membership criteria to all applicants uniformly and avoid making exceptions for one applicant while denying another with a similar criminal history.

Q. The president of my association doesn't want to follow the bylaws. What am I supposed to do?
The leadership (including president, president-elect, and all directors) of an association owes fiduciary duties to the association, including the duties of care and obedience. The duty of care requires leadership to act the same as a reasonable person would in similar circumstances. It translates into the leadership ensuring that they understand the association's governing documents and follow the amendment procedures to update the governing documents to match the association's practice. The duty of obedience requires association leaders to act in accordance with the association's governing documents (including, but not limited to, the association's bylaws). Conscious disregard for the association's bylaws can lead to legal consequences for the association and for the leadership. For example, if an association didn't follow its bylaws' election procedure and was sued, the court could overturn the election and require a new one in accordance with the procedures in the bylaws.

Working with association legal counsel, remind your leaders about their fiduciary duties and the potential liability they and the association face when the bylaws are not followed. It is also important to note that the association could jeopardize its NAR-provided errors and omissions insurance because the insurance policy requires that associations implement and follow mandatory NAR policies and their own governing documents.

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Plan Your 2020 Event Travel

Industry conferences are great sources of inspiration and knowledge. Picking which ones to attend and getting them budget-approved, however, isn't easy.

See dates for 2020 NAR events and state conferences at nar.realtor/events/nar-meetings-by-year

AEs at the 2019 AE Institute in Austin, Texas.

Whether you're a new or experienced AE, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the wide array of options available when it comes to conferences, meetings, and industry events. Which ones will give you the best insights and ideas? And which ones will be the best to network with fellow colleagues?

Unless you're lucky enough to have an unlimited travel budget, look at your policy and procedures manual for what particular events are already approved to attend. Then be prepared to make the case for attending new events.

At my small association (225-plus members) we detail which events are preapproved for each position—AE, president, president-elect, and others—in our policy manual. It also includes a stipulation that these will be budgeted for every year except when the location or timing makes it cost-prohibitive, such as Hawaii or New York City in the summer. If you don't have travel detailed in your policy and procedures manual, then it is definitely something you will want to bring to your board to discuss prior to budgeting for 2020.

Be prepared when advocating for travel expenditures by having already investigated the hotel and flight prices for each destination and calculating an approximate overall cost to attend. Promise directors that you'll work to reduce expenses by exploring hotel discounts, Airbnbs, ride-sharing, and meals with vendors. Then, detail your reasoning for attending. What will you learn or do at this event that will benefit your association and members? Look at the agenda and show the directors specific sessions and how those topics directly relate to an initiative you will be launching at your association. For example, if there's a roundtable discussion on association branding, it would be invaluable to learn directly from fellow AEs about their successes and failures.

If you regularly make presentations to your directors after attending events to show what you learned that directly applies to your association, you're more likely to gain approval for more events in the future.

Once I know my travel budget, I map out the "must attend" events and estimate what my expenses will be in these cities. Most years, I attend three national and three state events. The Florida REALTORS® Convention & Trade Expo is a great event that I encourage all my members to attend, so I couldn't not attend myself. Your state REALTOR® conference is a good event for you to build camaraderie with your current and future leaders and show them the value that their state association provides them.

The three national events I find key are AE Institute, NAR Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo, and the REALTORS® Conference & Expo. If you operate an MLS, attending your MLS vendor's user group or conference is always very important. Almost all of the major MLS vendors in the industry have an annual conference where you can learn about new technology and provide input on future plans. My first event in this industry was one of these user-group meetings, and I was blown away at the feedback and information provided, as well as how welcoming this industry is. It is a great opportunity to meet your vendors, collaborate (or commiserate) with other AEs, and, ultimately, find new ways to provide better service to your members.

I have never been to CMLS or Inman events, or NAR's new iOi summit, but they are on my bucket list. If there is room in your budget after looking at the must-attend events, consider these three for industry, technology, and MLS information. If you can't attend, there are usually online sessions available. I have watched some of the key speakers at Inman the past few years. If certain sessions are being streamed or recorded, which is often the case today, take advantage and watch them from your office. Chances are, you can't attend all these conference (even though I know some AEs who do) so pick the ones you get the most out of and mix it up some years.

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How to Communicate With Today's Busy Member

Being a REALTOR® means spending most of your time on-the-go, and smartphones have enabled that lifestyle even more. According to the Real Estate in a Digital Age 2018 Report, 94% of REALTORS® use a smartphone every day, while only 91% use a laptop or desktop computer every day. Additionally, 92% of REALTORS® prefer to communicate with clients over text.

In the same report, 48% of real estate firms cited keeping up with technology as one of the biggest challenges facing their firms in the next two years. As technology becomes more integrated into REALTORS®' lives, we need to make sure we're meeting them where they are. Associations need to understand both what members want to hear from them and where they want to hear it.

Members look to you for insightful content

REALTORS® know the right content can help them improve their businesses. Luckily, in a world where content is king, there is no shortage of content for real estate professionals. However, it's not all of the same quality, and sorting through the good and the not-so-good pieces can be time consuming.

Your members trust and depend on your association to serve up standout content. Becoming a content resource for your members allows you to communicate with them in a way that's relevant and helpful to them.

Members expect you to be mobile

If 94% of REALTORS® use a smartphone every day, chances are that's where they're emailing, reading articles, and searching the web. 77% of REALTORS® are also on social media, and 97% of those users are on Facebook. So what does this mean for associations? A mobile-friendly website is a must. Posting regularly on your association's Facebook page should also be a priority. Members should be able to hear from you wherever they are.

New outlets to explore

Is your association as digital, connected, and on-the-go as your members? Here are some ways to get there.

Try texting. The majority of REALTORS® already prefer texting with their clients. Use a text marketing service to send out communications like event reminders, special promotions, and member surveys. Just make sure you're complying with opt-in laws.

Add more to your newsletters. Consider different kinds of media, like video. And make sure the template is completely optimized for mobile. Your newsletters can work harder for members.

Discover the power of podcasts. Podcasting has been around since about 2004, but it's risen in popularity in recent years. And, when you think about it, podcasts are perfect for busy REALTORS®. They're great for multitasking. You can take in valuable information while you're doing everyday tasks like driving, cooking dinner, or during downtime between appointments. They also tend to be conversational, so they're easy to listen to. And they get your mind going.

There are podcasts specifically for real estate professionals, like NAR's Center for REALTOR® Development Podcast. The CRD Podcast is well worth promoting to your members. Every episode explores a new real estate topic with a relevant industry expert. This is exactly the kind of content REALTORS® can get a lot out of on-the-go.

More about NAR's Center for REALTOR® Development Podcast

The host of the CRD Podcast is Monica Neubauer. She's been a REALTOR® in the Nashville, Tenn., market since 2002. In 2015, she was awarded the "REALTOR® of the Year" distinction by the Williamson County Association of REALTORS®. She was also awarded the SRES® Outstanding Service Award in 2014, and she's a national instructor for local and state associations. Monica and her husband have been self-employed and managing their own businesses for over 30 years, and she brings her entrepreneurial spirit to the CRD Podcast.

"Good podcasts are powerful bites of knowledge that are readily applicable," Monica said. "The CRD Podcast is not theory—it is real life-applicable material that listeners can plug right into their businesses."

Every episode, Monica is joined by a new knowledgeable and interesting guest. Conversations span education on various real estate niche markets, practical tips and advice, and regulatory changes. For an hour, listeners can really dive into a topic—whether that's during a long commute, while they're getting ready in the morning, or any other time.

You can subscribe to the CRD Podcast on Apple Podcasts, Android, Stitcher, TuneIn, Spotify, and GooglePlay.

Have an idea for a topic or guest? Send it in.

We want to hear your fresh topic ideas. And we'd love it if you introduced us to our next guest—it might be a colleague, a mentor, or even yourself.

The CRD Podcast is already a great resource for your members, and it could get even better when your association gets involved. Send your suggestions to Monica@MonicaNeubauer.com.

Offer Value to Attract Loyal Employees

It's a tight job market out there today. How can your association compete for the most talented and dedicated workers, and keep them long term?

You know what your association's value is to members, but what is it to employees? You may offer more than you think. By crafting an association employee value proposition, you can attract and retain dedicated staffers. Here's how.

What is my association's value to staff?

Your value is more than a laundry list of everything you provide to your employees, such as pay, benefits, training, and career development opportunities. It also includes the essence of your association—how it is unique and what it stands for.

This value is part of your association brand and should be marketed to current employees, as well as potential hires, so they have a solid understanding of why they work for your association.

To identify your association's employee value, start by asking yourself: Why should someone work here? What is fun and engaging about being here? What things can we change to make it better? If we don't offer high pay or strong benefits, what else do we have? Start making a list. More importantly, talk to your employees and find out what they think. Make it a fun meeting topic where everyone gives input.

Many employee value propositions include these categories

Work. How is the work itself rewarding and fulfilling? One example could be that employees get to see the direct benefit of their efforts in serving members. They can see how the association's classes help REALTORS® be more successful, for example. Association employees are contributing to the health of their own community by supporting the REALTORS® who serve it. REALTORS® help put people in homes, and that's something anyone can get behind. Another value of association work is that it may align with and deepen an employee's skills, knowledge, and career goals.

Rewards. What extras, options, or considerations do employees enjoy? This can include anything from performance bonuses to travel, training, and participating in association events and outings. Also consider what work-life balance opportunities you offer, such as flex time or the ability to bring your pet to the office.

Organization. Many companies boast that they are the market leader or the largest company in the area, but since your association is likely the only one in the area, promote the quality of your services, your social responsibility, your commitment to advocacy for homeowners and small businesses, and the fact that you are a part of the world's largest trade organization.

Environment. What makes your office a happy place? From a desk next to a window to free coffee in the breakroom, don't underestimate the value of your physical office and the culture of your workplace. In addition, promote the office policies that underpin a good working environment, such as your antiharassment and antidiscrimination policies, and the procedures and commitments that back them up.

Management. Why are you a person someone would want to work for? Promote yourself, your leadership style, and the type of manager you are, again, something anyone can get behind.

Craft your value statement

Once you've identified these value elements, craft a statement defining your entire value to employees. It should be aligned with your strategic plan, mission, and vision. It should be engaging and inspirational. Use it to create a vision for the staff experience of your employees. Many companies post this vision on their website.

For example: "It's more than a job, it's a purpose … the opportunity to improve lives … multicultural staff passionate about our mission, and a dynamic and exciting place to develop your career." This employee value proposition statement from the Heartland Alliance, a nonprofit working for social justice, defines their core value and what their ideal employee embodies.

This idea of commitment to the association's mission is a good place to start when drafting your value proposition statement.

Once you've identified the tangible elements of your value proposition and crafted a statement that conveys it, create a road map for how you will live up to your value proposition for every employee.

Carole Kaptur is the director of strategic association management at the National Association of REALTORS®. Contact her at 312-329-8311 or ckaptur@realtors.org.

zipLogix

How NAR's Transaction Management Member Benefit Makes Transactions Easier

Real estate has so many tools and processes for transaction management that the entire process has become entirely disjointed. From the moment they're created to the moment they're signed and sent to accounting, real estate transactions go through a long and arduous process.

A single transaction will go through agents. And then clients. And then the office. And sometimes agents again, and then the broker, and who knows how many different tools along the way.

That's why the NAR transaction management member benefit exists: to make transactions easier.

What's included with the NAR transaction management benefit?

For several years, the zipForm® Plus forms solution has been a staple for NAR members, which includes an exclusive library of forms and templates and transaction management tools—many of which are essential to process a real estate transaction electronically.

Many associations have added access to their own forms, enhancing the member benefit while providing a streamlined solution to your members, as they will have just one place to go to access required forms.

So what else is included?

Comprehensive transaction management tools

Every time a transaction stops to go through dozens of steps, or flip to another tool, it slows down—significantly.

Realistically, all of those steps should happen in the same place.

To avoid those unnecessary stops, the NAR benefit includes a transaction management platform—zipTMS®.

Together, zipForm® Plus and zipTMS® create a complete transaction management system, from forms to templates to document storage. This provides a solution for REALTORS® to manage and monitor transactions with checklist templates, transaction histories, and monthly statistics.

There are a wide range of co-marketing campaigns for associations to help drive adoption among your members.

The two systems work together to prevent any unnecessary changeover from forms to transactions—and by ensuring every transaction happens in one platform, they help create a faster, more efficient transaction process for everyone involved.

But the key to better transactions is...

As with anything in real estate, REALTORS® are the key to better transactions. It's imperative for them to trust the technology they're provided—or all of the great things it can do for them are all for naught.

For this, proactive education is provided for members, including free training webinars and regular newsletters, to help them gain trust in their member benefit and familiarity with its features.

Lone Wolf, which acquired zipLogix™, the provider of the NAR transaction management benefit, also offers a wide range of co-marketing campaigns for associations to help drive adoption among your members. These campaigns promote the benefits of the solution REALTORS® have been provided with using best practices for digital marketing, including advertising, email marketing, in-product messaging, graphic design, and more.

To learn more about these co-marketing campaigns, email info@lwolf.com or head over to ziplogix.com/resource-kit.

Technology should speed up a transaction's journey

Real estate tech should smooth out the bumps in the road, reduce the number of stops, and make the deal easier to close. It should empower REALTORS® to focus on the thing that matters most to their profession: brokering deals.

It may seem like a simple thing, a single transaction, but it's actually the most important thing. So when it comes to closing transactions, REALTORS® shouldn't accept second-best solutions—or processes that are "good enough." Signature by signature, contract by contract, form by form, REALTORS® can set the standard for this all-too-important process.

And it all starts with the NAR transaction management member benefit.

Lisa Mihelcich is the chief customer officer of Lone Wolf, the North American leader in residential real estate technology. Lone Wolf serves over 1.4 million real estate professionals across Canada and the U.S. The company offers an ecosystem of technology products designed to simplify the entire transaction process, including software for back office and transaction management.

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Vital Advice for Every AE

Miami REALTORS® CEO on building a career, getting involved, and inspiring younger generations.

It's impossible to cover Teresa King Kinney's groundbreaking accomplishments and industry-shaping leadership in one page. The *South Florida Business Journal* was just able to scratch the surface in its 2018 profile of Kinney, RCE, CAE, as one of the top 25 most influential businesswomen in South Florida, where it said she "is playing an integral role in making Miami a top real estate market for both domestic and international investment."

In November, she'll be celebrated at the REALTORS® Conference & Expo in San Francisco as the recipient of the 2019 William R. Magel Award of Excellence in association management, where she will no doubt share the credit with her staff, leaders members, supporters, and peers. It's this sense of humility and grace that has defined her more than 40 years as a REALTOR® AE.

She recently took time out to share advice on becoming a better AE, getting involved, and elevating young REALTORS®.

Q. What's the chief piece of advice you have for all AEs?
Focus on improving and enhancing your communication skills. Learn to be the absolute best communicator you can be. Constantly work to improve your public speaking skills and continually work to take them to the next level because nothing will take you further in your career.

Q. You served on the committee that created the RCE designation in 1987 and you hold six other designations. What's your advice for AEs on professional development?
Earning the CAE designation and the years of work on the teams developing the RCE designation have been a major foundation for my entire career. Designations and certifications are powerful and effective for every AE who wants to advance in their careers and their professional and personal lives. Designations show your commitment to your association, our members, and professional development.

Q. You lead a 50,000-member organization with dozens of staff members, yet you found time recently to appear live in one member's video blog. How can busy AEs maintain a close personal contact with members?
Interacting with the members in video blogs, on programs, and face to face is an important opportunity to connect and learn more about what members care about. Having 50,000 members really breaks down to serving them one at a time in person, on the phone, electronically, and in small groups at meetings, seminars, and conferences. For them and for us, it's personal.

Q. You've served on numerous NAR committees and task forces. What are the benefits of getting involved?
Definitely get involved in committees and other volunteer roles. Take advantage of these opportunities to participate, learn, share, and make a difference. I served on every AE committee, forum, and task force that I could, state and national, and that expanded to serving with other organizations, such as the American Society of Association Executives, chambers of commerce, and other civic organizations. Be sure to balance your volunteer roles with your commitment to your own association and, whenever possible, find opportunities that also benefit your association and your members. It's a good idea to also choose roles with strong staff support where your volunteer time has maximum benefit.

Q. Your association has an active Young Professionals Network group. How do you engage the new generation of REALTORS®?
Choose a few of the best and the brightest YPNers in your association, and help them find their focus, direction, and passion—and make sure you don't get in their way. Our YPNers are crazy, wonderful, top professionals who are absolutely the best at everything they do. We love them and their energy, creativity, and leadership. They do so much great work with education and community involvement that I recommended to the corporate board to make them a "leadership board." This means that their elected board members, president, and president-elect have been on the same level as our other leadership boards—residential, commercial, etc. Their programming, events, and outreach truly make a difference in the lives of all our members and our communities. They are our future.

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