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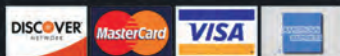
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REALTOR® AE

 Spring 2019

features



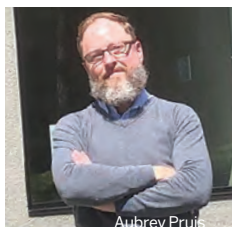
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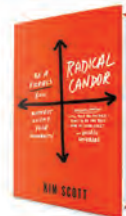


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The REALTOR® AE editorial board reviews each issue and provides critical feedback, proposes story ideas, and stays in touch with fellow AEs nationwide to scout out new programs and

products to share with the AE community. To join the editorial board, write an article, or contribute information, email Carolyn Schwaar, editor, REALTOR® AE magazine, cschwaar@realtors.org.

This Year, Be an Advocacy Superstar



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

I hate to wax nostalgic, but I miss the days when junk mail via the good ol' U.S. Postal Service overfilled my wooden inbox. Other than the occasional paper cut or annoying chain letter, there was little chance that anything bad could happen from my daily delivery. Today, phishing, hacking, misinformation, and a whole host of other nefarious activities befall us with a single errant click of the mouse to one of our 10,000 daily emails. In this edition, we will help you understand how to keep your inbox from turning into a minefield.

I will leave the rest of this discussion on tech-related safety to the experts who have filled these pages with great information. I'll turn my attention now to the REALTORS® Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo in May.

While in Washington, D.C., our focus will turn to the key national issues that affect every REALTOR®. As AEs, we need at least a baseline understanding of these issues, too. Flood insurance reauthorization, tax reform, government-sponsored enterprise reform, and infrastructure spending, for example, are included on our collective advocacy menu.

I urge you to take some time in Washington to learn more about one or more of the NAR priorities. Bright and early at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday, May 15, NAR will host the briefing on federal issue priorities. After picking up some knowledge at the briefing, you can dazzle your members during your Hill visits later that day.

In most parts of the country, 2019 is a local election year. You may want to think of the NAR meetings as the unofficial kickoff for your campaign program. Although national issues such as flood insurance gain a lot of headlines, the actions taken by your local municipalities can have a major impact on real estate and our members' business practices. Local communities are facing issues including rent control, restrictive zoning, and even more sign ordinances.

Candidate forums and one-on-one interviews are effective ways to meet with and evaluate current and future lawmakers, but they take time to organize. Please do not be intimidated if advocacy has not been your main strength as an AE. We must all

recognize our responsibility to have at least a functioning knowledge of the REALTOR® role in shaping national, state, and local policies. Thankfully, there is a wealth of information at nar.realtor/political-advocacy/ state-local-advocacy to help refine what you are doing or help get you started.

RPAC celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and you'll hear a lot about it in D.C. This presents a great opportunity to build a fundraising program around the half-century that REALTORS® have put their money where their advocacy is. In my state, we have learned that the best way to raise RPAC investments is to highlight the fun in fundraising. In 1969, 50 years ago, man first walked on the moon and Woodstock would become a happening, not just a sleepy town in New York. There's got to be some

good fodder there for creative, fun, and most importantly, lucrative events!

There's a saying that goes: "If real estate is your passion, politics is your business." This must apply to the entire AE community just as it does to every REALTOR®. Let's use the RPAC 50th as a springboard for revitalizing our political might.



New York State Association of REALTORS®' leadership meeting with U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer this year in the N.Y. state capitol.



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Above: The “That’s Who We R” TV commercial airing during popular programs including “The Big Bang Theory” and “Last Man Standing,” and on networks including MSNBC, CNN, and Fox News.

Join the “That’s Who We R” Campaign

State and local associations are a key element in the new National Association of REALTORS® “That’s Who We R” consumer advertising campaign, which distinguishes REALTORS® from other real estate agents. By using the free campaign materials—including video, audio, print, digital ads, and social posts—in your local communication channels, you can further the reach of the campaign. Customize the materials with your logo and incorporate the slogan into your existing outreach efforts.

Through this campaign, NAR aims to demonstrate to consumers the value REALTORS® bring to the real estate transaction and beyond—in their communities, in their understanding of local markets, and in their influence on public policies that encourage and facilitate real property transfer and ownership.

NAR’s Consumer Advertising Campaign ensures that the REALTOR® brand remains front and center with consumers through a comprehensive, multichannel strategy to reach consumers and REALTORS® wherever they are, including on online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram; digital channels Hulu, Amazon, and Roku; and traditional channels including television, radio, and print.

Also encourage your members to share the “That’s Who We R” campaign materials (available at nar.realtor/thats-who-we-r/campaign-materials) on their channels.

▶ “That’s Who We R” logo apparel, lapel pins, hats, and other items available in the REALTOR® Team Store at narteamstore.realtor/ThatsWhoWeRProducts.



Help Celebrate REALTORS® Who Give Back

When your association shares the story of a member who gives back to the community through charity work, champions a worthy cause, or makes a difference in the lives of those in need, all REALTORS® share in that positive spotlight. Whether it’s promoting the members in your own association or sharing the stories of the NAR Good Neighbor Awards winners through your communication channels, the result is a greater consumer recognition that REALTORS® do more than sell houses.

In fact, nearly 70 percent of REALTORS® volunteer in their community each month, according to the recent NAR Community Aid and Real Estate report.

The new Good Neighbor Facebook page makes it easy to share stories with your social media audience. Simply like the page at facebook.com/RealtorGoodNeighbors and share uplifting content. Also, visit the Good Neighbor website for free ads, posts, and prewritten stories to promote the May 10 application deadline. Go to nar.realtor/gna, scroll down, and then click “Media Kit.”

This year marks the 20th year of NAR’s Good Neighbor Awards, which honor REALTOR® achievement not in sales but for making an extraordinary impact through volunteer work. Winners’ stories generate considerable media attention, which benefits the cause with additional donations, volunteers, and support.

2010 Good Neighbor Wendy Rocca, a Keller Williams Realty broker in Newton, Mass., founded Operation American Soldier,



2010 Good Neighbor winners John and Wendy Rocca.



which has shipped 35,000 care packages to American troops deployed overseas. “Without the Good Neighbor Awards, we would still be packing boxes from our home, if we had been able to continue at all,” she says. “The award helped us secure a location and receive donations from REALTORS® and lenders around the country. NAR’s Good Neighbor Awards was the catalyst for everything we have accomplished.”

In 20 years, the Good Neighbor Awards has granted \$1.3 million to more than 200 nonprofits. The positive effects of Good Neighbor Award entrants have been felt in 40 states, Puerto Rico, and 15 countries around the world. More than 4,000 REALTORS® have applied for NAR’s Good Neighbor Awards, and an increasing number of state and local REALTOR® associations recognize their own winners.

Highlighting Good Neighbor stories reminds members and the public of how REALTORS® make a positive difference every day, says 2013 Good Neighbor Kristina Rhodes, at F.C. Tucker Emge, REALTORS®, Newburgh, Ind., who founded a chapter of Make-A-Wish and chairs the Good Neighbor Society networking group.

Join the group of local and state associations with their own Good Neighbor program to spotlight your REALTORS® who make a difference. Go to nar.realtor/gna and click “Launch” to access the online Good Neighbor starter kits.

The Good Neighbor Awards is funded by primary sponsor realtor.com® and Wells Fargo Home Lending. Questions? Contact Sara Geimer at sgeimer@realtors.org.

NAR Seeks to Dismiss Antitrust Lawsuit

Two recently filed class-action antitrust lawsuits against the National Association of REALTORS® and several major real estate franchisors allege falsely that consumers have no ability to negotiate commissions with real estate professionals, says Katie Johnson, NAR’s general counsel and chief member experience officer.

In *Moerhl v. National Association of REALTORS®, Realty Holdings, HomeServices of America, RE/MAX and Keller Williams* (and another class action lawsuit with similar claims having Sawbill Strategic, Inc. as the plaintiff), home sellers who listed their properties on several multiple listing services are claiming that NAR’s MLS policies—which require all participants to cooperate with and compensate other participants—is a violation of antitrust law.

“In fact, the commission offered to the buyer’s broker is not at all determined by NAR or the MLS,” says Johnson. “And, contrary to what the class action law firms allege, the commission is subject to negotiation.”

At the AE Institute in April, Johnson told the gathering of association leaders that NAR is preparing a motion to dismiss the Moerhl suit. She encouraged AEs to educate members on the issue so that they can have open conversations with their clients, and remind members of the importance of having buyers representative agreements with clients.

“The MLS has been around for well over 100 years and has contributed to an orderly and efficient marketplace,” says Johnson. “We are going to aggressively defend ourselves, along with the rights that enable home buyers and sellers to continue to have access to a highly efficient market.”

Look to The Hub for frequently updated FAQs and statements regarding the progress of the case. Visit thehub.realtor and search for “class-action antitrust.”

Advocacy in Action in Illinois

Attempting to bridge a \$1.2 million hole in its budget, the city council of Peoria, Ill., planned to impose a new fee on owners of all residential and commercial property. The proposed fee, which was expected to increase over time with no end in sight, was not going to get by the Peoria Association of REALTORS® without a fight. With help from the state association and the REALTOR® Party, the REALTORS®

used Advocacy Everywhere and other measures to call voters’ attention to the threat and encourage calls of opposition to the city council. Overwhelmed by the volume, the Council agreed to a compromise.

The fee passed, but in a reduced version of the original proposal: The fee itself was lowered, and a sunset clause limited the duration to three years. Says Hancock, “We’re glad for the compromise. More than that, we really raised awareness among voters in the community. Our REALTORS® saw the advocacy system at work; the public saw REALTORS® in action; and elected leadership experienced the impact of the REALTOR® Party collaborative efforts. That’s a big win.”



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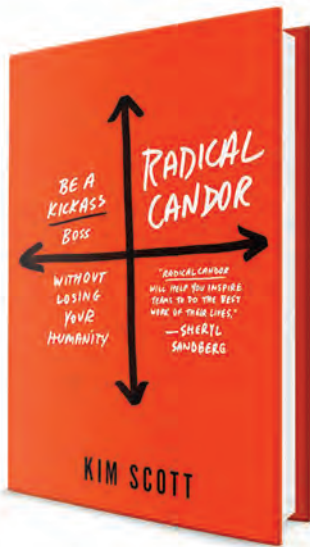
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◁ If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

— Kim Scott, *Radical Candor: Be a Kickass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity*

Telling People What to Do Does Not Work

Reader: Rob Olmstead, finance director, Pinellas REALTOR® Organization, Fla.

You might ask what a book by Kim Malone Scott—a former manager at Google with stints at Apple, Twitter, and Dropbox—has to do with running a REALTOR® association. Well, as it turns out, *Radical Candor: How to Be a Kickass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity*, is all about leading and inspiring teams of people to accomplish goals but still letting them take the spotlight. Sound familiar?

Scott shares principles that apply to team leaders in general and transfer handily to the unique teams of staff and volunteers working within REALTOR® associations. Scott's missteps as a manager and lessons learned lead her to believe that bosses—AEs—have three core areas of responsibility when it comes to managing people: 1) provide guidance through praise and constructive criticism; 2) promote team-building by finding and keeping the right people; and 3) drive results that optimize the team's output.

What appealed to me most about *Radical Candor* is its basic driving philosophy that the most effective leadership occurs when the bosses—we AEs—care deeply for those

on our team and challenge them directly to produce quality work. Without deeply caring for the team, direct challenges become “obnoxious aggression,” Scott says. Without direct challenges to produce quality work, caring deeply becomes harmful empathy. In other words, if our staff, leaders, and volunteers don't believe that we are deeply invested in their success and that we deeply appreciate their effort, we seem dictatorial or unappreciative when we ask them to produce. On the other hand, if we show we care but avoid directly challenging a leader to produce—and do the work ourselves—we fail to support their development.

A REALTOR® association I was with several years ago held a fundraiser in which one volunteer went above and beyond in securing donations and exceeding the goal. The volunteer coordinator at the time offered no recognition, and that volunteer never returned.

The need for caring deeply increases exponentially when working with volunteers because fulfillment means more to them than knowing they are serving a worthy cause. Even for your staff members—who are paid for their efforts—meaning and fulfillment can wear thin without the psychological boost of clear direction and constructive criticism.

“Being radically candid means being more specific and sincere with praise and being more kind and clear with criticism,” says Scott.

I recommend making *Radical Candor* required reading for all team leaders who want to improve themselves, foster a healthier work environment, and provide more effective guidance.

We'll Come to You

NAR's **Executive Outreach Program** will log more than a hundred outreach visits to state and local association events this year.

Of the National Association of REALTORS® executives available to attend and present at state and local association events, Chief Economist Lawrence Yun is the most requested. The Executive Outreach Program, designed to strengthen relationships between NAR and local and state associations and MLSs, launched in early 2018.

“Dr. Yun was so wonderful. What a great resource for our members,” says Claire Hayden, director of member programs and events at the Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS®, S.C. “The local paper wrote a fantastic article with the information Dr. Yun shared at our event.”

Dozens of NAR staff subject matter experts, including Nobu Hata, director of industry outreach and engagement; and Katie Johnson, general counsel and chief member experience officer, are available to bring insights and news to local association meetings, inaugurations, conferences, and other events.

“The REALTOR® leaders in our state were delighted with Katie Johnson's participation and very impressed that NAR would provide such personalized support for our association leaders from such a knowledgeable and high-ranking NAR staff member,” says Anne Rendle, RCE, CEO of the Delaware Association of REALTORS®.

All state and local associations and MLSs can request an NAR representative to attend a live meeting (or present via teleconference).

To access the visit request form and the list of NAR staff region representatives, go to nar.realtor and search for “executive outreach program.”

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH RECOGNITION SPOTLIGHT

Greater Northwest Indiana's Community Outreach Triumphs

All REALTOR® associations want to make their community a better place to live and position themselves as leaders in their community. This ambition takes time, money, and vision, and it happens to be among the 2019 strategic priorities of NAR President John Smaby.

Many AEs turn to NAR's REALTOR® Party Community Outreach programs, which provide funding, resources, and technical assistance to those who are committed to effective community leadership. Some associations and their staff not only take on this challenge but also go above and beyond expectations.

Joseph Wszolek, chief operating officer of the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS®, consistently leverages NAR outreach programs, including placemaking grants, housing opportunity grants, diversity grants, smart growth action grants, and the Land Use Initiative, to position his association as a leader in its community.

"Joe gets community outreach and understands the benefit community engagement brings to the REALTOR® community," says Holly Moskerintz, NAR's community outreach programs manager. "He knows the value in reaching out to stakeholders in the communities within [the association's] jurisdiction to enhance local housing, transportation, and quality of life."

Some of the association's recent projects include transforming an undevelopable wetland into an outdoor destination with trails, a

bird sanctuary, and a gazebo; supporting the redevelopment of a town in its jurisdiction into a walkable community; joining with community leaders to explore ways to increase access to affordable housing; partnering with a county parks board to update its five-year master plan; and holding an event to address the issue of vacant, abandoned, and problem properties in Northwest Indiana.

A major advocacy success came as the result of the Greater Northwest Indiana Association taking the lead to defeat a proposed commercial zoning regulation that would artificially restrict free enterprise.

"[The association] is committed to advocacy every day on behalf of our members,"

says Peter Novak, CEO. "It is one of the core missions of our association. So we make it a point to learn about our communities, including the elected officials who run them. We learned a long time ago that the best way to establish a relationship with our community leaders was to try to work with them when we aren't asking for something, so that when we do need something,

they will already know who we are and what we're about. By tapping into NAR's community outreach programs, we've been able to educate, advocate, and physically make improvements to our communities."

The Greater Northwest Indiana Association represents almost 2,500 members in six counties and more than 50 communities.

A wide range of projects came to fruition with help from NAR staff, the association's



The Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS® used NAR grants to transform this undevelopable wetland into an outdoor destination with trails, a bird sanctuary, and a gazebo. Photo: Joe Wszolek

memberships, relationships with elected officials, and various community connections to other networking contacts. "NAR's numerous community outreach programs were created by REALTORS®, for REALTORS®, to give us added opportunities to do so much for our communities," says Wszolek. "With the help of NAR staff, we've used these programs to accomplish what otherwise would have been left undone. As we move forward, we will continue to exemplify that REALTORS® do more than just open the front door."

From building strong communities to addressing local community challenges to advocating for public policies that protect property interests and promote a vibrant business environment, the Greater Northwest Indiana Association is a community outreach success story.

How they did it: Follow the lead of the GNIAR by addressing issues and challenges in your community. Take advantage of these NAR Community Outreach programs (at realtorparty.realtor), which also meet the Core Standards advocacy requirement.

- Transforming Neighborhoods Program
- Land Use Initiative
- Diversity grants
- Placemaking grants
- Smart Growth grants

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COMMUNITY PROGRESS

The Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS® used NAR grants to host this event to address the issue of local vacant, abandoned, and problem properties.



REALTOR® ASSOCIATIONS

HACKED

How to stay safe and fight back against cyberthreats.

Even before the Louisiana Association of REALTORS® was hacked in February, its leaders were shopping for cybersecurity insurance as a member benefit and crafting education for agents on preventing and responding to cyberthreats.

“It’s top of mind for everyone in the real estate industry right now,” says Amy Fennell, the association’s communications director. “We’re seeing more awareness among members about cybersecurity, but it’s not about just having insurance coverage, it’s also cyberdefense and what you’re doing to protect yourself.”

When hacking happens

Fennell was the first to notice the suspicious

email that appeared to come from within the association’s network from a staff person who left the organization a year before. It included an attachment and a message that read: Warning. Please see attachment.

“I alerted our outside tech service provider immediately and they were able to shut down that email account and scan our network for any breaches,” says Fennell. Fortunately, the incident was caught in time and didn’t cause any damage. “I imagine if I had opened the attachment it would have launched some sort of virus or malware.”

Potentially, the malware could have been sent out to thousands of members whose email addresses were in this former staff member’s account. When opened, the attachments could have

launched a spyware app on members' computers and monitored all of their email traffic, waiting for the time when a transaction was about to close. At just the right time, the criminal could have sent buyers an email with instructions on where to wire closing funds. Fortunately, this didn't happen in Louisiana, but it has happened in dozens of cases nationwide.

Fennell's tech providers said the affected email account was brute-force hacked from outside of the association's Office 365 network. Brute-force hacking, which accounts for the vast majority of data breaches, is an automated trial-and-error method used to guess passwords until it gets one right.

The criminals encrypted everything ... and demanded a ransom

The Anne Arundel Association of REALTORS®' three-week, all-out battle against cybercrime started with one hacked password. "It's was a nightmare," says CEO Bob Johnston, RCE, e-PRO. The criminals got in and encrypted all of the association's files and all of its backups. They demanded a one-bitcoin ransom.

"When something like this happens, you have no idea what to do," says Johnston. "Who do you call? How do I pay in bitcoin?"

Johnston notified his tech support provider, who shut down all the infected machines and took a picture of the hard drives and servers—which turned out later to be a vital step. But recovering any data was futile.

The only component of normal association operations that were up and running was the RAMCO membership system, because it's cloud-based, Johnston says. Through RAMCO, the National Association of REALTORS® learned of the incident and reached out to Johnston with good news.

"NAR told me I had cyberinsurance under the umbrella errors and omissions insurance," says Johnston. "The insurance company, Chubb, put me in touch with a forensic IT company [Kivu Consulting] and law firm [Mullen Coughlin] that specialize in data breaches."

After an attack, cybercrime victims have a legal duty in most states to assess what information was accessed or stolen and, if necessary, notify anyone affected. Kivu Consulting assessed the breach and determined—from the pictures of the hard drives and servers—that no personal identifying information was accessed, saving the association from having to notify members. Next, the insurance company paid the 1 bitcoin—or \$16,000—ransom. The price tag for the entire ordeal would have been more than \$90,000, Johnston estimates. Instead, he paid only the \$3,000 insurance deductible.

Once Johnston got back nearly all his data, he instituted

significant changes to the association's IT infrastructure and data security practices, including new hardware, software, and outside IT consultants.

Cyberattacks: Not if, but when

When a similar encrypting ransomware attack hit the 5,700-member Bay East Association of REALTORS®, Calif., in March 2018, the association was prepared, says CEO Tricia Thomas, RCE.

"Fortunately, we had set up a separate server for our accounting systems, another for our membership system, another for our MLS files, and a fourth for our marketing and video files, so these were unaffected by the malware that hit our two main servers," says Thomas.

The infection started when an employee opened a link in a resume received from Craigslist. It was quickly contained by the association's outside IT services. But, taking no chances, the IT pros replaced the hard drives on infected computers, wiped the infected servers clean, removed all files, and scanned all systems to rule out additional viruses hiding.

Because the association's data was backed up with two different offsite backup services, Carbonite in Boston and Altaro in Europe, Thomas did not need to pay the ransom to restore her files.

"When something like this happens, you have no idea what to do. Who do you call? How do I pay in bitcoin?"

— Bob Johnston, CEO,
Anne Arundel Association of REALTORS®

"We then contacted NAR's cybercrime insurance carrier because we wanted some peace of mind that the encrypted files weren't hiding other viruses," says Thomas. "We also wanted to determine that PII [personally identifying information] hadn't been stolen by the attackers." It hadn't.

As the Bay East incident illustrates, no matter how well-prepared you are, it may be only a matter of time before your association faces an attack.

"Make your best effort to prepare your association now," says Thomas. "Educate your staff about cybersecurity best practices, have at least two means of backing up your data on the most frequent schedule possible, and find out what it takes to get your data restored in a worst-case scenario."

Thomas has also hired a new outside IT firm that installed



A recent password manager application class at the Dan River Region Association of REALTORS®, Va.

deep-learning malware detection in conjunction with other virus protection software, moved all servers to the cloud, and regularly trains staff on the latest cybersecurity best practices.

Don't take chances

Although association executive Erica Slosek at the 127-member Dan River Region Association of REALTORS®, Va., has not had a hacking incident, she isn't taking any chances. "I try to be very vigilant against cyberthreats by requiring staff to use [password manager] Lastpass Teams and two-factor authentication using an app called Duo," she says.

Slosek also has a firewall installed on all association computers. Firewall solutions for small business are available as either software or hardware (with software components). Windows and Mac operating systems have firewalls built in.

"I highly advise associations to get an outside security audit by someone who is not aiming to sell them something," says Johnston. "Our audit found all sorts of errors our previous IT vendor had made. I'm planning an annual security audit done by an outside firm."

Johnston says he feels more secure now that his association uses Office 365 with daily backups to Microsoft's OneDrive and staff members have changed their passwords. "One of the things that the forensics company said is that if our admin password had been 15 characters long instead of seven, they wouldn't have been able to break in."

Cyberthreat awareness for members

In addition to beefing up their own cybersecurity practices and infrastructure, these associations are sharing their lessons learned with their members and offering more education and resources on how members can protect their data.

"We're planning to be more proactive on educating members on the things that they need to be doing to prevent cyberattacks," says Fennell. "Real estate is built on reputation, so if it gets out there that a firm had a data breach, the cost is not just in the actual damages but in the lost business due to damaged reputation."

This summer, the Louisiana Association is planning a series of brokerage outreach events on cybersecurity and how to more proactively defend against attacks.

The Bay East Association offers members free virus scans; that can be done remotely or members can

bring in their laptops. It's the association's most popular computer service, Thomas says. Cybercrime prevention education, however, isn't very popular. "We hired a national speaker to do specialized training on cybersecurity specific to brokers, but the turnout was really low. I think REALTORS® are focused on the cyberthreats involved in real estate transactions, and not as focused on how cyberattacks can immobilize their company infrastructure."

After their hacking and ransomware experience, the 860-member Southwest Indiana Association of REALTORS® shared its story with members as a cautionary tale. "We emailed a notice to our members detailing the event and reminding them of the importance of having their systems backed up," says CEO Kim Seibert, RCE, e-PRO®. Fortunately, the association wasn't forced to pay the ransom to retrieve its files because all data was backed up remotely, which Seibert recommends all members do. Two months after the hacking, the association hosted a digital security luncheon for members with a certified ethical hacker and defense architect who specializes in network security and business security countermeasures. The speakers told members that they are more vulnerable to an attack than they realize and advised them to avoid using public Wi-Fi networks and free email accounts, such as Gmail, yahoo, AOL, and hotmail.

Lance Evans, RCE, CEO at the 325-member Jefferson-Lewis Board of REALTORS®, N.Y., also chose to share his association's ransomware attack story with members. "My advice to them is back up, back up, and back up again, remotely," says Evans, who also used cyberinsurance obtained through NAR to pay the ransom for the return of his association files after even the backup became encrypted. "We certainly have passed on our lessons learned to our members, and we also alert them to the newest schemes and scams.

When You Suspect an Attack, Call!
 All associations and MLSs are insured against a cyberattack through the NAR Insurance Program. The policy includes a crisis hotline (800-817-2665) for immediate assistance when you suspect an attack, response coaches to help you take the right steps, and response specialists to assist with public relations, business interruption, and data recovery. For details, contact Finley Maxson at fmaxson@realtors.org.

"I'd advise all associations to invest in good security software, have a strong firewall, and build a good relationship with a local outside tech company," says Evans. "And remember, if you are suspicious, don't click. No prince is going to reach out to you to give you money."

—by Carolyn Schwaar



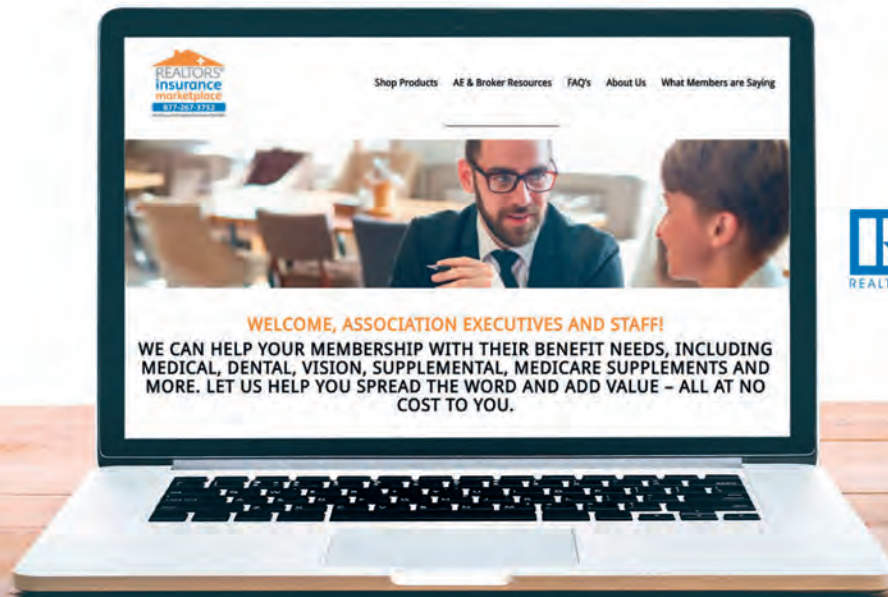
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6 Tips to Launch a Tech Offering

From safety apps to transaction management systems, the membership benefits you offer can fall flat without a finely tuned launch plan for maximum member adoption.

Tip 1: Make sure you're launching the right product

Months before the TransactionDesk platform launched to members of Arizona REALTORS® as their newest membership benefit in March, committee members were busy evaluating scores of products looking for the right fit.

"The ease of use, the integrated pieces of the platform, and the 24/7 support were some of the factors that led the committees to their conclusion," says Matt Roberts, the association's communications manager.

Although staff was included in the evaluation process, they did not have any say in the selection of the new platform, says Roberts. The association's Business Services & Technology and Risk Management committees conducted the reviews and focus-group testing to ensure it was a member-led decision.

Now, Roberts' job is to make sure every member not only knows about Transaction Desk but learns how to make the most of it in

their business.

"After the initial announcement, we began a soft launch introducing the program via our e-newsletter to our members, supporting it with social media and a couple of static webpages that go into detail about the program," he says.

Live training at the association's state convention, bolstered by a series of webinars, more live classes, and short videos, are expected to further drive product adoption.

So far, the rollout has been a success, says Roberts. "The soft launch prompted about 400 members to access the system and we have not had any negative responses from those who have logged in and played with the system."

Tip 2. Draw out the suspense for as long as you can

After her board of directors approved the safety and lead intelligence app Forewarn as a new membership benefit in February, Mea-

gan O'Leary, communications and member services director at the Northwest Montana Association of REALTORS®, had only a month to come up with a plan to launch the product to members.

"To create a buzz, we started a campaign using our Facebook page, Instagram, and e-newsletter, that told members a major benefit was launching soon and to stay tuned for an email from our executive officer," says O'Leary.

The tactic has been seen in nearly every successful Apple product launch; you drop clues about how your product will dramatically benefit members' business but be sure not to disclose complete spoilers. Give them just enough information to want more and pay attention.

"Later, we announced that the benefit was Forewarn, and within the first nine days, we had 18.2 percent of our members set up their Forewarn account — we were anticipating around 15 percent," says O'Leary.

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Activepipe, a real estate-focused marketing automation platform, was part of the National Association of REALTORS®' Second Century Ventures 2018 REach® accelerator program. ▶

Tip 3. Put the focus on the members, not the products

O'Leary not only shared videos, photos, and text with details about the benefits of the product, she also formulated her communications to highlight why the association and its leaders were excited to provide this membership benefit, which was clearly to keep members safe.

Rather than focus on the product and its features—or how great the association was to deliver this valuable benefit—O'Leary kept the focus on the members and how this new product could make their lives better.

"We hope this product's adoption continues to grow through consistent communications and answering inquiries about the app," she says.

Tip 4. Turn your product launch into an event

Columbus REALTORS® primed members for the release of its newest tech membership benefit, Homesnap, a national home search platform, by launching a contest that culminated in mass live-training events. "The Columbus Homesnap Challenge" was designed to build excitement about the launch and get members to sign up for the training events by earning points and chances to win prizes," says Marqué Bressler, the association's communication director.

To boost the excitement over the event, the association took to Facebook to live-stream one of the training sessions and recorded several video testimonials to post on social media.

Bressler and her team crafted a comprehensive Homesnap communication strategy detailing which channel would deliver which message and when. "We determined that it was critical to get Homesnap up and running with member buy-in quickly," she says.

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New Real Estate Tech on the Horizon

To keep up with the cutting-edge products, services, and concepts in real estate technology, look no further than the National Association of REALTORS® technology incubator, REach®, which is backed by Second Century Ventures, NAR's strategic investment arm.

"Through NAR's Second Century Ventures and REach® investments, we are able to leverage world-class technology and resources that help us keep pace with evolving technology but also stay focused on what we do best—helping make REALTORS® more successful and profitable," says NAR CEO Bob Goldberg. The REach class of 2018 included technology innovators looking to fine-tune products that automate email marketing, virtually stage homes, streamline transaction coordination, track agents' financial performance, and aggregate ibuyer offers.

New for 2019, NAR launched REach® Commercial, a commercial real estate technology accelerator. Learn more about the tech companies selected to participate at the REALTORS® Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo in Washington, D.C., this May.

And it worked. More than 1,800 members signed up for the Homesnap training events, and 27.7 percent of members registered on the platform in the first week.

Tip 5: Get opinion leaders on board early to support your product

The early adopters of your tech products set the stage for more members to follow. Ask the savviest and most admired tech users within your membership to not only contribute to the selection of new technology-based member services but also help promote them. A confident and adept user will blaze the trail for other members to follow — especially when it comes to using a tool that's unfamiliar and

may change the way members operate.

Tip 6: Create a product explainer video

Video messages are more popular today than ever, so a video how-to is a great idea to boost adoption—especially with new technology tools that can often be hard to explain. To boost member understanding of Realtors Property Resource® when it launched—and still today—the National Association of REALTORS® relied on videos. From explainer videos and tutorials to video testimonials and recorded webinars, how to use RPR's features and functions and its overall business value are said best with video.

—by Carolyn Schwaar



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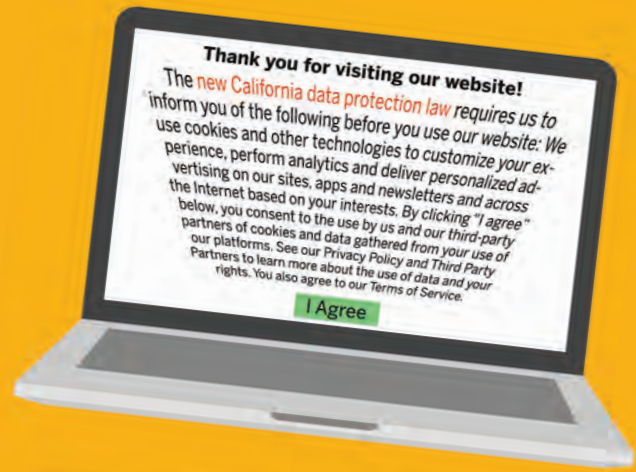
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Data Privacy Duties

California's new data security legislation could become the norm nationwide.



Pending online data privacy rules in California require website operators to notify visitors (and obtain their consent) when their identifying information is being captured and explain what that information will be used for.

The new California data privacy law that addresses growing concerns over how online companies are using people's personal information may be the beginning of a nationwide trend that could also affect REALTOR® associations, MLSs, and brokerages. Eight other states are using the law as a model for their own legislation, and your REALTOR® associations and MLS may need to change some practices when these laws take effect.

What the California Consumer Privacy Act does

The California Consumer Privacy Act, which was based on the European version called GDPR, goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2020. It defines personal information very broadly and requires certain disclosures to consumers about how their personal data is collected and used. Not all businesses will need to comply with the law, and there's also a non-profit exemption. Although this law is limited to the personal data of California residents, anyone who collects the information from California residents outside of the state may need to comply as well.

Here's an overview designed to help AEs in California and nationwide get an idea of what their data privacy policies, procedures, and practices may look like in the near future.

What's considered personal

"Personal information" has a broad definition under California law and includes anything that identifies, describes, or is capable of being associated with a particular consumer or household and is not limited to electronic data. For example, if you collect

any names, property addresses, or even IP addresses using cookies or signup forms on your website or public-facing MLS, you'll need to comply with the consumer disclosures in the law.

Who has to comply

The California law will apply only to businesses that fall into the following categories:

- Organized as a for-profit
- Does business in California
- Collects personal information
- Determines how the information collected is processed and for what reason

Note that doing business in California is not limited to those businesses physically in the state; it will also cover businesses that interact with California residents—think Amazon, Netflix, Zillow, and Redfin.

If the business has the above elements, then the law applies if it meets any of the following criteria: It 1) has gross revenue of more than \$25 million; 2) derives half its revenue from the sale of consumer data; or 3) buys, sells, shares, or receives for its commercial purposes the personal information of 50,000 or more consumers, households, or devices.

Although many associations and MLSs would not appear to meet the above categories, large MLSs will need to consider the personal information they have about California residents. For example, many MLSs purchase or receive data about properties that may include those owned by

California residents.

Although the California law exempts nonprofits from compliance, there is an important caveat for nonprofit REALTOR® associations: If a nonprofit, such as a REALTOR® association, controls and shares branding with a for-profit subsidiary that needs to comply with the law—an MLS, for example—then the nonprofit entity may lose its exemption and need to comply with the law. "Common branding" is a shared name, service mark, or trademark.

How to comply

To comply with the California privacy law, businesses must post privacy policies and respond to consumers' requests to have their data deleted, among other duties. Businesses that not only collect but also sell personal information have additional procedures to follow.

We've only touched upon the many requirements of the privacy law here. As this law and others like it become more popular, look to NAR to provide associations and MLSs with detailed compliance guidance.



Finley Maxson is a senior counsel at the National Association of REALTORS®. Contact him at 312-329-8381 or fmaxson@realtors.org.

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Set Your Limits and Soar

An important first-year goal should be updating your policies with well-defined boundaries in mind.

When you were a new association executive, you probably spent your first several months on the job trying to define your duties and your role in the organization. No doubt, your leadership, volunteers, members, and affiliates all had thoughts on the matter.

In my first year as AE of the Santa Ynez Valley Association of REALTORS® in California, I aimed to provide outstanding customer service in everything I did. I spent a lot of time juggling the many hats I had to wear and came across a strategy that helped me better define my responsibilities.

I found it essential to define what my duties were not and draw a clear boundary line between my role and what others thought my role should be. This isn't a one-time exercise. I continue to establish with new leaders and new members, and under new circumstances, what is and is not my job. In my experience, setting clear boundaries is the best way to ensure that you'll be successful.

One of my go-to books on this topic is *Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being Ridiculously in Charge*, by Henry Cloud. Cloud describes boundaries this way: "Boundaries are made up of two essential things: what you create and what you allow. A boundary is a property line. It defines where your property begins and ends. If you think about your home, on your property, you can define what is going to happen there and what is not. You are 'ridiculously in charge' of the vision."

So, how do you apply this vision to your REALTOR® association?

Articulating boundaries is an important step. Back up your written documents by verbally confirming the policy. For example, when I

recently had a REALTOR® call me to help her with renewing her real estate license, I said, "I would love to help you, but, since I am not a licensed agent, I would hate to advise you incorrectly. You really should reach out to your office manager or broker." She thanked me for my response. Yes, I could have taken 15 or 20 minutes to outline the steps she needed to take, but I found that if I ignore or overstep my own boundaries, it will cause more work and stress in the long run. What other questions and issues might this member come to me with next?

Establish boundaries for members

There's no end to the things that members want you to fix for them. Many of these things have nothing to do with your association. Learn where to draw the line. If a member calls to complain about another member's property signage, for example, don't get in the middle. Direct the member to where he or she can find the relevant sign ordinance and suggest contacting the other agent. You are not the sign police, but you can offer resources.

Establish boundaries for affiliates

Affiliates and sponsors are valuable parts of the association ecosystem, but they need clear limits. I've seen AEs and their staff become burdened with organizing affiliates' "lunch and learn" events for members when the affiliates themselves should be taking on the bulk of the work. Taking on every detail will pull you away from other priorities and place the blame squarely on you if things don't go as planned. Detail exactly what you will and won't do, and let your affiliates take ownership of their own events.

Establish boundaries for volunteers

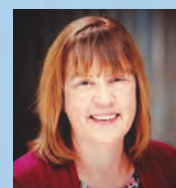
Committees are essential to running your organization, and here is a place to set boundaries and let others take ownership. For example, my association is starting a Young Professionals Network. I assembled a group of interested members to brainstorm and advised them on the formation process, but I firmly established my role as one of mentorship and encouragement. The YPN members will identify their leaders and goals.

Establish boundaries for leadership

From one year to the next, AEs can find themselves either encouraging leaders to step up and take the reins or discouraging them from overstepping their positions. Establishing clear duties in written documents and building a culture of defined roles at your association can stem the wide swings in leadership behavior and curb power struggles. If a board member, for example, asks you for details on employee pay or benefits (information that is clearly out of bounds), written restrictions on disclosing sensitive information will ensure that you are protected legally. Updated written policies in your employee handbook, job descriptions, and committee and board descriptions will provide you with the backup to a verbal conversation about the role of leadership at your association.

Boundaries are not a wall you build once; they are adaptable but still need to be firm. For a new AE, setting limits early on will be key to the long-term success of your organization.

Find resources for setting boundaries, such as the "President/Chief Staff Executive Task List," at nar.realtor.



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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Establish No-Stress Evaluations

Anchor performance reviews to your job description and your association's strategic plan for a smoother annual process.

The recent Core Standard requirement that all AEs have an annual performance review generated a lot of discussion and change in my state of Maryland and around the country. I guided more than half of the 16 presidents of our local associations last year through AE performance reviews and helped them craft job descriptions and employment contracts. Four associations even used the process to replace the incumbent AE and hire a new one.

The typical REALTOR® association president serves a one-year term, is a full-time business person, and has no training in human resources, so it's unfair to expect him or her to know how to conduct performance reviews. I fielded many very basic questions from presidents, such as who conducts the review, when it's conducted, if there is a form, and how salary and bonus decisions

figure into the process. There was a palpable sense of being overwhelmed, and I wanted to help.

I developed a set of resources, including NAR's "HR Toolkit for Association Leadership," and explained the process for conducting a performance review. Although associations vary in size and means, a few elements are universal—the main one being that the basis for an AE's evaluation has to be his or her job description and the association's strategic plan.

The job description details the AE's responsibilities, and the strategic plan (required by the Core Standards) sets out the goals the AE is expected to guide the association toward. Ultimately, a review will evaluate how well the AE performed the functions specified in the job description and facilitated the realization of the goals established in the strategic plan.

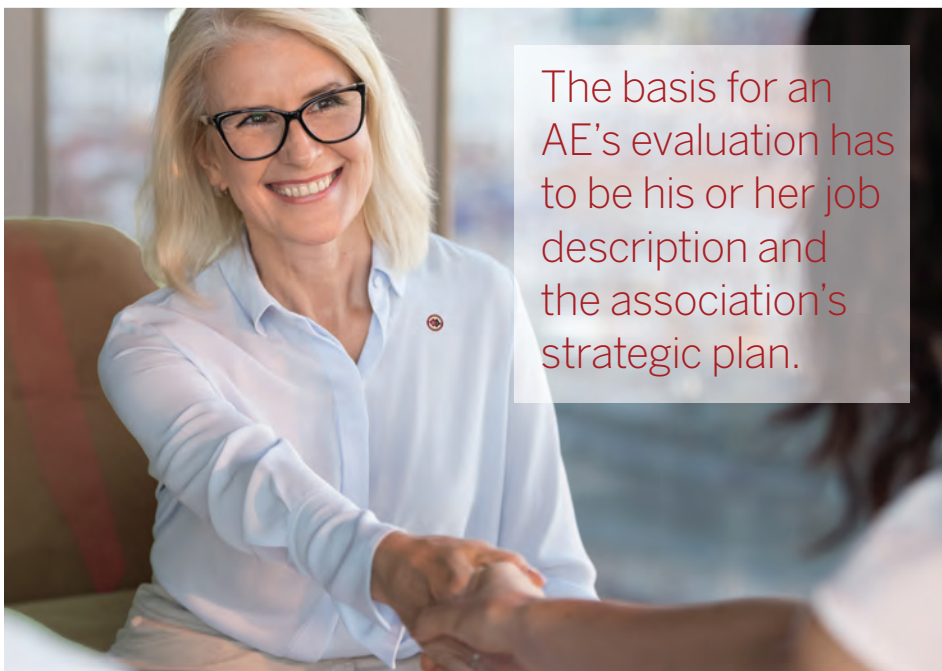
I helped facilitate 12 of the 16 local association strategic plans, so I knew a clear plan wasn't the problem. Unfortunately, at most associations, there was no job description or employment contract, and no history or established process for a review. Some associations had never conducted a review of the incumbent AE. They were starting from scratch.

The AE Job Description

For the boards hiring a new AE last year, it was a great time to develop a job description as an element of the search. I recommended that the leaders look at the AE job board (nar.realtor/ae-jobs) for good examples of AE job responsibilities along with the "Toolkit for Recruiting Association Executives" (search nar.realtor). There's no one-size-fits-all answer, but there were enough commonalities in the job descriptions to guide us.

Every job description should contain these elements: job title and summary, competencies (education, experience, etc.), key roles and responsibilities, performance expectations, and compensation and benefits. A good place to start is defining what every REALTOR® AE is responsible for, such as advocacy, governance, operations, strategic planning, financial and personnel management, and internal and external relations, and then build from there. Job descriptions should incorporate enough detail so the AE knows what the job is, but not so specific that as the job evolves, it is no longer accurate. Of course, we shouldn't be afraid of updating any job description as needed.

When presidents were unclear about which duties were their responsibility—some asked about staff reviews—I'd refer them to



The basis for an AE's evaluation has to be his or her job description and the association's strategic plan.

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the list of duties in NAR's Association Model Assessment tool. Although there is no right answer about all duties, the degree to which the volunteers are involved in managing the association (if at all) must be communicated and understood by all parties.

Once the job description is agreed upon, the presidents can develop the evaluation instrument for the following years. (You'll find good templates, forms, checklists, and tips in NAR's "Chief Staff Performance Evaluation" toolkit at nar.realtor.) Of course, the current year's evaluation was trickier without a job description as a guideline, so presidents needed to rely on the AEs to describe what they do. It came as a surprise to some presidents to learn all

that the AE does and is responsible for.

The local board presidents took their responsibilities seriously and each one successfully completed the review. The review procedure, including who performs the review, when it is performed, and what it entails, was then established in association policy.

The AE Employment Agreement

The next step was the employment agreement, which I recommend for all AEs. The incumbents and the new AEs in my state all signed employment contracts, often using NAR's Sample Employment Agreement as a guide. (It's a good document, so kudos to the HR and legal staff for developing it.)

Also, I was ever mindful of the limits

of my involvement and often my only advice was for the local board to consult with legal counsel. This must happen when it comes to employment contract matters.

Once the pieces are in place—strategic plan, job description, employment agreement, and evaluation tool—annual reviews can become routine, and getting incoming leaders involved while they are ascending the leadership ladder assists in establishing continuity.

You can't take all the stress out of performance review time, but you can minimize it with an established process, good tools, and communication.



Charles A. Kasky, RCE, is CEO of Maryland REALTORS®. Contact him at 800-638-6425 or Chuck.Kasky@mdrealtor.org.



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Why All AEs Should Have an Employment Contract

An AE employment contract acts as guidance and protection for the AE and the association. Regardless of association size, a contract is a smart move because it takes ambiguity out of the AE's responsibilities to the association and can help create a more stable work environment because expectations are clear and agreed upon.

AEs in "at will" employment states often ask what difference a contract makes when they can be fired without cause at any time. Although a contract can't secure your employment, it can detail a severance clause providing salary and benefits (including outplacement assistance) for a period of time if the board should ask you to resign for reasons other than "cause" (embezzlement, conviction of a felony, etc.). A severance agreement protects the association, too, since a fair deal reduces the likelihood of a messy lawsuit and public airing of issues. Read more about contracts at nar.realtor, search "Negotiate Employment Agreement."

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MLSs Must Evolve

Get the scoop on the state of the industry with Council of MLSs 2019 Chair Chris Carrillo.

MLS mergers, adoption of new technology, implementation of the latest polices, competition from portals and startups ... there's a lot going on in the MLS industry today. Who better to clarify the issues than Chris Carrillo, CEO of MetroMLS in Milwaukee, 2019 chair of the trade group Council of MLSs, and a member of the National Association of REALTORS® MLS Emerging Trends Advisory Group?

What keeps MLS executives up at night?

Change is happening very fast, and a lot of that speed is driven by consumer expectations for housing information. Younger buyers coming into the market consume data differently. Traditionally, the tap of information was the real estate professional. But now a lot of information is from ancillary third-party avenues, and it's presented and communicated in completely new ways.

This puts MLSs in a new position. They're not just service providers; they're being

asked to license data in a way that requires them to be much more nimble. This puts a lot of pressure on MLSs to mature quickly, but it's also a great opportunity for organizational growth.

MLSs must look at the opportunities that are coming up with the evolving technologies and talk to the vendors who are putting them forward, without losing focus on the needs of today.

What are the new technologies?

Existing MLS industry companies and startups are advancing our capabilities with predictive analytics and machine learning. They come to MLSs and say, "We need a full data dump and API access for instantaneous updates." This positions MLSs as technology enablers. This is where they want to be. For MLSs that are a bit more stagnant, this pace of change will be difficult.

Forward-looking MLSs want to be in front of new technology to deliver new opportunities for their REALTOR® members. MLSs



Chris Carrillo, CEO, MetroMLS, Milwaukee, and 2019 chair of the trade group Council of MLSs

must evolve. At MetroMLS, we've exchanged ShowingTime abilities throughout our state, created a preferred photographer program, and established MLS Without Borders.

This pace of technological change, however, has forced MLSs to do something that we haven't always been good at: communicating our value proposition to the marketplace. At CMLS we believe that the MLS is "Making the Market Work." It is our mantra and our mission, and it's front and center in all we do. CMLS has marketing materials for all MLSs to use to communicate their value.

What is the value of the MLS in today's industry?

New competition and technology forces MLSs to take a look at their value proposition and ask themselves: What is the difference that we make in the real estate professionals' business? How difficult would their life be without the MLS?

It used to be that the MLS provided listing books, and REALTORS® used them and home shoppers had to go to REALTORS®, but that paradigm is long outdated. The data is out there, listing information is out there, and that's okay.

If you look at any of the third-party portals, whose early mantra was, "Let me get my hands on data and put it out there," at a certain point these third-party vendors realized that their product was harmed because they didn't have access to the timely information that comes only from the MLS. There was a realization that the end consumer was



"MLSs must look at the opportunities that are coming up with the evolving technologies and talk to the vendors who are putting them forward, without losing focus on the needs of today."

— Chris Carrillo, CEO, MetroMLS, Milwaukee, and 2019 chair of CMLS

Financial Resources For Your Members

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Receive personalized goals to help navigate their financial security



Discover financial resources related to budgeting, retirement planning, real estate investing and more



need to know: MLS issues

being put at a disadvantage.

MLSs do something unique that no other organization does, and that is ensure that the information is timely and accurate. We are the quality insurance stop for property information. We're the checks and balances on making sure that the information is correct.

What is the best MLS model: local, regional, national?

I think there's a misconception that if you're a small MLS, your days are numbered. I reject that thought because there are some really effective small MLSs. There have also been some very effective mergers and other collaborations. I also don't believe there is a best model or a one-size-fits-all path. The key is to meet the needs of your members today and plan for the future.

At CMLS, we have an evolving set of best practices. When we meet as a board, we review the list of best practices and make sure that it remains dynamic.

Best practices are really the way forward. If you look at NAR's Core Standards for associations, it says you must be able to communicate your value back to the community; you must have campaigns that advocate homeownership and the value of a REALTOR®. A lot of those same ideas are baked into the CMLS best practices document. It's our hope that, regardless of size, any MLS can look at that document to gauge their effectiveness and chart a path forward.

At Council of MLSs, we are always working on materials that our members can use



Photo: Homesnap, which partners with more than 125 MLSs, is the public-facing brand of the Broker Public Portal, a collaborative venture between real estate brokerages and MLSs to create a national consumer home search experience.

to communicate their value in their markets. Currently, we're finalizing our newly redesigned technical and IT best practices guide. That should be out this spring, followed by our new marketing and communications best practices guide.

Are MLS of Choice and other new policies on the horizon game changers?

Last year, when the MLS of Choice idea was being discussed, it raised the collective blood pressure within the industry. I think some folks were concerned, but I think it fixed a couple of MLSs who were unfairly leveraging some outdated policies for their own benefit, and that's an example that gives the MLS industry a black eye.

Within the last three years we have all had

to make uncomfortable decisions. If, as an MLS, you have not faced those uncomfortable decisions, then perhaps you should take a fresh look at the industry and ask yourself, "How can we grow?"

In the case of MLS of Choice, the industry discovered a problem and worked together nationally though NAR and the national policy to correct it.

Just like any business out there that competes for customers, MLSs need to be progressive and responsive to the marketplace and differentiate themselves by providing more value than the competition. If anything, MLS of Choice forced MLSs to evaluate whether they are doing all that they can to be competitive for the benefit of REALTORS® and brokers.

NAR's MLS Technology and Emerging Issues Advisory Board is next looking at whether to require listing feeds and portals to publish a link to the listing broker's site alongside individual listings. I think this policy has a lot of layers. There are different points of view and areas of concern, but the overarching goal is the right one. This is yet another example of a difficult conversation that continues to push the industry forward.

Study Searches for Ideal MLS Governance Structure

More than 129 MLSs participated in the recent CMLS study of MLS governance structures nationally. "We looked at what is the best operating model for an MLS and what we found is that there are many," says Chris Carrillo, chair of CMLS. "We

gleaned some common success practices that all MLSs can look at to find the optimal structure that will allow them to be more strategic and progressive." The 2019 CMLS Governance Survey Report is due out this spring at councilofmls.org/research.



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You Can't Post That on Facebook!

Updated dos and don'ts for social media use at your association.

I have a love-hate relationship with social media. It can sap my time but it can also keep me closer to the people I want to share with. It can be a distraction for staff but it's also a great communication tool for your REALTOR® association. Just how can, and should, you balance social media use in your office and on the job? Here, I address some common AE questions.

social media connections with one another and certainly advise against AEs requiring it.

Social media is a valuable tool to communicate with members, and if an employee's job description includes managing the association's Facebook or Twitter account, they'll need access at work. But I recommend that association staff not connect with members via their personal accounts.

messages, and news about the association. His personal Facebook page, on the other hand, shows only a few dozen friends, which indicates that he keeps it strictly personal.

Apart from dismantling your social media accounts, explore the features these platforms offer that enable you to communicate only with certain segments of your friends or followers. Remember, posting a disclaimer that your views do not reflect those of the association is generally ineffective in the eyes of members and the public. A disclaimer isn't a shield from being shown the door for posting something that is clearly incendiary.



Q. Can my board fire me for what I post on my personal social media pages?

Maybe. There's no shortage of examples of public figures, media personalities,

Q. Can I ban employees from using social media during work?

Yes. If spelled out clearly in your employee handbook, you can ban employees from using social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter during work hours, whether it's on their personal or work device. On their lunch hour or break time, it's typical to allow employees to use social media, although they have no right to privacy when using office equipment.

However, moderate social media use in the office can give employees a quick mental break that enables them to return to work more energized. Co-workers might use social media to increase interaction and strengthen relationships, improving collaboration and strengthening your office harmony.

But although social media interaction among co-workers can improve relationships, it can also expose associations to potential liability regarding sexual harassment. I would discourage co-workers from having

politicians, and private citizens losing their jobs over something they posted online. You represent your association in everything you do publicly, and posting something that may be considered hate speech, discriminatory, or widely offensive (not that you would ever do this!) may be grounds for dismissal or reprimand.

Separating your personal and professional accounts to avoid any misunderstandings or accidental clicks of the send button won't completely shield you from negative consequences mentioned above, but it's still a good idea. Unfriending your members and colleagues and asking them to "like" your professional page instead may be a massive undertaking, but it's in your personal and professional best interest. Now is the time to take control of your social media by establishing a profession-only page.

Take a cue from NAR CEO Bob Goldberg. His public Facebook page, which has more than 2,300 likes, is where he communicates with members and posts photos, video

Q. Can I keep members from posting inappropriate things on social media?

No. Unless, they're violating the posted rules of your association-hosted Facebook group or another association-sponsored platform, or the member is an association volunteer who has agreed to follow your social media policy, you can't, and shouldn't, interfere with what they post online.

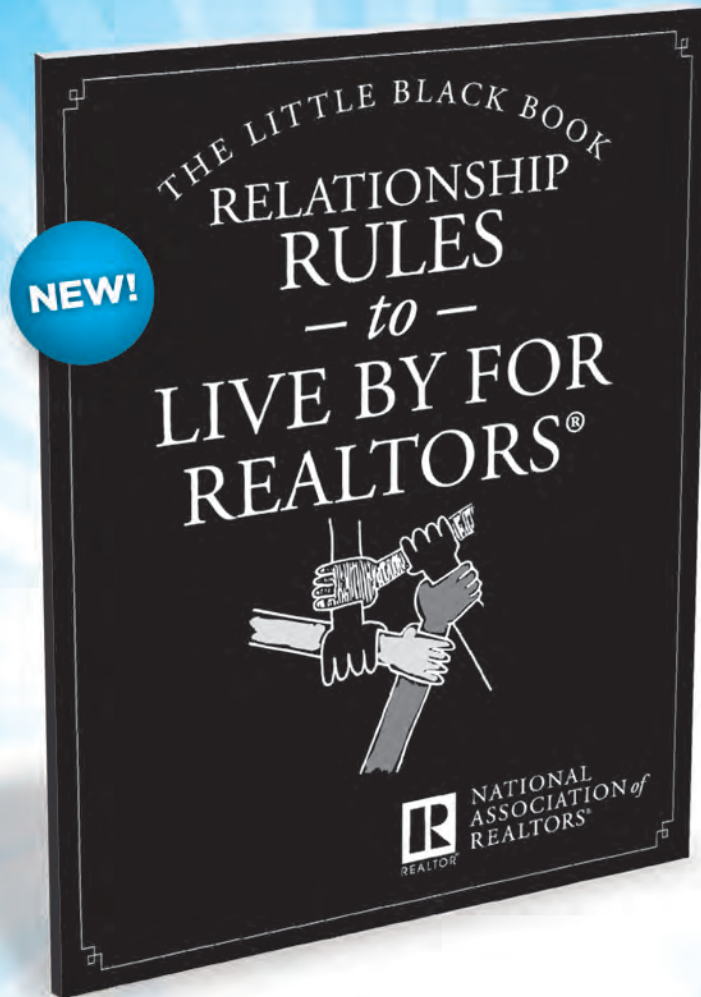
Your association-hosted social media groups should have clear posting guidelines that include the expected code of conduct.

If a member's negative post is about your association, you should respond immediately and diplomatically with facts and links to factual information. Offer to take the conversation offline by extending an invitation to a face-to-face meeting or phone call.



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.

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Returning to Paradise

AE Aubrey Pruis on rebuilding his REALTOR® association from the ashes.

Life is slowly returning to Paradise, Calif., months after the state's most devastating wildfire, which killed 85 people, including two REALTORS®. It leveled the town. More than 90 percent of all real estate, including the Paradise Association of REALTORS® building, was destroyed.

Association Executive Aubrey Pruis says the Starbucks and the Walgreens have reopened. Even though few residents have returned yet, the hundreds of work crews living in RVs there has prompted some local restaurants to return.

"We're seeing movement," he says. "Finally, the town has a redevelopment company on board—the same one that helped rebuild New Orleans after the flooding—and they're involving the community in the decision-making."

Pruis and his association president are active with the redevelopment company, Urban Design Associates, and on the town redevelopment committee to represent real estate and homeowners' interests. "I reached out to the town to offer market data, assistance, and input," he says. "Right now it's all about working together to get the town back on its feet."

Making sure the association stays up and running consumes most of Pruis' time. "My plate has been full with scouting out a new association office in Paradise and trying to gauge where we stand as far as membership and revenue for the year."

More than three-quarters of the association's previous 127 members should remain,



More than 90 percent of all real estate in Paradise, Calif., including the local REALTOR® association building, was destroyed in the Nov. 8 wildfire.

Pruis estimates, although they are currently scattered across the area. "The majority of REALTORS® want to return and rebuild because they're very dedicated to our community. Understandably, some—especially those near retirement age—are emotionally scarred by the experience and plan to hang up their license and not return."

All dues, MLS, and lockbox fees were waived from the date of the fire in November until April, so it's difficult to gauge how much operating money Pruis has to work with for 2019. He's asking to have members' state and national dues waived so they can afford to stay in business.

Keeping members connected and informed is Pruis' priority. "I go to community meetings and gather information for our members on the recovery effort, such as deadlines for FEMA debris removal applications and grants that property owners can use toward rebuilding."

Pruis just returned the association office to Paradise after more than four months operating out of a donated room in a member's Century 21 office in nearby Chico.

"Right after the fire, I was working out of my sister's dining room," says Pruis, who had the composure to load all the association computers and critical files into his car as ash and burning debris was falling all around him on Nov. 8, when the fire closed in on Paradise. "I was in survival mode at the time. It was looking bad and I grabbed

everything I thought I'd need to run the association and got out of there."

Pruis drove home to collect his dogs, but no other personal items would fit in his car. "It was pitch black at 10 a.m. and so hot."

By the time he made it to his sister's house in Chico, 20 miles away, Paradise was engulfed in flame. Pruis, who was born and raised in there, lost his house and a car.

Later that day, a fellow AE called to check in and ask what he needed. "I had nothing but the clothes on my back so she went online and ordered pants, shirts, shoes, and socks and had them sent to me at my sister's house. It was so amazing."

After a few weeks sleeping on his sister's couch, a colleague at the California Regional MLS called and offered Pruis an RV on her ranch—where he still lives today, but in his own "fifth wheel" now.

The outpouring of support, both financial and emotional, has been overwhelming, Pruis says. "NAR and CAR have been great with facilitating the disaster relief grant effort, and several area associations have sent checks and gift cards to us for our members. I can't say thank you enough to all of the associations who reached out to help."

The Paradise town hall began issuing building permits in March. "It's slow going," says Pruis, "but it feels really great to be back."

—Carolyn Schwaar



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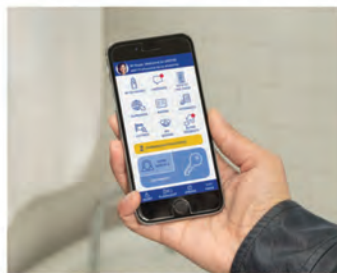
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