**What is a link scheme?**

According to Google, "any links intended to manipulate PageRank or a site's ranking in Google search results may be considered part of a link scheme and a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines. This includes any behavior that manipulates links to your site or outgoing links from your site."

**The IDX attribution policy is not a link scheme.**

The intent of the IDX attribution policy is to give appropriate credit and attribution to the authoritative source, the listing broker.

Redfin sought input from Rand Fishkin, a leader in the field of search engine optimization tools, resources & community. Fishkin's assessment is there's *"no reason to view [the IDX policy] as a link scheme. Link schemes are those designed to manipulate Google's ranking systems to artificially inflate rankings and put a less deserving site or page at the top of the search results. This [proposal] is an attribution system designed, like every other content licensing system (open source or private), to ensure that credit goes to the originating source. Attribution licensing requirements aren't link schemes, and I don't think anyone from Google or any other search engine has ever tried to say otherwise."*

Below are examples from Google of link schemes. While this is not an exhaustive list, the IDX policy does not fall into any of these categories:

| Example of link scheme | IDX Policy - Yes/No |
|---|---|
| Buying or selling links that pass PageRank, for example: (1) exchanging money for links, or posts that contain links; (2) exchanging goods or services for links; or (3) sending someone a "free" product in exchange for them writing about it and including a link | No |
| Excessive link exchanges ("Link to me and I'll link to you") or partner pages exclusively for the sake of cross-linking | No |
| Large-scale article marketing with keyword-rich anchor text links | No |
| Using automated programs or services to create links to your site | No |

**Fair attribution is a best practice.**

Links are the primary way to give proper attribution in the digital world. It is common for a content creator to require link attribution when allowing another site to display her content. A widely-used content licensing agreement, the [Creative Commons License](#) includes language for link attribution requirements (see Section 3(a)(1)).

When a consumer searches for a New York Times article in a search engine, they won't see a Facebook link to that article as their top choice. The results will show the original article on NYTimes.com at the top, with other sites that display and reference to that article also included. Search engines aim to have the authoritative source show up first, in order for consumers to get the most accurate results for what they are searching on.

In the real estate context, linking back to the source material -- the listing details page on the listing brokerage website -- simply directs consumers, search engines and web crawlers to the original, authoritative source of the information.

Brokers and MLSs should continue to ask for clean, visible, HTML-readable links. HTML links are preferable to other types of links because [Google has shared](#) that it struggles to index other types of links, including links within Javascript. In addition, text browsers, screen readers (for sight-impaired users), web crawlers (like those Moz or the Wayback Machine use), and other technologies that work with links all default to HTML links.