



## **Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Missouri REALTORS® Staff 2016**

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## Introduction

Social media is a boundless tool to create positive relationships with industry professionals. Social networks are accessible by anyone from anywhere. Your posts and comments are easy for people to find – and use in ways detrimental to you and Missouri REALTORS – if they want to. The Marketing team has put together these guidelines and resources to assist Missouri REALTORS staff in understanding and engaging in the Associations social media efforts. If these best practices are followed, you will be able to meaningfully and effectively communicate with others using social media in a way that benefits you and Missouri REALTORS. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines or how to apply them when participating in social media channels in a personal or professional capacity, please contact a member of the Marketing team.

Any association staff member engaging in online, electronic dialogue as a delegate of the organization is required to comply with the guidelines in this document.

## 1 Missouri REALTORS® Social Business Strategy

As stated in Missouri REALTORS® Mission, we unite to connect members through various media and events. Missouri REALTORS' social media strategy strives for members to become active, engaged participants and is designed for greater collaboration, providing a coordinated, purposeful and beneficial tool for members and the organization.

The below strategic objectives create our social business strategy:

- Turn monologue into dialogue with our members and build deeper relationships.
- Reach more members with our information – when and where it's relevant to them.
- Join and influence existing conversations about MISSOURI REALTORS and about issues REALTORS® care about.
- Empower members to connect with each other around common interests.
- Empower members to effectively and efficiently use MISSOURI REALTORS resources to connect with consumers.
- Enable frictionless sharing of MISSOURI REALTORS content so that members can keep their followers informed with very little effort.
- Leverage social media channels as another way to gather member input on MISSOURI REALTORS initiatives, policy positions, products and services and make better-informed decisions within the organization.

- Coordinate with industry thought leaders and association executives from local and state associations to expand our reach and effectiveness.

## 2 Global Guidelines

These general best practices apply to association staff members' participation in most social media platforms.

### 2.1 Perception is reality: Online you are always an MISSOURI REALTORS employee

- Personal expression: When you participate in social media, you are likely to find your personal and professional lives becoming more integrated online. While it's perfectly fine to express your personal beliefs, be aware that your participation in social media is visible to the association's membership.
- Be clear: When speaking about issues relating to the association (real estate, property rights, interest rate tax deductions, etc.) ***it's important to specifically state that any personal opinions you express may not be the same as those of your employer.***
- Be transparent: Even when stating your own personal opinion, reveal that you work for a REALTOR® association before commenting on real estate issues.
- Don't say or do anything online you wouldn't do face to face. Every social media channel has privacy settings; please take the time to adjust them to your preferred level of "transparency."

### 2.2 Participating in social media on the Association's behalf

- Know the association's positions: When speaking for the association on industry-related topics, it is your responsibility to be familiar with the association's position. ***If you are unfamiliar with that topic, it is up to you to find a more qualified person to speak, or to state that this is not within your area of expertise.***
- Do not involve yourself in disputes: In a legal, public or political dispute between members, or between associations and members, your job is to ***remain neutral.*** Avoid making any statement that can be viewed as preference to one member/association over another.
- Before publishing a picture, tagging, photo/geotagging, tweeting, "checking in" via location of a member, association employee, or anyone with a professional relationship with the association in a ***non-professional*** setting, discuss the

message content with the Marketing team. Please do not post photos showing people drinking or in exotic locales because it may send an unintended and unwanted message to viewers.

- Behave as a member of the REALTOR® Party: In order to serve members' interests, the association works with elected officials from both major political parties who support issues important to REALTORS®.
- Personal positions and beliefs are not to be stated in conjunction with the association's name without written permission from your manager.

## 3 Facebook Guidelines

### 3.1 Why do our members use Facebook?

It's estimated that more than half of all Facebook users visit the network at least twice a day. It's important to understand, though, that our members aren't always visiting Facebook with the intention of seeing what's new with the Association. Members are on Facebook to:

- Engage with and grow their sphere of influence on a personal and professional level.
- Interact with family members and friends.
- Demonstrate expertise and promote their business to stay top of mind by sharing relevant content.

Understanding why and how our members use Facebook will allow us to better serve and reach them, creating further page interaction.

### 3.2 How members use Facebook

The most common method for sharing information is to post content to a group, business page, or profile wall. Wall posts are syndicated into every following member's timeline, however when a person logs into Facebook, only the most relevant content, which is determined by the Facebook algorithm is displayed. Because of this, users who have liked our page but may not constantly interact with what we post may not see our content on their *newsfeed*.

### 3.3 Profiles, pages and groups

Because so many members are active on the site, it's an excellent tool for MISSOURI REALTORS to listen, engage in conversation and exchange or share information.

#### **Business Page**

**MISSOURI REALTORS has a Facebook Business Page, or "Facebook Page" so that the Association has a recognizable presence on Facebook.** This page is

administered by personal profiles through members the Marketing team. The purpose of this Facebook page is to share information and interact with members.

Only an official representative of an organization is permitted to create a Facebook page. Anyone can “Like” these public-facing pages. This means that both members and nonmembers will have access to the content on the page.

#### **Content ideas for publication on Facebook**

- Events: Any conference, training, luncheon, or related event hosted by the association can take advantage of the events feature in Facebook.
- News: News from the association or links to news that affects members can easily be posted to a page wall.
- Pictures: Pictures of members attending past events are a great way to leverage Facebook’s photo tools.
- Conversations: Done responsibly, it’s ok to engage your audience with questions or observations.
- Rich media: Video, pictures of members and association functions.
- Events: Upcoming events including social events, education, and online events like webinars.
- News: Or links to news that members may find value in.
- Updates: About the association itself.

#### **Team of contributors**

Missouri REALTORS’ Marketing team organizes a posting schedule and contributes posts to the Association account. If you have a post to contribute please contact a member of the Marketing team.

## **4 Twitter Guidelines**

Twitter’s forced brevity is the key to its success. Its 140-character limit on each communication forces users to keep announcements and conversations short and simple. @’s, DM’s (Direct Messages), hashtags and RT’s (retweets) are the primary engagement methods. Twitter takes significant dedication and commitment from a manager; consult the MISSOURI REALTORS Marketing team for guidance.

### **4.1 Follow and be followed. Twitter is Opt-In.**

- Communication on Twitter is not necessarily reciprocal. When one member of Twitter finds value in another member’s posts, they choose to subscribe to that member by following them. That member may choose to follow them back, or may not. Each member’s Twitter page links to a list of the members they follow, and of those that follow that member.

- If your intention is to use a Twitter account as a channel purely to broadcast information, then don't follow back. If you plan to use the channel for two-way communication, then make it a point to follow those you hope to communicate with.

#### 4.2 Twitter is a river of information

- Most Twitter users only look at the conversations happening in the last few minutes.
- Most followers will only see posts made by the association if they happen to tune into Twitter at about the same time as the association posts.
- Be prepared to post several times a day in order to reach a significant portion of your followers.
- Accounts require an ongoing commitment to both post and listen to the conversations happening in the accounts network of followers.

#### 4.3 Using Twitter personally

##### Set expectations

- Members will find your personal accounts, but don't let that discourage you from keeping that account personal. Be consistent in how you use your personal account to set expectations for the members who choose to follow you.
- If you only speak about business on the account and use an avatar that is very professional, then members will have an expectation that you will always be professional. If they discover your account populated with casual and personal information, their expectation will be that this is your personal account where you sometimes talk about business.
- You can choose to make your account private, and approve your followers.

#### 4.4 Managing a MISSOURI REALTORS Twitter account

##### Team of contributors

MISSOURI REALTORS' Marketing team organizes a posting schedule and contributes tweets to the Association account. If you have a post to contribute please contact a member of the Marketing team.

## 5 Blog Guidelines

### 5.1 Creating a new blog for Missouri REALTORS

As we continue to grow THE LANDING, you may be asked to write a blog post. Here are some tips we hope you find helpful. Before launching a *new* blog, please discuss your plan with the MISSOURI REALTORS' Marketing team. The team will want to know the answers to the following questions, so it will be helpful if you consider them in advance of your request:

- Is a new blog the best place to share these messages? Are there existing communications channels that could be used instead?

- What is the theme of the blog?
- Who is the audience?
- What are the topics?

## 5.2 Managing your MISSOURI REALTORS blog

- **Respect copyright:** Use caution when publishing text, pictures, video, or other content that was not created by the Association. Almost all written content is protected by copyright laws and requires third parties to obtain a permission or license from the content's author prior to using it in any manner.
- **Creative Commons:** In most cases, content created under a Creative Commons license is still protected from commercial use. Association staff members shouldn't republish Creative Commons content unless that content is specifically licensed for commercial use.
- **Linking vs. republishing:** Whenever possible, link to content elsewhere on the Web instead of republishing it. Excerpt or quote whenever possible with a link back to the original materials.

The association encourages meaningful exchange on its blogs/websites on issues involving REALTORS® and real estate. All comments are published unless they violate the MISSOURI REALTORS Policy.

## 5.3. How to blog effectively

### **Know your audience.**

Be sure your content is relevant to the audience you're trying to reach. Write clear headlines. The headline should pull readers in; write so the headline makes sense out of context; many will see only the headline in a reader through syndication and will need to click through to read the full post.

### **Be interesting.**

Write blog posts in a conversational voice. Don't sound unprofessional, but there is no need to adopt the sometimes formal tone of a news release or article. Blog posts express observations, share experiences, and point readers to interesting information. One goal of a blog post is to start a conversation with readers, so feel free to invite comments or ask questions.

### **Be wise.**

Whether you're posting personally or professionally, don't write anything in a blog post or comment that you wouldn't want published with your name or the Association's in the *New York Times*.



**Link intelligently.**

Credit the original author(s) of the material. Provide a description of where the link will take the reader, and link to the exact page that you are referring to in your post.

- Tip: Don't link to content that readers can't access without paying a subscription fee, or that the user must register to access. If you do link to password-protected content, explain what to expect if they click on the link.

**Add depth with multimedia.**

Consider including videos, images, or other non-text content. Keep in mind that more readers will click on links with thumbnail images than links without them.

**5.4 How to comment on other blogs/websites****Identify yourself and who you speak for.**

When posting on a real estate industry blog, identify yourself and your relationship with the association. If you post a personal opinion on a real estate industry blog, please state that the opinions expressed in the post are your own and may not necessarily reflect MISSOURI REALTORS' views – *whether or not your opinion is consistent with the association's position on that issue*. If you are posting on behalf of Missouri REALTORS as an official response, note that in your comment.

## 6 LinkedIn, YouTube, and Any Other Social Media Platforms

- YouTube: MISSOURI REALTORS video content is currently posted on an Association account.
- LinkedIn: The Marketing team manages an Association LinkedIn company page.
- All other social media platforms: Please consult with the MISSOURI REALTORS' Marketing team with actionable items and ideas for review.