

Social Media Policy for Realtor® Members and CMLS Subscribers

Overview

Social media is a set of integrated tools that allow people to build a network or community for interacting through the creation and/or distribution of interests, messages, stories, and information. Social media can be used both personally and professionally, and social networks provide opportunities for people with a common history or interest to connect and share content with each other.

Social media can take many different forms, including Internet forums, blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures (e.g., Flickr, Shutterfly), video (e.g., YouTube) rating and bookmarking. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), to name a few.

The Charlotte Regional Realtor® Association, Inc., Carolina Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (CMLS), and the Housing Opportunity Foundation (collectively “Company”), respect the right of its members and Subscribers (collectively “Users”) to engage in blogging, social networking, and other public discourse via the Internet. The Company is aware that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, professional networking sites such as LinkedIn and Plaxo, and the Members-only Forum can be used as important tools in business. This policy sets forth some guidelines for appropriate use when participating in such activities either using the Company’s computers and on-site wireless systems, or using personal devices and systems.

Guidelines

Users are permitted to briefly use the Company's lobby computer system and on-site wireless to participate in social networking sites and other public discourse on the Internet subject to the following prohibited uses:

- Users are prohibited from any communications or other use that would violate Company business policies, including business ethics, nondiscrimination, and anti-harassment policies, or any use contrary to the interests of the Company;
- Users are prohibited from any communication or other use that is abusive, harassing, vulgar, obscene, or offensive;
- Users are prohibited from posting gossip, rumors, lies, falsehoods, defamatory comments, personal attacks, harassing, discriminatory, menacing or otherwise inappropriate and offensive content. For example, Users:

- May not disparage the association, its staff or members;
 - May not engage in disputes;
 - Must correct any mistakes as quickly as possible;
- Users are prohibited from engaging in communications that disparage or demean other individuals based on race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or any characteristic protected under federal, state or local law. Disparaging communications include distasteful jokes or communications that disparage or defame the products or services of the Company, other Users, vendors or competitors;
 - Users are prohibited from communicating any information pertaining to Company copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary information, or any other highly or sensitive confidential information, except with express management permission;
 - Users are prohibited from participating in solicitations, including solicitation for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, fundraisers or outside organizations while using the Company's computers or on-site wireless;
 - Users are prohibited from accessing, viewing, downloading, copying or sending sexually explicit materials or other offensive materials while using the Company's computers or on-site wireless;
 - Users are prohibited from using the Company's computers or on-site wireless for gambling, wagering or day-trading during business hours.

Any communication sent externally, including messages placed on the Internet, which refer to the Company or its products or services in a way that could be interpreted as stating a company position, policy or viewpoint must be approved in advance by Company management.

If a User chooses to participate in blogging, social networking or other public discourse on their own time and with their own equipment, these activities may still be subject to violations of this policy. If a User comments on the Company or identifies him or herself as a Company member or Subscriber, the User must be professional and courteous, and follow the standards of acceptable business communications. In addition:

- Users must explicitly and conspicuously state that the views they are articulating are their own and not the views of the Company. Users must not state or imply they are speaking for the Company.

- Users must not disclose any confidential or proprietary information about the Company, its customers or suppliers. This includes any information that is not already in the public domain or that might give any of the Company's competitors a competitive advantage. Proprietary information is not to be discussed or referred to on any social networking site, even in private messages between site members who have authorized access to the information. If a User is unsure about what information falls under this policy, he or she should check with Company management.
- Users must not disclose any personal or confidential information about third parties, including other Users, Company employees or others associated with the Company, or post pictures of them, without their permission.
- Users must not use vulgar or sexually explicit language.
- Users must not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, disability or any other protected criteria.
- Users must not use Company trademarks or copyrighted material without written permission.
- Users must respect copyright laws, and reference or cite sources appropriately. Plagiarism applies online.

Each User will be held personally responsible for the posting of unauthorized Company content on the Internet. If a User chooses to engage in blogging, social networking or other public discourse on the Internet, each does so at his or her own risk. **The Company will not indemnify Users from claims resulting from such activities.**

Use of online or Internet software

Software downloaded from an online service or the Internet to the Company's computers could pose potential problems for the Company. Downloaded software from an online service or the Internet could contain a computer virus that might affect the operation of the Company's computer network. No software should be downloaded from an online Internet source without the prior approval of the Company's Information Technology (IT) division. If a User believes he or she has inadvertently downloaded software from the Internet, the IT staff should be contacted immediately.

Privacy

To assure the proper and authorized use of its communications, computer systems and on-site wireless, the Company reserves the right to monitor its systems. This includes stored communications and data stored on the equipment of the Company's third-party vendors or suppliers.

Users should be aware that the Company will generally monitor for certain types of activities, such as visiting Internet sites that may be inappropriate for the workplace and monitoring when a specific business need is presented. This might include monitoring to determine excessive personal use; to investigate uses that may violate the Company's policies against discrimination and harassment; to determine whether trade secrets, copyrighted material or other highly sensitive or confidential information are being communicated; or to investigate other communications that may be illegal or otherwise adversely affect the welfare of the Company, its Members and Subscribers, and its employees.

By using the Company's system and on-site wireless, each User knowingly and voluntarily consents to being monitored as described above, and acknowledges the Company's right to conduct such monitoring. Users do not have a right to expect privacy on the Company's communication and computer systems. Users should not use the Company's systems for any communication for which they expect or want personal privacy.

Disciplinary action

Any violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action, including deletion of inappropriate posts or exemption from participating in Company social media.