MLS Survey Report
2010
The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, The Voice for Real Estate®, is the world’s largest professional association, representing over 1 million members.

The term REALTOR® is a registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR) and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.

For more information about NAR, visit www.REALTOR.org.
The Center for REALTOR® Technology (CRT) is a department within NAR. Its purpose is to serve the REALTOR® membership as an industry advocate, an implementation consultant, and a technology resource. One of the major surveys carried out by CRT is the Multiple Listing Services (MLS) Technology Survey. It is conducted annually among a random number of MLSs.

This report summarizes national findings collected in December 2010 among MLS staff as listed in NRDS and through the MLS directory. These groups account for 336 usable surveys. At the 95% level of confidence, the margin of error is +/-4.75%. Any exceptions will be called out.

The purpose of this survey is to better understand MLS technology trends & usage. Business practices, public websites, member usage, Real Estate Transaction Standards (RETS), and syndication are key topics of the study.
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Report Highlights

The following are the top five industry issues that were selected as “very important” or “important”:

- MLSs reinventing themselves to continue to meet the evolving needs of the real estate industry
- Improper data use by members
- Improving MLS security
- Risk of the MLS becoming a ‘public utility’
- Making MLS tools available via smartphones & other mobile tools

In the last 12 months survey respondents have been investing in MLS software upgrades, MLS-friendly mobile apps, security, server upgrades, consultants, and/or server maintenance among other things. Not taking into account technology staff that supports the MLS, respondents report spending an average of $25,981 on these MLS technology initiatives. The ‘mode’ or most common response was $5,000.

Although there are several ways to enter listings into the MLS system, 71% use a web browser. 73% provide a public website (not IDX/VOW) where consumers may access listings. Of these, 48% support lead generation. 32% of this group indicates that the leads go to the listing agent while another 25% indicate that both, the listing agent and listing broker, receive the information.

Mediums in which the public website may be advertised include: social media sites (29%); newspaper (24%); and/or real estate magazines (21%).
Report Highlights

Those that do **not** offer a public MLS website selected the following statements to describe their position:
- Public websites should be provided by brokers (51%)
- MLS public websites compete with listing broker or agent websites (32%)
- Public websites are the agent’s responsibility (29%)

Those that **offer** a public MLS website selected the following statements to describe their position:
- MLS should provide a public website to display MLS listings (61%)
- MLS public websites are good for MLS and REALTOR® image in the community (58%)
- MLS public websites are a good alternative to REALTOR.com® (30%)

88% indicate that their MLS system has a RETS interface.

Broker IDX/VOW websites (83%) and/or 3rd party vendor services other than IDX/VOW (62%) as business advantages to using RETS.

Those that syndicate (51%) do it in order to get greater exposure for listings. These MLSs perceive syndication as being a member benefit.

Of those that do not syndicate (32%), more than half are not considering syndication at all. A few reasons that discourage syndication include: they do not want to deal with feeds; cost per month to syndicate is high; agents and brokers may already belong to real estate companies that syndicate; and/or MLSs do not want to lose control of data.
Top five places where listings are sent:

- REALTOR.com® - 95%
- Trulia – 55%
- Local MLS site – 50%
- Zillow – 50%
- Local association – 49%
- Yahoo – 48%

Respondents were asked how the role of the MLS will evolve over the next three years. The most common responses were (in no particular order):

- The MLS will be accessible via mobile tools like the iPad and smartphones.
  - These will be integrated with social media tools for easy access
- The importance of Professionalism within real estate will continue to grow.
- Agent and broker ratings will become commonplace in many MLS templates.
  - Members will have to maintain acceptable ratings otherwise the MLS will reserve the right to terminate that relationship.
- There will be browser neutral MLS tools.
- Some may push the transparency envelope allowing home owners to update data for a finite period of time. The goal will be to have more reliable and accurate data from which the public can benefit.
- ‘MLS of choice’ is a possibility.
The 8% who selected ‘other’ describe their MLS as co-owned with another association or as regional.

90% of MLSs participating in this survey were built by an MLS vendor. Another 9% are homegrown.

Respondents were asked how many members (agents, brokers, etc.) are part of their MLS. The average is 2,940 members. However, the ‘mode’ or most common answer is 600 members.
How important are the following industry issues to your MLS?

- **Incorporating Social Media tools into the MLS**
  - Very Important: 13%
  - Important: 39%
  - Somewhat Important: 37%
  - Not at all Important: 10%

- **The need for consolidation – MLSs in the same market area merging**
  - Very Important: 15%
  - Important: 21%
  - Somewhat Important: 30%
  - Not at all Important: 30%

- **Implementing reciprocal data sharing agreements among neighboring MLSs**
  - Very Important: 24%
  - Important: 28%
  - Somewhat Important: 31%
  - Not at all Important: 16%

- **Making MLS tools available to Mac users**
  - Very Important: 27%
  - Important: 35%
  - Somewhat Important: 26%
  - Not at all Important: 7%

- **The impact of alternative consumer websites on the value of the MLS**
  - Very Important: 42%
  - Important: 39%
  - Somewhat Important: 17%
  - Not at all Important: 2%

- **RETS Compliance**
  - Very Important: 44%
  - Important: 38%
  - Somewhat Important: 15%
  - Not at all Important: 2%
How important are the following industry issues to your MLS?

(Continued from previous page.)

- Making it easier for brokers and agents to get data into or out of the MLS: 50% Very Important, 36% Important, 11% Somewhat Important, 3% Not at all Important.
- Making MLS tools available via smartphones and other mobile tools: 53% Very Important, 36% Important, 10% Somewhat Important, 1% Not at all Important.
- Improving MLS security: 55% Very Important, 33% Important, 12% Somewhat Important, 3% Not at all Important.
- The risk of the MLS becoming a “public utility”: 55% Very Important, 29% Important, 12% Somewhat Important, 3% Not at all Important.
- Improper data use by members: 65% Very Important, 29% Important, 5% Somewhat Important, 4% Not at all Important.
- MLSs reinventing themselves to continue to meet the evolving needs of the real estate industry: 70% Very Important, 25% Important, 4% Somewhat Important, 1% Not at all Important.
Where do you learn about new technology for your MLS?

- 84% National Association of REALTORS® (NAR)
- 59% State REALTOR® Association
- 56% Other MLSs
- 55% Trade shows
- 51% Real Estate conferences
- 37% Technology websites
- 28% Local REALTOR® Association

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Where do you learn about new technology for your MLS?

(Continued from previous page.)

- Real Estate blogs: 27%
- Real Estate websites: 26%
- Social Media: 19%
- Other: 13%
- General business magazines: 12%
- RETS.org: 10%
- General business blogs: 9%

‘Other’ unaided responses included MLS user groups and MLS vendors.

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
On what technology resources were these funds spent in the last 12 months?

Not taking into account technology staff that support the MLS, respondents report spending an average of $25,981 on MLS technology initiatives in the last 12 months. The ‘mode’ or most common response was $5,000.

- Other: 34%
- Server upgrades: 22%
- Consultants: 21%
- Server maintenance: 21%
- Not sure: 19%
- RETS compliance: 15%
- Additional Servers: 13%
- Newsletter system: 11%
- Social Media: 8%

MLS software upgrades, mobile apps that interact with MLS data, security analytics and monitoring were mentioned under ‘other.’
Business Practices

How are listings entered into the MLS system?

- Web browser: 71%
- Manual data entry by MLS staff: 22%
- Other: 18%
- Non-browser based software: 3%
- RETS: 3%
- Don’t Know: 1%
- Batch upload (non-RETS): 1%

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Do you offer your members an opt out of REALTOR.com?

- Yes, it is an option per listing: 51%
- No, and we are not considering this as an option: 17%
- Yes, it is a universal opt out for listings: 17%
- Don’t know: 7%
- Other: 7%
- No, but we are considering an opt out option: 2%
Business Practices

To what degree does listing data go through a quality control process before loading into the MLS system?

- Some amount of quality control before loading: 43%
- No quality control before loading: 41%
- Intensive quality control before loading: 8%
- Not Sure: 8%
Business Practices

Where is data integrated on your MLS system?

- Transaction management system is integrated with the MLS and auto fills MLS data: 14%
- Documents can be entered and attached to contact records on the MLS system: 19%
- Contact data can be imported from 3rd party products like Outlook, ACT, etc.: 33%
- Forms/contract software is integrated with MLS and auto-fills MLS data: 36%
- Parcel maps that are integrated with tax/public record data: 47%
- Contact data stored on the MLS system can be anywhere on the MLS system requiring contact data: 50%
- Parcel maps are integrated with MLS data: 51%
- MLS system allows mapping and exporting of MLS data to any 3rd party product: 53%
- Tax data can be auto filled into MLS listings: 55%
- Documents can be entered and attached to MLS records on the MLS system: 90%

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
If your MLS is considering consolidation with one or more MLSs, when might it occur?

- My MLS is not considering consolidation at this time: 69%
- Not sure: 8%
- MLS consolidation is in the works but the time frame is not set: 6%
- My MLS consolidated with another MLS a while ago: 2%
- MLS consolidation is in the works and should occur in the next 6 months: 1%
- MLS consolidation is in the works and should occur in the next 7-18 months: 1%
Business Practices

Do you have reciprocal data sharing agreements with other MLSs?

- Yes
- No, and my MLS does not plan on having one soon
- No, but my MLS is considering an agreement for the future
- Not sure

- 44% Yes
- 35% No, and my MLS does not plan on having one soon
- 17% No, but my MLS is considering an agreement for the future
- 4% Not sure
Business Practices

How do you or how will you share data?

This year, respondents were able to select more than one answer.

- Special MLS access for reciprocal members: 42%
- Through direct data exchange: 26%
- RETS: 23%
- Through a 3rd party vendor: 19%
- Other: 17%
- Separately maintained aggregation site (non 3rd party): 6%
- Not yet determined: 3%

State REALTOR® association and RPR were mentioned under 'other.'

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Public Websites

- **Does your MLS provide a public website (not IDX/VOW) where consumers may access listings?**
  - Yes: 73%
  - No: 26%
  - Don't Know: 1%

- **Does your MLS provide consumers with customizable search profiles which send updates for matching listings that fit their search criteria?**
  - Yes: 71%
  - No: 25%
  - Don't Know: 4%

Of those that provide a public website, 48% support lead generation. 32% of this group indicates that the leads go to the listing agent while another 25% indicate that both the listing agent & listing broker receive the information.
Public Websites

How do consumers get access to search profiles on your MLS site?

- Agents subscribe their prospects to listing updates: 59%
- Consumers sign up on the public website: 33%
- Agents register their prospects for full search capabilities: 21%
- Other: 18%

Under ‘other’ a few indicate that a broker’s office gives clients information on how to access the site.

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
How is the MLS public website advertised?

- It is not advertised: 40%
- Social media sites: 29%
- Newspaper: 24%
- Real estate magazines: 21%
- Chamber of Commerce: 17%
- Online ads: 15%
- TV/Radio: 12%
- Other: 12%
- Billboards: 9%
- Don’t know: 6%

A variety of print materials, business cards, email footer, and Google ads were mentioned under ‘other’ places where the MLS public website is advertised.

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Public Websites

Which of the following describe your position regarding MLS public websites?

- Do Not offer a public website
- Offer MLS public website

1. MLS public websites reduce the value of the REALTOR®
   - Offer MLS public website: 17%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 2%

2. MLS public websites compete with buyer broker or agent websites
   - Offer MLS public website: 20%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 5%

3. MLS public websites compete with listing broker or agent websites
   - Offer MLS public website: 32%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 5%

4. Public websites are the agent’s responsibility
   - Offer MLS public website: 29%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 12%

5. Public websites should be provided by brokers
   - Offer MLS public website: 51%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 22%

6. MLS public websites help compete against lead resellers
   - Offer MLS public website: 29%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 8%

7. MLS public websites are a good alternative to REALTOR.com
   - Offer MLS public website: 30%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 8%

8. MLS public websites are good for MLS and REALTOR® image in the community
   - Offer MLS public website: 58%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 20%

9. MLS should provide a public website to display MLS listing
   - Offer MLS public website: 61%
   - Do Not offer a public website: 17%
What benefits result from an MLS-supplied public web site?

- Broader exposure for listings: 76%
- A neutral website for consumers: 69%
- Good for REALTOR® image: 54%
- MLS is an option for those that can’t afford to support listings on their own site: 39%
- Competition with non-REALTOR® sites: 29%
- Other: 5%

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Member Usage (VOW/IDX)

What percentage of your members presently operate an IDX/VOW site(s)?

- 1-5%: 11%
- 6-10%: 7%
- 11-20%: 12%
- More than 20%: 53%
- Not Sure: 16%
Member Usage (VOW/IDX)

What percentage of your members download historical sales data from your MLS?

- 1-10%: 16%
- 11-25%: 5%
- 26-50%: 8%
- More than 50%: 13%
- Not sure: 45%
Member Usage (VOW/IDX)

Would your MLS be willing to accept a new listing feed directly from a broker's system?

- Yes: 57%
- No: 33%
- Already do: 10%

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Member Usage (VOW/IDX)

In what format do you make data available to...

- RETS: 76%
- VOW/IDX feeds: 79%

Other options:
- Don't know: 12% RETS, 11% VOW/IDX feeds
- Format recommended by vendor: 7% RETS, 12% VOW/IDX feeds
- Format specific to our MLS: 5% RETS, 13% VOW/IDX feeds
- Syndication: 5% RETS, 0% VOW/IDX feeds
- Other: 3% RETS, 8% VOW/IDX feeds
- ASCII, tab delimited: 2% RETS, 12% VOW/IDX feeds

FTP was mentioned under 'other.'
Does your MLS system have a RETS interface?

- Yes: 88%
- No: 1%
- Not sure: 11%
Select the business advantage(s) of using RETS.

- Broker IDX/VOW websites: 83%
- A variety of 3rd party vendor services other than IDX/VOW (contact mgmt, market metrics, etc.): 62%
- Data sharing: 59%
- Syndication: 59%
- No business advantage: 7%
- Other: 4%

Easy to maintain was mentioned under ‘other.’

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
What version of the RETS standard do you or will you use?

- Don’t know: 50%
- 1.7.2: 20%
- 1.7: 12%
- 1.5: 9%
- 1: 1%
- 2: 8%
RETS

How is RETS primarily used or how will it be used?

- Bulk & incremental download: 38%
- Real time queries: 31%
- Don’t know: 28%
Is or will the data provided by RETS be:

- Real time from the MLS system: 62%
- Periodically synchronized with MLS system: 20%
- Don’t know: 18%
How satisfied are you with the RETS stand

- Very Satisfied: 19%
- Satisfied: 55%
- Dissatisfied: 5%
- Very Dissatisfied: 2%
- Uncertain: 19%
Those that syndicate do it in order to get greater exposure for listings. These MLSs perceive syndication as being a member benefit.

Of those that do not syndicate, more than half are not considering syndication at all. A few reasons that discourage syndication include: they do not want to deal with feeds; cost per month to syndicate is high; agents and brokers may already belong to real estate companies that syndicate; and/or MLSs do not want to lose control of data.
Syndication

Where is the MLS placing listings?

Comparison chart of the following years

- **REALTOR.com**
  - 2007: 10%
  - 2010: 55%
  - 2010: 75%

- **Trulia**
  - 2007: 7%
  - 2010: 50%

- **Local MLS site**
  - 2007: 32%
  - 2010: 50%

- **Zillow**
  - 2007: 14%
  - 2010: 43%

- **Local Association site**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **Yahoo**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **GoogleBase**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **Other**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **CommercialSource**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **Local newspaper online site**
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2010: 33%

- **Craig’s List**
  - 2007: 3%
  - 2010: 11%

- **Facebook**
  - 2007: 6%

- **Don’t Know**
  - 2007: 3%
  - 2010: 3%

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.

93% indicate that MLS members may opt out of any of these sites.

ListHub, Point2, Front Door, and Hot Pads were mentioned under ‘other.’
Syndication

What does your MLS include in listings sent to third parties?

Photos: 86%
Address: 83%
Amenities: 75%
Tax info: 21%
Other: 17%
Sold data: 10%
Don’t know: 6%

Percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one answer.
Future of the MLS

Respondents were asked how the role of the MLS will evolve over the next three years. The most common responses are noted below. These responses are not statistically significant.

- The MLS will be accessible via mobile tools like the iPad and smartphones.
  - These will be integrated with social media tools for easy access
- The importance of Professionalism within real estate will continue to grow.
- Agent and broker ratings will become commonplace in many MLS templates.
  - Members will have to maintain acceptable ratings otherwise the MLS will reserve the right to terminate that relationship.
- There will be browser neutral MLS tools.
- Some may push the transparency envelope allowing home owners to update data for a finite period of time. The goal will be to have more reliable and accurate data from which the public can benefit.
- 'MLS of choice' is a possibility.
Several technology resources and applications, specific to real estate brokers, agents, & associations, are provided by CRT at no cost. To learn more about CRT and the many technology resources available through CRT, visit www.REALTOR.org/CRT.