

Be valuable

Social media is about communication and not direct marketing. Make sure that you add value to your social media presence by sharing relevant information for your audience.

- Credit the original source of information and link back to content rather than republish content as your own
- Be active in monitoring comments on your blog (if you have one); you are personally responsible/liable for what is on your page
- Check your content twice before posting; whatever you write on the internet will be around for a very long time

TIP: Set up email notifications so you know when someone posts or comments on your online presence (e.g. blog, Facebook wall, LinkedIn group).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BROKERAGES

Brokerages play an important role in helping REALTORS® navigate the world of social media. Ideally, brokerages can provide their associates with:

- training on how to use social media to support their real estate business
- a policy on how the brokerage treats social media as a marketing channel
- information about which trademarks associates need to respect when communicating online
- guidelines on how to treat consumer contact information that associates may be collecting through their social media channels

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REAL ESTATE BOARDS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Real estate boards and associations can use social media as another way to communicate with members and the general public. Real estate boards should think carefully about their social media presence and how they can best serve the needs of their members. It is important to:

- have a clear objective about your social media presence: why are you online and what do you hope to accomplish?
- think about what information you want to share with your members and what kind of information you want your members to be able to share with their clients
- have a clear plan in place for keeping your social media presence updated and maintained
- monitor your social media presence regularly for false or defamatory comments, and remove any that you know are false or misleading
- create a clear terms of use for your board website and/or blog
- get permission to post photos or videos from members; this could be included as part of event announcements or materials
- have a social media policy in place for real estate board employees; at a minimum, the policy should cover what employees can/cannot do online and what is considered acceptable content

When publishing information online, real estate boards can consider:

- adopting a social media release format for posting all news releases and other content of interest to members and their clients
- enabling members, media and the public to easily tweet, blog, or refer to content coming from the board
- ensuring that all board releases refer to other online channels (e.g. Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, etc.)

SELECTED SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES (click link to read)

- REALTOR® trademarks
- National Association of REALTOR® Association Staff Social Media Guidelines
- Corporate Social Media Template
- Social Media Policies for Associations
- Corporate Social Media Policies ebook



Social Media Guidelines

for REALTORS®, Boards & Associations

Background

With the increased use of social media tools by REALTORS®, brokerages and boards/associations, the British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA) was tasked to create a set of guidelines on best practices for using social media. These guidelines are meant to provide guidance for REALTORS®, brokerages and boards/associations as they build their social media presence rather than a how-to list, or specific instructions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL REALTORS®: and good general guidelines too!

Be honest and transparent

An authentic online presence that is true to your personality will be much more successful than blindly copying what others are doing.

- Clearly identify that you are a REALTOR® and who you work for
- Speak only what you know about and state opinions as your own and not those of your brokerage or board
- Don't post in public anything you wouldn't want to see in the newspaper attached to your name

Be respectful

Respect is crucial to building meaningful online connections. People may likely form an opinion about your brokerage, your board and REALTORS® in general based on the way you conduct yourself online.

- Always be professional. Don't use personal insults, obscenities or slurs
- Avoid making negative remarks about your brokerage, clients or competitors
- Don't spam your clients or colleagues
- Be open to feedback; don't delete a comment on your blog just because you disagree with it

General guidelines

In many ways, social media is another marketing and communications channel for your business or board. Yet, there are some important differences. Success in social media depends on being honest about who you are and what you do, being thoughtful about your contribution and being respectful of the community you are engaging with.



Follow the rules

Social media can be a great tool for sharing information about your business, however, it is still subject to the same rules as other marketing channels.

- Ensure you follow all brokerage and board policies when posting (e.g. disclaimers, REALTOR® Code of Ethics)
- Respect all trademarks and copyrights
- Continue to respect your agency agreements in social media; don't share information unless you have specific permission
- Get permission from people in your videos or photos before posting them
- Think carefully about using your personal account for professional purposes. If you have two accounts, nothing real estate related should be on your personal account otherwise you will need to disclose relationship

TIP: In your Schedule A, include a clause giving you specific permission to post information about your listing on social media sites.