



## **Social Media Guide:**

## **Policies and Guidelines**

## PURPOSE

South Shore Realtors® (also referred to as “the Association”) utilizes the Internet and the variety of unique opportunities it presents to provide opportunities to participate in interactive discussions, promote Association activities and share information with members. The Association realizes the use of social media can also pose risks to confidential and proprietary information, reputation and brand, and can also jeopardize the Association’s compliance with its Bylaws as well as THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR) Code of Ethics.

*These guidelines apply to Association Staff, Officers and Directors, volunteer members of the Association and third parties who participate in social media activities with or on behalf of the Association. All Volunteer Leadership and Staff agree to adhere to these guidelines as a condition of their volunteering for the Association in any capacity or being employed by the Association, respectfully.*

The Association actively participates in several social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, the online community platform "The Launch" and webinar platforms for meetings and education.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

These are the official guidelines for social media at South Shore Realtors®. Whether you are an employee, volunteer leader, member, contractor, creating or contributing to blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual online communities or any other type of social media/websites, these guidelines are for you. We expect anyone participating in social media on behalf of the Association to understand and follow these guidelines. Note: guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge—be sure to stay abreast of current policies.

- **Be professional.** You are an ambassador for the Association on and off the job. Even in your private communications, understand you are a REALTOR® or AFFILIATE member of our professional trade organization. When posting your opinion on social media sites that could possibly be interpreted as the “official position of the Association” – specifically state that any personal opinions you express may not be the same as those of the Association.
- **Do not share proprietary information** that could potentially violate the confidentiality of our members, staff and/or internal operations. Stay within the legal framework and be aware that anti-trust, libel, copyright and data protection laws apply. Never plagiarize.
- **Do not make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the Association on Social Media unless authorized.** If in doubt, avoid any contribution until you have received express permission from the Association’s CEO. If authorized; know the Association’s positions and 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 the Association.
- **No expectation of privacy.** All contents of the Association’s communications and resources (and communications systems) are the property of South Shore Realtors®.

- **Be honest and transparent.** Unless posting AS South Shore Realtors®, use your real name to identify yourself when commenting about the Association or its programs.
- **Admit your mistakes.** If you happen to make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction.
- **Be credible, accurate and fair.** There can be a fine line between healthy debate and hostile reaction. Refrain from negativity when commenting about ours and other Realtor® Associations, staff, our leaders, members, and the industry/profession in general. When disagreeing with others' opinions, be objective and respectful. Remember that once your words are online, you may not be able to rescind them.
- **Add value.** There is an overload of information online. Contribute subjects and relevant information readers will value. Social communications should assist our members. Be thought-provoking and help build a sense of community, adding value to membership.
- **Be conversational.** Social media is a conversation. Speak professionally and encourage comments and positive contributions. Broaden the conversation by citing other experts in your posts, blogs, or re-Tweet others' comments.
- **Perception is reality.** When it comes to online networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional can get blurred. Posting about your areas of expertise builds credibility and others appreciate the information sharing.
- **Always respect the brand,** REALTOR® trademark, copyright, fair use, confidentiality and financial disclosure laws. If you have any questions about these contact the Association. Remember, you are personally responsible for your content.
- **Respect Association commitments:** Social media activities should not interfere with regular work commitments. Association staff is expected to respect other applicable policies relating to work performance.
- **Protocol.** All staff, members and/or representatives of the Association with personal Social Media page/s should follow these guidelines/protocol and **be aware of 11/13/2020 update to Code of Ethics Standard of Practice 10-5 regarding harassing or hate speech.**

## ASSOCIATION BUSINESS PAGE POSTING GUIDELINES

Association Social Media platforms are maintained to provide for REALTOR® and Affiliate use and to create community by the Staff and Board of Directors. Posts will share Association information, the achievements of our Association, members and staff as well as other relevant community and industry information.

**All comments posted to the Association's business pages are subject to review and removal by the page administrator at the discretion of the Association's CEO and Communications Director.**

The intent of this guideline is not to censure negative or critical information from being posted, but to protect the privacy and rights of members and staff of the Association. Discussing employees or

members in a negative way is prohibited. Administrators for the Association's business pages will review all postings to ensure they do not violate the Code of Ethics or the Associations' Social Media Guidelines.

We welcome your thoughts and comments. However, **we reserve the right to remove the following content from our social media platforms and online community:**

- Language that the Association, in its sole discretion, believes can be potentially considered offensive or inappropriate. Infringements on the trademarks or copyrights of the Association or any third parties.
- Violates the law or encourages others to do so. This includes respecting copyright and fair use laws. If you are talking about somebody else's content, reference that work or the person, and whenever possible, include a link.
- Easily identifies members and/or staff of the Association in defamatory, abusive, or negative terms. Derogatory, vulgar or offensive comments and statements targeted at other organizations or individuals are prohibited.
- Does not show proper consideration for others' privacy.
- Disparages or harms the image or reputation of the Association and/or its employees or members.
- Has no relevance to the site or a post that is being responded to.
- Is a commercial endorsement, including spam.
- Property listing information and/or agent recruitment based advertisement or promotion.
- Individual or company/franchise promotion.

**The Association's page administrator reserves the right to:**

- Encourage positive and productive participation and discussion comments.
- Remove comments at any time, for reasons listed in these guidelines. Note: User posts will NOT be edited.
- Acknowledge criticism that is legitimate and respond respectfully.
- Reproduce postings from members in other media.
- Post pictures and videos from Association events.

### **Photo / Video Disclaimer**

The Association reserves the right to use photographs/videos taken at any event sponsored by the Association without the express written permission of those included within the photograph/video. The Association may use the photograph/video in publications or other media material produced, used or contracted by the Association including, but not limited to: social media platforms, brochures, invitations, publications, magazines, television, website, etc.

Any person that does not wish to have their photo taken or distributed must contact the Association and communicate, in writing, their intentions. These requests will be accommodated; however, a photograph must be included for identification purposes (and will be held in confidence).

### **Reporting Inappropriate Comments**

If you have a comment or would like to report an inappropriate comment/content for us to review, send an email to [info@southshorerealtors.com](mailto:info@southshorerealtors.com).

### **The National ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®**

South Shore Realtors® maintains compliance and assists with the enforcement of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® policies and guidelines.

## **“ROGUE” SITES: CREATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION AND ITS GROUPS**

**Creating a social media page/site using the Association logo, name, tagline or brand is expressly prohibited without written authorization from the Association’s CEO.** If you are contacted for comment about the Association for publication, including social media outlets; direct the inquiry to the Association’s CEO, Communications Director or President. The Associations’ Policy and Procedures list the President and CEO as the official spokespersons for the Association.

Social Media Pages/Sites created for the express use of an Association Committee, Task Force, Board or group of members must be set up and managed by Association Staff. Committee Chairs, Vice/Co Chairs, Group Leaders and/or appointed representatives that desire administrator access should contact the Association CEO to request access.

### **Approval Required Before Use**

If your job or position responsibilities require you to speak on behalf of the Association in a social media environment, approval for all communications must be received from the CEO or Communications Director using the guidelines listed below:

## **VIOLATION OF THE BRAND & TRADEMARK ON THIRD PARTY SITES**

Board Members, CEO, Staff, Volunteer Leaders and Members that find an unauthorized page depicting, using or containing Association information, name, logo, tagline or brand should immediately report the page to [info@southshorerealtors.com](mailto:info@southshorerealtors.com). The Association will contact the third party directly to request they cease and desist use.

If the incident may be considered a violation of the Realtor® Code of Ethics, it will be forwarded to the Association’s Grievance Committee for their review and potential action. All violations of the Realtor® trademark will be reported to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Legal/Trademark Department.

## **HELPFUL HINTS FOR HANDLING NEGATIVE COMMENTS**

Although negative comments can provide an opportunity to discuss and respond to issues, it is very important to promote productive responses. In general, negative comments fall in two categories:

### **Constructive criticism:**

- Establish whether the problem or complaint is legitimate.

- Acknowledge the problem.
- Assure the commenter they have been heard.
- Keep your response positive and respectful. Try to maintain a friendly voice of authority.

**Unwarranted attack, commonly referred to as trolling or spam:**

- In many cases, it is best to ignore the commenter. But, if a response is warranted, then politely and respectfully respond and then leave it alone.
- For sustained attacks, especially unwarranted, often other community members will step in, making your response unnecessary.
- In response to unwarranted attacks, it is often most effective to ignore the commenter, which takes away the fuel for their fire.
- Censuring negative comments is not a good practice and will risk creating a larger backlash. However, there are instances within these guidelines which warrant removal of posts (including those that can be considered offensive, abusive, obscene or socially unacceptable, especially those that violate **Code of Ethics Standard of Practice 10-5. REALTORS® must not use harassing speech, hate speech, epithets, or slurs based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Adopted and effective November 13, 2020).**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND REVIEW**

By signing below, I am confirming that I have received, reviewed and understand these Social Media Guidelines. I understand South Shore Realtors® expressly reserves the right to change, modify, update or delete its provisions without immediate notice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature