

BLOGS & SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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Blogs and social networking sites are being used by real estate professionals to market to and communicate with clients, prospective clients and the public in general. The nature of these media formats is informal, light and conversational. However, whether a blog or social networking site is being used by you for personal or business purposes, you are a professional and thus responsible for the content of any entry you create in such media. That content reflects on you as a Realtor® and, in turn, on the Brokerage Firm.

All entries should be thoughtfully considered just as you would any other communication you engage in as a professional. Whenever these entries relate to your business and/or the Brokerage Firm, they are subject to all of the laws and regulations that otherwise guide your behavior as a Realtor®. For example; the Code of Ethics, Department of Real Estate ("D.R.E.") regulations, advertising laws, Multiple Listing Service/System ("MLS") rules and defamation laws can all apply to such communications.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS:

1. Use your same high standards when blogging or utilizing social media, just as you would in any other writing you generate for public consumption. The style can be informal, but the standards should not vary.
2. While blogs may have an informal style remember, even in the "blogosphere," you are bound by laws, regulations as well as the Code of Ethics. Do not deviate from your high standards and best practices.
3. Never advertise another agent's listing without the express written consent of the listing **broker – not the listing agent** (such decisions are appropriately made by the broker and your broker.) Some websites, blogs and on-line ads imply that the agent providing the content is the listing agent (e.g., "Call me for more information about this listing" when, in fact, it is not your listing.). This practice could lead to an ethics complaint or MLS rules violation.
4. Routinely review your blogs and social media sites to make sure the information is accurate and up to date.
5. Regularly monitor and delete any inaccurate, derogatory, vulgar, offensive or obscene postings by others if others are allowed to post on your site.
6. Do not engage in gossip and do not pass along unverified information.
7. "When in doubt – leave it out." It is better not to publish an item than regret it later.
8. Before posting an entry in any social media, ask yourself, "Would I like to see this entry displayed as a six foot high exhibit on a courtroom wall?" or "Would I like the Real Estate Commissioner to view this entry as part of a D.R.E. Administrative Hearing?" If not, don't post it.
9. Use care and obtain appropriate authority when posting the intellectual property or copyright materials of others, including music and video.
10. Confidentiality is to be carefully considered; discussions or posts involving buyers, sellers, property, neighborhood and community are to be cautiously evaluated prior to posting.
11. Use common sense and be careful out there!

As we move forward with new and evermore creative methods of reaching out to our clients and sphere of influence it is important that we do so with professionalism as our hallmark.

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