



The Voice of Real Estate in Northeast Ohio

## AKRON CLEVELAND ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS® (ACAR) takes a proactive approach to engage in Social Media with its members on the leading edge of social media. We are continuing to explore new and more effective ways to interact with members through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and SnapChat. This plan lays out our objectives, how we will proceed, and the guidelines we will follow.

### OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Turn monologue into dialogue with our members.

Social media affords ACAR the opportunity to evolve how we communicate with members, moving from mostly monologue to a more interactive and engaging dialogue. To create policies, products, and services that better meet members' needs, ACAR uses social media as a tool to help us listen to and learn more about members.

As part of this effort, staff and leaders think as a Social Media Association, using the 'channels' (listed here) to drive members to the ACAR website as a primary source of information. Every communication with members is designed, as far as reasonable and appropriate, to drive attention to a content rich, newly updated ACAR website. A secondary goal is to illustrate the value of membership to those who are already involved with the Association, so they will continue to support and find value in ACAR.

#### 2. Reach more members with our information – when and where it's relevant to them.

ACAR will share its research, market data and business tips when and where it's most relevant to our members. We are the provider of the "just in time" information, dropping into discussions on Facebook, Twitter, or when information is available from the Association to offer insight, clarity, or act as a needed resource.

Currently, we reach members via the weekly *Communication Connection* and *Communication Connection Events, Education & Essentials Guide* and with various Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and **AkronClevelandRealtors.com** posts. We have adopted a more concise and constant presence within the available social media outlets that will increase traffic to our website. ACAR staff uses the current *Communication Connection* information and posts regularly on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and **AkronClevelandRealtors.com**.



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### 3. **Build deeper relationships with members and others.**

A large percentage of association members use one or more social networking sites regularly. ACAR continues to be engaged and drive the 'dialogue' with our membership. This has been achieved by proactively participating in and managing our social media presence.

## **GUIDELINES**

The following are guidelines for staff and leaders acting on ACAR's behalf to follow when creating and maintaining profiles or a presence in various social media channels. These guidelines apply to profiles or presence-related posts about an ACAR program, department, or information.

**ACAR staff members and leaders engaging in online, electronic dialogue as a representative of the organization must comply with these guidelines.** They apply to personal participation in social media channels when communicating with others about ACAR. (ACAR employees should refer to the most current ACAR Employee manual for further guidance). Because social networks are accessible by anyone from anywhere, personal posts and comments are easy for people to find – and can be detrimental to both the individual and to ACAR.

### 1. **Respect copyright**

All those posting on behalf of ACAR must use caution when publishing text, pictures, video, or other content not created by the Association. Unless specifically licensed otherwise, all created content is protected by copyright. If copyrighted material is used, written permission must be obtained from the original author. Whenever possible, link to content elsewhere on the web instead of republishing. It's always advisable to include a disclaimer. Consult legal counsel to determine the statement content.

### 2. **Channels covered by these guidelines:**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- SnapChat
- Reddit
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- AkronClevelandRealtors.com
- Any additional channels as determined by the ACAR Board of Directors and added to the ACAR Rules & Regulations



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### 3. Our profile

Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS® social media profiles (through Facebook, Twitter & Instagram) are our face, our “brand.” It’s essential that Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS® continues to present itself as a single entity in social media, with one voice. Our members and other audiences are best served by having as few profiles and groups as possible, with many posts and information flowing through them, vs. having a large number of profiles and groups, each with separate followings and few posts. ACAR maintains three Facebook accounts (1 for ACAR, 1 for YPN, and 1 for the Realtor Essentials Store), three Twitter accounts, one YouTube channel, two LinkedIn profiles, and three Instagram pages (1 for ACAR, 1 for YPN, and 1 for the Realtor Essentials Store) to promote all ACAR messages and activities. This ensures a ‘consistent’ brand for the Association and all its programs, services and communications with our members.

### 4. To post or not to post

In deciding when an item should be posted to a channel or site, consider whether:

- The goal is to reach a broad base of members.
- There is a commitment, enough information and content to publish at least one piece of content each week.
- The content provided is more information, not a specific RSS feed to a widget.
- Each department is doing something at least once a week that can be communicated to the membership.
- ACAR has the resources or information to publish new content at least once a day.
- The content appeals to a broad spectrum of members.
- A large segment of members wants to subscribe only to “specific” content.

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

#### • Facebook & Instagram

To build a relationship with members on Facebook and Instagram, ACAR shares the latest real estate news, shows the impact of that information on the membership, and demonstrates the many benefits and resources ACAR has to offer. By providing information and resources that help REALTORS® do business smarter and easier, ACAR will continue to cultivate a cadre of members with positive feelings toward the Association. Our goal is to reach those members who are not already actively engaged with ACAR and are not aware of the programs and benefits their ACAR membership provides.

#### • Twitter

Twitter’s forced brevity is the key to its success. Its character limit on each communication forces users to keep announcements and conversations short and simple. Some helpful guidelines in using Twitter:

##### **Follow and be followed. Twitter is opt-in.**

- Communication on Twitter is not necessarily reciprocal. When one member of Twitter finds value in another member’s posts, he chooses to subscribe to that member by following him or her. That member may or may not choose to follow him or her back.
- Each member’s Twitter page links to a list of the members he follows, and of those that follow him.



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- **YouTube**

ACAR uses YouTube to enable brief and rich media content to be shared on other social networks. Our YouTube postings are based on the availability of quality and relevant content. To build a relationship with members on YouTube, ACAR will share only premium content. Items will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Popularity of the topic and content item on AkronClevelandRealtors.com or Facebook
- Priority to members, based on likelihood that members will share videos on a particular topic.
- Priority to ACAR strategic initiatives.

Our publishing frequency is based on the availability of appropriate and relevant content.

## **ORGANIZING ACAR SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS**

We have developed a request system similar to the ACAR's *Communication Connection*, where staff submits items to the Communications Department for posting via Monday.com, with the exception of Government Affairs during the state Legislative session. (Government Affairs has its own access rights to upload 'calls for action' and other issue related content as time & availability permit. If ACAR's GAD needs assistance with postings, the GAD will include the submission on Monday.com) Each department must submit content to the Communications Department in a timely manner for posting on the profile page.

All submissions for posting should include the following:

- Brief, concise content
- The 5 Ws: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How to take action
- Request for date of publishing and if the information should be featured more than once
- Include external links and/or attachments as applicable

In the event that a sub-group or committee of ACAR want to create a new social media property, that particular group will make a recommendation to be presented to the Communications Committee for approval. These recommendations may or may not need to go to the ACAR Board of Directors for approval depending on the discretion of the Communications Committee. Exceptions to this rule include candidates running for office for OR or NAR.

**ACAR employees must adhere to the rules contained in the ACAR Employee Manual.**

Members of ACAR should observe the following guidelines:

- **Personal Does Not Mean Private:** When you participate in social media, your professional and private lives become more integrated. Expressing your personal beliefs in social media raises awareness of your profile among the Association's members.



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- When addressing issues relating to the Association (real estate, property rights, interest rates, housing market statistics, etc.), explain that you represent a REALTOR® Association and that any personal opinions you express may not be those of the Association. Don't post any confidential or proprietary information regarding the Association or its members.
- Don't say or do anything online you wouldn't say or do face to face.

### **Participating on social media on the Association's behalf**

- Know the Association's positions: When speaking for ACAR on industry-related topics, it is your responsibility to be familiar with the Association's position. If you are not, it is your responsibility to become familiar, to find a more qualified person to speak, or to state that this is not within your area of expertise.
- In political discourse, we must all behave as a member of the REALTOR® Party. To serve members' interests, ACAR works with elected officials from both major political parties who support issues important to REALTORS®. When representing the Association, refrain from expressing your own political views about individual politicians. The REALTOR® Party is our only party.



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## **Additional Social Media Guidelines**

ACAR Staff (CEO, COO and Communications Director) as well as the current Communications Committee chair reserve the right to remove comments/posts.

### **1. No Promotions or Spam**

Give more than you take to this group. Self-promotion, spam and irrelevant links aren't allowed.

### **2. Be Kind and Courteous**

We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Let's treat everyone with respect. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required.

### **3. No Hate Speech or Bullying**

Make sure everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed. In keeping with the guidelines concerning "hate speech" set forth by NAR, the ACAR staff shall be empowered to remove or "hide" any comment or series of comments (on any of ACAR's social media platforms) that could be deemed as negative, inappropriate, offensive, or falling into the category of hate speech. This will include any commenting or emoji usage that could be construed as negative regarding the association or one of its members.

### **4. Respect Everyone's Privacy**

Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. What's shared in the group should stay in the group.

Any ACAR Member possessing admin status on any of the ACAR approved social media channels must agree to these rules for posting and submitting content before admin access is granted.