

**Social Media, Website
&
Online Forum Guide:
Posting 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 all participants, including Staff, Officers, Directors, Volunteers & Members of the Association, and third parties who participate 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. All Members agree to adhere to these guidelines as a condition of their participation.

The Association actively participates in many social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, the online community platforms and webinar/eLearning platforms for meetings and education programs.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

These are the official guidelines for online participation (including 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 on behalf of the Association to understand and follow these guidelines. Important to note: our 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 industry 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 (especially on sites that could 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 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, systems and resources 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, don't be afraid to 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, leadership, members, and the industry/profession in general. When disagreeing with others' opinions, be objective and respectful.
- **Add value.** There is an overload of information online. Contribute subjects, proven facts 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.
- **Always respect the brand,** REALTOR® trademark, copyright, fair use, confidentiality and financial disclosure laws. If you have any questions about these, contact the Association. Only you are personally responsible and accountable for your content.
- **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 updates to the Code of Ethics, including Article 10-5 regarding harassing or hate speech toward protected classes.
- **Promoting Outside (Third Party) Events/Programs.** The Association reserves the right to review and approve all advertising calendar requests. Ads may be rejected for the following reasons (and includes but is not limited to): competing time frame with a currently scheduled Association event/program, Realtor®/Affiliate recruiting/employment programs, program deemed inappropriate for association advertising space, ad does not adhere to the U.S. Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 or standard advertising laws, etc. Calendar ads are only available for purchase by Realtor® and Affiliate Members of South Shore Realtors®. Contact info@southshorerealtors.com for more information.

ASSOCIATION BUSINESS PAGE POSTING GUIDELINES

Association online and social media platforms are maintained to provide for REALTOR® and Affiliate use and to create an inclusive and safe community by the Staff, Board of Directors, Volunteer Leadership and Members. Posts will share Association information, the achievements of our Association, members and staff as well as other relevant/factual community and industry information.

If any member is made to feel intimidated or bullied, immediate action will be taken to remove the offending person from the online platform. Members should contact the Association's CEO with any questions or concerns. Complaints from member(s) should be directed to the Association CEO and/or President.

All comments posted to the Association's business pages are subject to review and may be removed by the page administrator at the discretion of the Association's Chief Executive Officer, Communications Director and Board of Directors.

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 (or the confrontation of employees or members) in a negative way is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Administrators for the Association's business pages will review all postings to ensure they do not violate the Code of Ethics or these Guidelines.

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

- 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: third party 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.

National Association of REALTORS® Policy Compliance

South Shore Realtors® maintains compliance and assists with the enforcement of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® trademark 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 virtual/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. 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 MAR 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.
- Censuring negative comments is not practiced by the Association, however, there are instances within these guidelines which warrant removal of posts (including those that can be considered offensive, abusive, obscene or socially unacceptable).
- Posts should contribute to a welcoming environment of inclusion and respect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF AGREEMENT

By participating in the Association's website, social media platforms/sites, online forums, or other platform, I agree to follow these, and other Association guidelines, relating to conduct and harassment. I understand that South Shore Realtors® expressly reserves the right to change its provisions without immediate notice.

ACTIONS TAKEN FOR VIOLATIONS

One violation of these guidelines will result in the post being removed, with a warning issued and a copy of the guidelines included. A second violation within six months will result in the offending party being removed for a period of six months. A third violation may result in permanent removal/access from the Association's online platforms. To object to a third party posting, contact the Chief Executive Officer at rtristano@southshorealtors.com