

SOCIAL MEDIA

FOR REALTORS: 101 DOS AND DON'TS



This booklet is part of the
SOCIAL MEDIA FOR REALTORS SERIES



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION *of*
REALTORS®

The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR) constantly communicates to consumers and the media the importance of choosing to work with a REALTOR® because of your unparalleled expertise, access to NAR's many resources and commitment to the Code of Ethics.

Every day, you do your part to promote yourself as a REALTOR®. And every day, your national association is doing the same.

Because of NAR's outreach – and your efforts – home buyers and sellers know there's a difference between a REALTOR® and someone who hasn't earned the right to carry that name. They recognize you as a trusted professional, respected within the industry and your community. As a result, when it comes time to buy and sell real estate, consumers turn to you.

As part of your business understanding, the effective use of social media can be a key to your success in the real estate business. This guide has two purposes, to help you take your business to a new level through the use of social media tools and to put into context your responsibilities and duties as a member of NAR when using social media. Only through both will you uphold your reputation for quality and standards of excellence in all real estate related pursuits.





According to the *2011 REALTOR® Technology Report*, 90 percent of brokers and 91 percent of agents use social media, primarily to engage with consumers and other REALTORS®. 79 percent of REALTORS® are on Facebook and 67 percent are on LinkedIn. In 2008, 67 percent of survey respondents did not engage in social media.

The use of social networking sites by REALTORS® and consumers is growing, and it is time you start using them too! These 101 tips will help you get started and on your way to understanding and utilizing social media like a pro. Use these tips to get you on the right track and help you stand apart from the competition.

IN THIS QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE YOU'LL FIND SECTIONS ON:

- Social Networking and the Connection with Real Estate
- General Social Media Tips

THEN WE'LL DELVE INTO SPECIFIC TIPS FOR THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES:

- Facebook (Your Little Black Book or Reunion)
- Twitter (The Online Cocktail Party)
- LinkedIn Tips (Your online Rolodex and Resume)
- Other popular sites include: Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Flickr, and Foursquare.

THROUGHOUT THIS GUIDE WE'VE BROKEN DOWN THE TIPS INTO TWO SECTIONS:

- Principles and Best Practices (Best practices and theory)
- Getting It Done (Action items and putting theory into practice)

We'll end by wrapping it up and provide additional resources and next steps.

THE CONNECTION WITH REAL ESTATE

Your family, friends, and business connections are using many different social websites to locate and share content. Some are reviewing articles, uploading photos and videos, or writing blogs. Here are details about some of the most popular online social networks in the real estate realm.

GENERAL SOCIAL NETWORKS

FACEBOOK

Allows users to post online profiles (including photos, information about themselves, etc.) and then connect to other users who share the same interests, experiences, etc. Facebook is built around “friends” and groups. It includes many networks of companies, regions, high schools, and colleges. Users may also create a business page for commercial use.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

TWITTER

A microblog that allows you to post messages 140 characters long. Every time you post a message, everyone who “follows” you receives it, either on Twitter.com, on their cell phone, or via one of many Twitter reader tools. Twitter posts can include hyperlinks to blog posts or Web pages, which encourages people to engage with you. In addition, Twitter is a place to engage in short conversation with people that are in your network. Find people in your community and start reaching out.

The Twitter logo, featuring the word "twitter" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font with a thin blue outline, positioned above a thin blue horizontal line.

LINKEDIN

A professional network. Build a network of past colleagues, friends, and industry experts. The Answers section helps you build a reputation as an industry expert by answering questions that others ask. Ask people to write recommendations of your work and endorse you. And consider joining the National Association of REALTORS® group on LinkedIn to network and share ideas with other REALTORS®.

The LinkedIn logo, featuring the word "Linked" in black and "in" in white lowercase letters inside a blue square, with a registered trademark symbol, positioned above a thin blue horizontal line.

GOOGLE+

Google+ is a fast growing social network with opportunities to share and engage in conversation with others. You add your connections into “circles” to keep groups of people with a commonality together. For example, “Local Connections”, “Real Estate Agents”, “Family”, etc. Users can also create a business page for commercial purposes.

The Google+ logo, featuring the word "Google" in its multi-colored font followed by a plus sign, positioned above a thin blue horizontal line.

REAL ESTATE SOCIAL NETWORKS

ACTIVERAIN

A social network for real estate professionals that offers networking and referral building. The blogging platform has tools to allow even the newest of real estate professionals to be found on the Internet.



REALTOWN

One of the oldest and most respected real estate networks, featuring a variety of online communities as well as a wealth of community created content.

REAL ESTATE SEARCH

There are many real estate search engines to choose from. These sites allow real estate professionals to market their listings, view real estate data, and promote their services. Some offer profiles and blogs. The most popular are:

- Realtor.com
- Trulia.com
- Zillow.com
- Frontdoor.com

BLOGS

A blog is a website where you add content on an ongoing basis. New posts end up at the top of the blog so people can scan and see your posts by dates. A blog is a great resource for a real estate professional and although it isn't a social network itself, it can be used for social networking. The most popular blogging platform is Wordpress. Wordpress.com is free and is hosted by Wordpress; Wordpress.org is also free, however you need to provide a website hosting company. They have many choices of template designs for you to choose from. Realtor.com has a free "Featured Blog" go to the "For Realtors" section to find out more about it.



PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

FLICKR:

A storage place for photos, as well as a social network. If you use Flickr, you will meet people looking for great local pictures and people finding your photos. Flickr has a great interface that lets you also post photos to your blogs.



PICASA:

A free photo organization and editing tool from Google. For a free program, it really has a lot to offer. Picasa is desktop software that runs on Windows; it can be downloaded from <http://picasa.google.com/>.



YOUTUBE:

A video-based social network. If people do online searches for your communities or town, they are likely to see your videos, and they may contact you from there.



SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

The internet is used by millions everyday and people are connected virtually every minute using their computers and mobile devices. Web applications facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration.

The World Wide Web is not a software or a hardware, but allows for anyone to create content on the Web to communicate with their niche. An example of social media in practice is that you can become a source who recommends products and services that solve problems. Some of the tools that can help you provide this information depend on your comfort level and willingness to use the tools.



You'll find that a number of the dos and don'ts have a video icon next to them. You can find out more about these tips at <http://TheTechByte.com/NAR>. These tips are meant to provide you a general start for all social networks and media.

SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW-PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

1. **DO** Take NAR's e-PRO® Certification Program at www.eProNAR.com
2. **DO** Get yourself out there and join the networking sites that will help you expand your sphere of influence.
3. **DO** Promote yourself and your business but **DON'T** overdo it. **DO** let readers know you are a real estate professional but **DON'T** do it by broadcasting listings/sales. People want to know you as a person, not just by your profession.
4. **DO** Remember that the Code of Ethics principles still apply online.
5. **DO** Realize that the ROI (return on investment) of social media can be slow, and it may take some time before you see a return for the time you put into connecting online.
6. **DO** Realize that social networking isn't for everyone. Explore several social media sites and choose one to focus on making a presence in.
7. **DO** Remember that you want to be where your current and prospective clients are. Make it easy for people to find you.
8. **DO** Manage your social media efforts yourself, so you are completely aware and in touch with what is going on with your pages, profiles, blogs, and sites.



9. DO Set up Google Alerts to monitor your reputation (your name, brand, user names) and area (where you sell real estate, your farm areas).

- 10. DO** Make timely posts. Focus on the community in which you sell real estate and the local economic environment.
- 11. DO** Use free blogging tools. You can get started with a free Featured Blog from REALTOR.com, or you can choose to use a service like Blogger <www.blogger.com> or Wordpress <www.wordpress.org>.
- 12. DO** Write compelling headlines for your blog posts, so you can catch the attention of potential buyers and sellers. You can then use the same headline and link to your post on Social Networking Platforms.
- 13. DO** Let people know you are online and integrate your social media profile information into tools that are currently working for you (print, newsletters, business cards, email, website, etc.).

- 14. DO** Make sure you have a website or blog and that people can find your website when they search for real estate in your community. Your website remains the foundation for your business – your social media endeavors should always direct people back to your site.
- 15. DO** Start a blog. On your blog, write posts about your properties and about your particular skill set. Promote your blog posts on other social media sites.
- 16. DO** Give your profile pizzazz by using your “elevator speech” for your profile and description. An elevator speech is the 10-second description of yourself that you would use in an interview.
- 17. DO** Go mobile. Use your smart phone to maximize your time on social media. For example, while in line at the grocery store you can update your Facebook status, accomplishing your social media goals without taking up too much of your valuable time.
- 18. DO** Include keywords that a client might search for in your blog and social media posts.
- 19. DO** Edit your profile and security settings quarterly on all networks. You can reveal as much or as little about yourself as you wish and choose what information you want to share with others.



20. **DO** Create personalized profiles/bios on each site, making each similar but not duplicated. LinkedIn is more businesslike, while Twitter and Facebook are more casual.
21. **DON'T** Replace money-generating activities with social media activities. Spend time on social media when you would otherwise not be making money.
22. **DON'T** Make it a one-way conversation. Interact with other people and areas of interest online. Make it a two-way conversation by showing interest and engaging with others.
23. **DON'T** Keep your profile description too simple. Be sure to include personal interests as well as your profession. Your followers want to know a little bit about you to build a relationship.
24. **DON'T** Focus on the numbers of people you connect with. Focus on the connections that will provide you with value. Follow people that have many followers and similar interests.



SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW-GETTING IT DONE

25. **DO** Develop a plan so you can focus your time efficiently. Research the social networks in which your target clients are actively participating on so you can engage with them.
26. **DO** Start with the three largest networks: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
27. **DO** Commit the time to developing yourself and your social media tools. Focus your attention on social media for at least 6 to 12 months to see results.
28. **DO** Set goals for what you want to get from your social media efforts, figure out why you are doing this and what is realistic.
29. **DO** Focus your Social Media connections on people who live where you sell real estate. This will expand your local reach in the community.



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43. DO Import your contact lists into Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter so you can connect with our sphere.

30. **DO** Watch how other real estate professionals are using social media by reading their blogs, and connection with them on social networks.
31. **DO** Use social media consolidating tools like www.HootSuite.com to monitor many social networks all in one place.
32. **DO** Post about things your clients are asking you about. If one client asks you about a particular topic, someone else probably has the same question.
33. **DO** Set aside time in your busy schedule to dedicate to using the social media tools.
34. **DON'T** Give up on social media tools after only a short period of time. It will take time to develop your network and the real value in these tools.

35. DON'T Write overly complicated blog or social media posts. Keep your posts short and to the point.

(YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK OR REUNION)

facebook

Facebook has more than 350 million active viewers, with 65 million of them using mobile technology to visit the network. With about 50 percent of users logging in daily, more than 8 billion minutes are collectively spent on Facebook each day. The average user on Facebook has 130 friends, and the fastest-growing demographic of Facebook is those 35 years and older. In NAR's 2009 social media survey of members, Facebook was the most used social network among respondents.

FACEBOOK-PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

36. **DO** Keep in mind that Facebook's Terms of Service states, "You will not use your personal profile for your own commercial gain." For commercial purposes, create a business page rather than only a personal Facebook profile.
37. **DO** Treat your Facebook page as a conversation. Respond to all feedback whether positive, negative, or difficult.
38. **DO** Share your life and experiences. This is an opportunity to be social and share your interests. Adding personal items to your pages like photos of your family and pets allows current and prospective customers to learn more about who you are and engage with your interests and personality.
39. **DO** Socialize. Be on Facebook for the reason people are there. People are there to socialize, so you should do the same. This can be accomplished with comments and "likes".
41. **DO** Use technology like your smartphone to multitask with social media. Log in to Twitter and Facebook on your phone to stay connected.
42. **DO** Make personal connections on social media sites. The sales will come later as a result of your increased reach.
44. **DON'T** Go on to Facebook with a singular goal of selling. This will be looked at negatively and set you up for failure.
45. **DON'T** Write only about real estate. People will stop following you and listening to you. Focus on the community, that will have interest to a greater population.
46. **DON'T** Outright ask for business on Facebook. You can offer services if people are looking but don't go over the top.

47. DON'T Force your conversations. If you aren't interested, don't fake it. People will know when you aren't authentic.

48. DON'T Target other agents clients on their Business Pages or personal profiles.

FACEBOOK-GETTING IT DONE

49. DO Find pages that your target market would be interested in, and “like” those pages.

50. DO Make yourself known by updating your status and staying engaged in discussions.

51. DO Get Personal. A good formula for real estate professionals on Facebook is: three parts personal or community and one part business.

52. DO Use content you find interesting. Don't recreate the wheel with your posts. Link to interesting stories; try to post good and relevant content daily.

53. DO Use Facebook to search “Posts by everyone” for brand keywords in users' (with open privacy settings) statuses.



61. DO Organize your friends into lists so you can manage your time and focus on engaging with certain lists of people. (ie: Locals, Current Clients, etc)

63. DO Ask customers to “like” your business page on Facebook. Doing so, will immediately spread your message beyond your own network..

62. DO Use content that consumers will find interesting, HouseLogic www.houselogic.com has a free tool – the REALTORS® Content Resource www.houselogic.com/members – that REALTORS® can use to publish content to consumers on the topics that mean the most to them.





- 54. DO** Comment on what other post on Facebook. Spend five minutes of your Facebook time each day to comment on what some of your friends of your personal and business page have said. Stay involved.
- 55. DO** Use the share button to share posts from your business page onto your personal profile (this should be done periodically), which will help market your business page.
- 56. DO** Create a Facebook Business page for your community or neighborhood, in addition to one for yourself or your business. Focus on what would interest people living in the area in which you sell real estate.
- 57. DO** Interact with people. Expand your sphere of influence and get to know people. Comment on people's status updates and/or pictures.
- 58. DO** Use Facebook as a lead generation tool. If someone in your network posts that they are looking for a new house, be sure to offer your services to help them or to refer them to another agent.
- 59. DO** Give careful consideration to exactly who sees your profile and when. Create a limited Facebook profile for those people you are unsure about whether to include. By default, your limited profile contains everything in your full profile, so take the time to edit it down.
- 60. DO** Use Facebook as your business page from time-to-time and interact with community members on popular pages.
- 64. DON'T** Send out mass friend request or 'friend' someone you don't know. For everyone you do know and want to add as a friend, send a personal message in addition to your friend request with a bit of information on how they know you.



According to the Twitter home page, “Twitter is a free service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short updates, often called “tweets” of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile or your blog, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search.”

TWITTER-PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

- 65. DO** Use Twitter to stay informed about the latest market relevant information by following real estate newsmakers. Use Twitter as the pulse of what is going on in your area.
- 66. DO** Engage your followers. Ask your followers to participate in conversation by posing questions and asking for advice.
- 67. DO** Retweet interesting and/or valuable information. This is just as good as creating your own content online.
- 68. DO** Keep it personal with a picture. Let people see who you are by personalizing your profile pictures. Many people will not follow someone without a picture and/or avatar.
- 69. DO** Reply to tweets. This engagement will potentially open you up to a greater audience.
- 70. DON'T** Be passive. Twitter is constantly changing and moving. Stay attuned to what is going on and evolve with it.



83. DO Focus on keeping posts short. With only 140 characters, you'll need to learn how to say more with less.

- 71. DON'T** Overdo the amount of your participation, or the amount of selling you do in your Twitter posts. Keep your tweets subtle and don't over promote yourself or your business.
- 72. DON'T** Overuse links on Twitter and constantly direct your followers somewhere else.
- 73. DON'T** Feel like you have to start conversations. It's okay to eavesdrop on Twitter - join in!
- 74. DON'T** Spend all your time on Twitter talking about your open house and listings.



TWITTER-GETTING IT DONE

- 75. **DO** Manage your Twitter account using a tool like TweetDeck <www.tweetdeck.com> to stay on top of your Twitter activity. TweetDeck allows you to stay connected with your contacts across Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and more.
- 76. **DO** Shorten the URLs to Web pages that you mention in tweets, in order to maximize the information in your tweets. Use a service like <http://bit.ly/> or Bud URL <www.budurl.com>, which also lets you track who has clicked on the link from Twitter.
- 77. **DO** Provide an interesting teaser to any URL you use in a tweet so that it gives your followers a reason to click on the link.
- 78. **DO** Search key words to find people to engage with. Use the search function in Twitter to find terms like “MYTOWN”, “real estate”, “COMMUNITYNAME”, and open or join in the discussion.
- 79. **DO** Try to respond to messages you receive as well as any mentions, though know that you DON'T have to respond to everything.
- 80. **DO** Post pictures, especially those in your community. Use a service like Instagram.
- 81. **DO** Create lists of your followers. It will make it easier to organize everyone and focus your engagement.
- 82. **DO** Manage your account on the go using popular apps on your mobile devices..
- 85. **DON'T** Link alone. Don't only use a URL as your tweet – describe the link you are posting.



- 84. **DO** Use hashtags to identify your tweets about a popular topic or event. Hashtags are set apart with a ‘#’ in front of a word, #hashtag and can be clicked on to find all conversation around that topic. Anyone can create a hashtag, but it is a good idea to make sure it isn't in use by someone for content that you don't want related to your tweets.



According to LinkedIn, LinkedIn “is an interconnected network of experienced professionals from around the world, representing 150 industries and 200 countries. You can find, be introduced to, and collaborate with qualified professionals that you need to work with to accomplish your goals.”

LINKEDIN-PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

- 86. DO** Use LinkedIn as your networking site to ask for business and ask for real estate referrals.
- 87. DO** Lean more towards a professional/business side versus personal/casual on LinkedIn like using a professional head shot as your avatar.
- 88. DO** Set up your LinkedIn profile as your online resume. List what your specialty is and what types of homes you sell.
- 89. DO** Grow your sphere of influence on LinkedIn by making as many connections as possible with people you know. DO change and add a personal message with every request for a connection reminding the person how you know them.

LINKEDIN-GETTING IT DONE

- 90. DO** Recommend people and ask for recommendations on LinkedIn for yourself. These are powerful forms of client testimonies attributed right to the person giving the recommendation.
- 91. DO** Participate in “LinkedIn Answers.” You can position yourself as an expert to answer questions about real estate or recommend connections who can help.
- 92. DO** Join and interact on Groups that many social networking sites have in place that share a common interest or location.



93. **DO** Use Google+ to create a personal and business page. Be sure your Google profile is updated which is your profile on Google+.
94. **DO** Use Google+ Circles to keep your connections organized in groups so you can focus your engagement.
95. **DO** Use Foursquare to leave tips at local businesses and places. Share where you check-in on other sites where you are active.
96. **DO** Use Flickr to upload your pictures around the areas you sell real estate. Images are often found when people are searching using search engines.
97. **DO** Use descriptive title and tags for your content on YouTube and Flickr.
98. **DO** Use the embed method to share your video content from YouTube to your website. This gives a better result than using the link method.
99. **DO** Upload short videos to YouTube. Your listings, your community, interviews with affiliates, client testimonials, etc.
100. **DON'T** Connect with people on LinkedIn that you don't know.

OTHER

101. **DO** Use Pinterest <<http://Pinterest.com>> to share boards relating to home maintenance, decorating, and community interests.



WRAPPING IT UP

The tips provided will get you started using social media tools, but remember social media is constantly changing and evolving. You will need to constantly change and evolve to stay on top of what is going on. Remember that if you put in some time and make an effort, you will start to see the return you are looking for. Here are additional resources that may be helpful:

FOURSQUARE <www.foursquare.com>

PICASSA <picasa.google.com>

FLICKR <www.flickr.com>

INSTAGRAM <www.Instagram.com>

PINTREST <www.Pintrest.com>

GOOGLE+ <www.Plus.Google.com>

YOUTUBE <www.YouTube.com>

FACEBOOK <www.Facebook.com>

LINKEDIN <www.Linkedin.com>

TWITTER <www.Twitter.com>

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINER KIM WOOD <<http://TheTechByte.com>>

VIDEO DOS AND DON'TS BY TRAINER AMY CHOREW AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INSTITUTE (VIDEOS AND FURTHER INFORMATION) <<http://TheTechByte.com/NAR>>

FEEDBURNER (RSS FEEDS) <www.feedburner.com>

REALTOR.COM FEATURED BLOG

<solutioncenter.realtor.com/Agents/FeaturedBlog.aspx>

WORDPRESS <www.wordpress.org>

HOUSELOGIC REALTOR® CONTENT RESOURCE

<www.houselogic.com/members>

GOOGLE ALERTS <www.google.com/alerts>

BIT.LY [HTTP://BIT.LY/](http://bit.ly/) OR **BUD URL** <www.budurl.com>

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®' SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES AND PRESENCES

<www.realtor.org/about_nar/social_media>

FIELD GUIDE TO SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR REALTORS®

<www.realtor.org/library/library/fg125>

FIELD GUIDE TO TWITTER <www.realtor.org/library/library/fg234>

NAR'S e-PRO® CERTIFICATION, RAISING THE BAR FOR REALTORS® THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AND REAL ESTATE TECHNOLOGY.

NAR's e-PRO® Certification Program provides a roadmap to help you serve hyper-connected consumers of today and tomorrow. Course topics for Day 1 (live or online) include the changing market, how to connect with consumers, the online conversation, and reputation management. Day 2 (online only) provides hands-on discovery of business tech tools such as e-strategy, mobile offices, micro-blogging, rich media, and NAR resources. For more information, visit <http://www.ePRONAR.com> or email ePRO@REALTORS.org.



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Social Media for Realtors®: 101 Dos and Don'ts is part of the NAR Social Media for REALTORS® series, and is an easy-to-understand tool that will help real estate professionals like you take your business to the next level using the power of online social media tools, saving you time, money, and effort by getting started with key dos and don'ts.

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