

SUMMER 2024

# AEXPERIENCE

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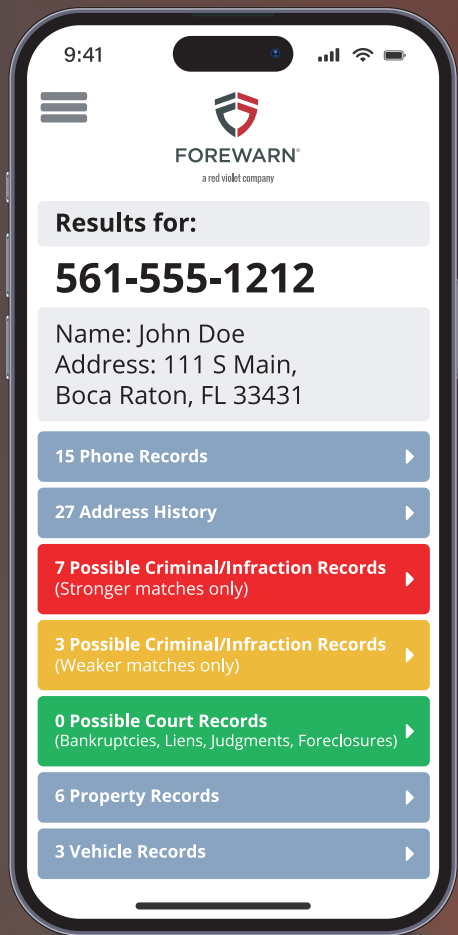
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AExperience, powered by REALTOR® Magazine, covers activities, programs, best practices, trends and ideas in REALTOR® association management.

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## ON THE WEB

### Drive Economic Development and Serve Members

Help your commercial members sell the value of their community. The Economic Development Organization Toolkit is a new resource that helps associations collaborate with local EDOs on common goals. Access it at [nar.realtor/commercial/economic-development-toolkit](https://nar.realtor/commercial/economic-development-toolkit).







AEC CHAIR

## Collaborate, Calm and Connect

**W**elcome to summer 2024! After successfully navigating a leadership transition at

NAR, we are now helping our members navigate definite dates, plans and practice changes resulting from the class-action litigation. As association executives, it is a wonderful time for us to work with one another at the local, state and national levels to share and supplement the resources that we have all created to assist our brokers and agents with these changes. As I write this, our MLS partners are also working to ensure the new rules are in place. Meanwhile, our members are finding new ways to collaborate with each other to market properties. For the latest updates, visit facts.realtor.

Because we have gone through so much change recently, it is important to remember work-life balance. We will be together in late August for Leadership Week, and we will begin plans for 2025. Please force yourself to take a couple of days off to rest and reset if you haven't planned to do so already. I saw a colleague at the REALTORS® Legislative Meetings who had just returned from three days off, spending time with family and zero time on work email. He looked happy,



Theresa Hatton, RCE, is CEO of the Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® and 2024 AEC chair.

relaxed and full of energy. Lesson learned! We all need to treat ourselves and our brains to a little downtime to refresh and regroup.

We are now more than 90 days past our joint AE Institute in San Diego. Since then, I've challenged myself to be more connected with my colleagues across the country. Sometimes we get into habits, and AEI is a good opportunity to learn and then change things up when we get back to our home offices. Through this process, I have learned more about how others are working with their members on outreach, professional standards complaints, land scams and other issues. It has greatly assisted me in being proactive to find new tools and resources to help our members.

I am curious: What have you implemented or changed since attending AEI? Let me know at [thatton@marealtor.com](mailto:thatton@marealtor.com).

We are here for each other! If you have something to share, please do, and if you need something, please reach out.

## AEXPERIENCE

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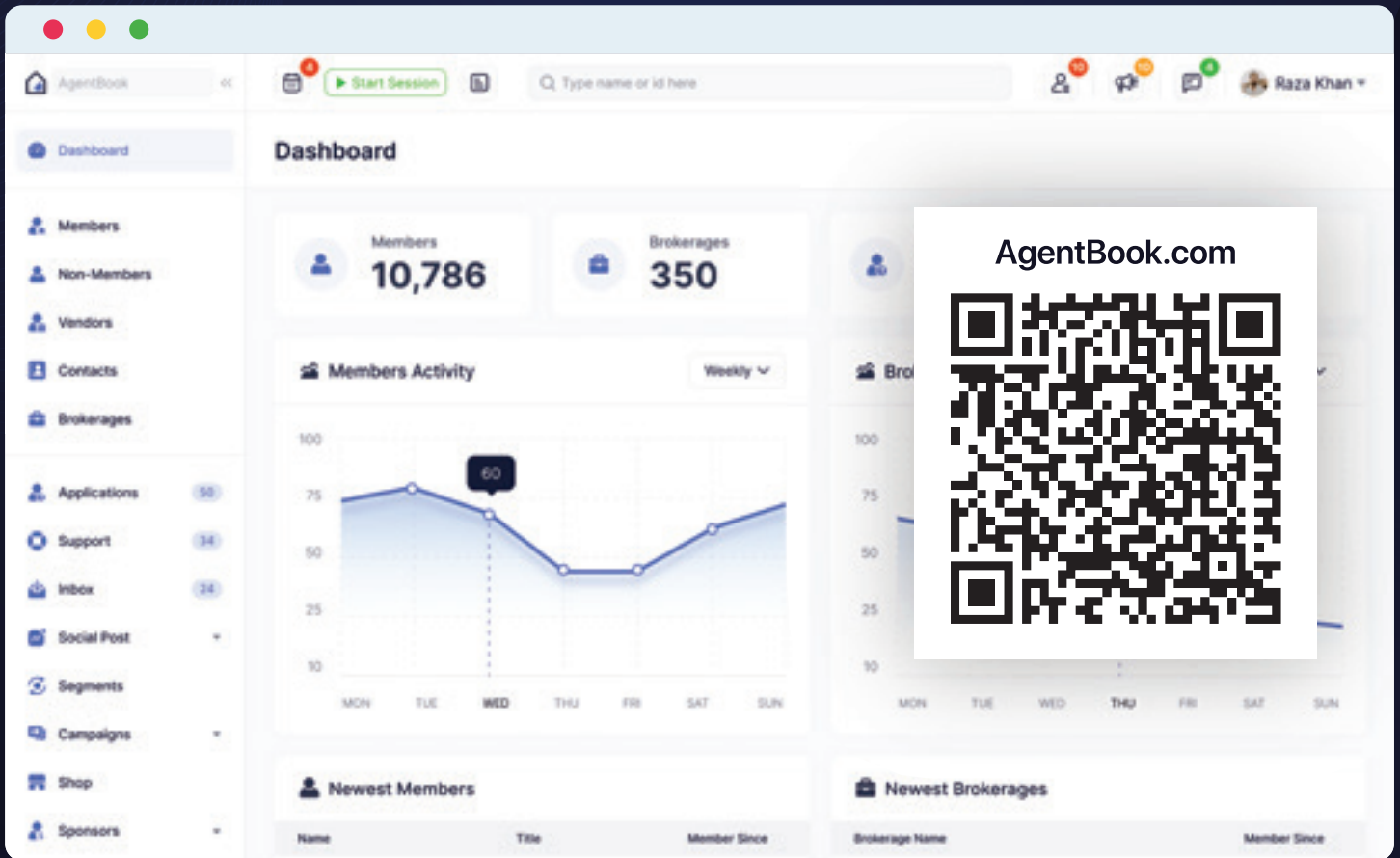
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## Exclusive Real Estate Association Management System (AMS)



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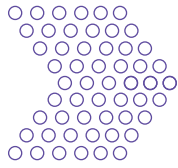
Member Portal



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# AOR IN ACTION

NEWS AND IDEAS FROM YOUR PEERS



Michelle Mills Clement, CAR's CEO, moderated a panel discussion in front of a packed audience during the documentary viewing.

## HISTORY LESSON

### Acknowledging the Past

As the lights went up inside The DuSable Black History Museum in Chicago, emotions were running high in the audience of nearly 300.

The Chicago Association of REALTORS® was hosting a screening of *Shame of Chicago, Shame of the Nation*—a four-part series it helped sponsor—documenting the role of local real estate associations in promoting restrictive covenants that kept Black buyers out of predominately white neighborhoods. There was frustration, anger, shame—but also hope and positivity.

“At the core, it’s important to acknowledge the past and not act like it didn’t happen,” says Michelle Mills Clement, RCE, CAE, CAR’s CEO. “CAR members attending wanted to know what we can do, as REALTORS®, to counteract the last 100 years of our history.”

Panelists at the screening urged attendees to become educated on how the U.S. got to this point “so we all can educate others,” Clement says. The emotions also have a role: “They’re what evoke us to take action and be a part of future change.”

#### Here are actions CAR and its members are taking:

- **The 360° Summit: Leading with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** creates a space for conversations and powerful connections.
- Through **The REALTORS® Real Estate School**, CAR offers courses such as NAR’s At Home With Diversity certification course and its own fair housing course.
- **CAR’s Diversity Committee, “the D77,”** gives a voice to each of Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods.
- **Partnerships**, such as with the local chapters of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, Asian Real Estate Association of America, The LGBTQ Alliance and others, help build a diversity within the profession.
- **Public policy advocacy** helps advance broader homeownership availability, accessibility and affordability.



## EN ESPAÑOL

### How to Promote NAR’s Bilingual Resources to Members

Today, at least 120,000 National Association of REALTORS® members identify as Spanish speakers. The homeownership rate among Hispanics in the U.S. has hit an all-time high of 51%, approaching the overall U.S. rate of 65.2%, according to the NAR 2024 Snapshot of Race and Home Buying in America, which reflects 2022 data (the most recent available).

**NAR en Español** ([nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol](http://nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol)) was launched in 2019 after members asked for more content, tools and resources in Spanish, says Alejandro Escudero, NAR director of global strategy and engagement.

Consider promoting these translated resources on your association website to help support your members—and local buyers and sellers—who speak English as a second language:

- The **2024 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice**, in 14 languages ([nar.realtor/code-of-ethics-translations](http://nar.realtor/code-of-ethics-translations))
- Trademark-related assets explaining how to use the **REALTOR® logo and trademark** ([nar.realtor/logo-y-la-marca-realtor](http://nar.realtor/logo-y-la-marca-realtor))
- Step-by-step guides that explain how **working with an agent who is a REALTOR® adds value** to the process ([nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol](http://nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol))
- **Settlement FAQs**, a document explaining NAR’s actions to end litigation of seller claims related to broker commissions ([facts.realtor](http://facts.realtor))
- **“179 Ways Agents Who Are REALTORS® Are Worth Every Penny of Their Compensation”** ([nar.realtor/179-maneras](http://nar.realtor/179-maneras))
- How **associations can work effectively with volunteers** and increase member participation ([nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol](http://nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol))
- **“Window to the Law”** videos with Spanish subtitles ([nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol](http://nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol))
- **Webinars on business practices**, such as how to delegate and achieve work-life balance, and how to add value in times of crisis ([nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol](http://nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol))
- Assets from the **“That’s Who We R”** national consumer advertising campaign in multiple languages ([nar.realtor/thats-who-we-r](http://nar.realtor/thats-who-we-r); find international language assets under the More tab)

“Because we are an increasingly diverse and global organization and believe that this opens a great deal of business opportunity for our members, I look forward to seeing our state and local associations fully leverage the potential of these translated resources,” Escudero says.



# GOOD

# NEWS!

## REALTORS® ARE GOOD NEIGHBORS



Hundreds of REALTORS® and associations have been featured on **REALTORS® Are Good Neighbors social media channels**. Highlight your members who uplift the community through volunteer work.

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- Attracts positive media attention to your association.
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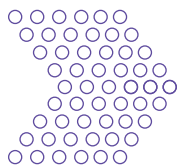
Share your members' stories today!

[nar.realtor/rgn](https://nar.realtor/rgn)



Follow us at   @RealtorsAreGoodNeighbors #RealtorsAreGoodNeighbors

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## Professional Development Reimagined

BY KRISTIN PARKER

Striving to meet our members' needs is one of the fundamental catalysts for change. Are you delivering value in the area of professional development? If not, it may be time to reimagine the professional development you provide, moving beyond solely passive learning options to offer a variety of dynamic and interactive experiences.

**1 Content.** Start with resources tailored to various preferences to ensure all members can engage with the content in a manner that suits their learning style:

- Reading materials, blog posts, etc.
- Short and long-form video content
- Interactive activities
- Podcast episodes

**2 Digital platforms.** Platforms like Zoom, WebEx and Microsoft Teams are often used for meetings and classroom spaces that require live interaction. Online learning management systems such as Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle or Thinkific, on the other hand, typically have robust tools and features to enhance and support the education experience with interactive content. No matter the platform, consider increasing engagement beyond a simple video stream or meeting recording. For

example, can you use the whiteboard function for some enriching interaction, or can you gamify the content in a way that allows the member to practice, build and retain the information learned? Does the platform offer ways to diversify the delivery of content with video, quizzes, interactive build-your-own adventure stories, animations, etc.? Also consider how to provide a blend of live interactive and prerecorded sessions so members can engage in real time or at their own pace.

**3 Increased accessibility.** Location, time, devices and ease of use are all important considerations. What technology or application is most common or familiar? What learning curve is required with a new technology? Use focus groups to help identify user experience pitfalls during planning and development.

**4 Engagement.** Create a sense of community by encouraging networking and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Use social media and other online tools to keep members connected, engaged and informed of all your association's offerings.

An association's longevity is a testament to the power of embracing change and viewing a challenge as an opportunity for innovation. Adopting a proactive approach not only inspires others but also encourages further evolution within the association.

*Kristin Parker has been the education and events director of the Saint Paul Area Association of REALTORS® since 2018. With nearly 20 years of experience in the real estate industry, she has guided thousands of real estate professionals through training in evolving technologies.*

# 4.5

The average number of hours adults spend on their phone daily.

SOURCE: STATISTA.COM

Cutting down on screen time, even by just an hour, can have big benefits. It can boost your mood, help you sleep better, reduce stress, improve focus and help you be more productive at work, according to Piedmont Healthcare. Ease into reducing your screen time by putting your phone out of sight for an hour every day or after a certain time in the evening.



## TRUST-BUILDING

### Partnership Is Paramount

"Change happens, change came, change is here," National Association of REALTORS® Interim CEO Nykia Wright said at NAR's annual Communication Directors Institute, held in Oklahoma City in early July. Speaking to 170 communication directors from state and local REALTOR® associations nationwide, Wright emphasized the importance of trust and cooperation between NAR and its state and local leaders.

The event was a chance for communication directors, who have been fielding questions from members about NAR's proposed settlement agreement, to learn more about how NAR is supporting members, associations and MLSs through industry changes.

"Your ideas and your voices are important," Wright said. "NAR is transforming the organization to meet tomorrow's needs. Let's start with trust. I need to know your opinions and understand what happens at the local and state level."

[nar.realtor/ae/local-partnerships-are-paramount](https://nar.realtor/ae/local-partnerships-are-paramount)





## “When you’re a staff of one, how do you handle board members saying they’ll ‘fill in for you’ during an absence?”

When members suggest taking on association management tasks, it’s a good time to remind them that the association executive manages and the board governs. Here’s how Stephanie Keister, CEO of the Glenwood Springs Association of REALTORS®, handles it:

“I let my membership know that I will be out traveling and thank them in advance for their grace and understanding that my availability will be limited. I let them know that I may not be able to respond

immediately but will do my best to respond to emails and phone calls within a day. The same messaging is on my out-of-office email and voicemail.

“When I took over a year ago as CEO, I updated all our technology. Now, everything I do is online and all the association’s files are on a secure Box account, so I can access everything while traveling. And all my phone messages are delivered to me via email (easier to read a message while in a breakout session than to listen to one!).

The tech upgrade has made it much easier to travel. Yes, it’s a pain to have to work a bit in my hotel room at night, catching up on requests and issues. But I’m at peace with that, as it’s part of the job I signed up for.

“Members do mean well. But as I told one board member, ‘How would you feel about me writing up some contracts for your current listings while you’re on vacation?’ The message was heard loud and clear!”



MEMBERS’ SHOES

## Why I Decided to Go Through the Licensing Process

BY MEIGHAN HARRIS, RCE, IOM

Although the standing rules of my association (Bonita Springs-Estero REALTORS® in Florida) don’t allow association executives to hold an active license, I got board approval to do so. I wanted to see what my members experienced—and to understand why they sometimes didn’t know what I expected them to know when they became association members. It was an eye-opening experience. Here are my five reasons to go through this process.

- 1 By going through the licensing process start to finish, you’ll see exactly what information future members are being given.
- 2 You’ll better understand how the licensing process works. For example, I was told the state doesn’t send emails to remind you of your license renewal or the fee. Not true!
- 3 While this might not be true in all states, in Florida, you can hold the license for an association’s real estate school if you are a licensed broker or real estate instructor. Otherwise, you’ll need to ask a member who fills these requirements to take on this role. This is why, along with my real estate license, I’m also pursuing my broker license.
- 4 When you understand what members don’t learn as part of the licensing course, it helps you create relevant education for new licensees. For example, I found that the pre-licensing course taught to the test—no more, no less—and had nothing to do with conducting a real estate business.
- 5 You can encourage members to take skills-based courses such as the post-license course and GRI 100 series sooner so they can be better educated on how to run their real estate businesses. Another reason: In Florida—and some other states—if members don’t take the post-license course before they must renew their license, the license goes into “null and void” status, and they must start the pre-licensing process over again, including the state application, fingerprints, the course and the test. I have seen this happen.

SCHOOL OF JOY

## Put on Your Rose-Colored Glasses

Staff and members are looking to association executives and other leadership for guidance on how they should respond during this time of incredible transformation across the industry. How do you handle change amid challenging situations? You can do it with negativity, or you can do it with a conscious focus on joy.

“Life is all about learning, unlearning and relearning,” Amanda Gore, below, CEO of The Joy Project and closing speaker at the 2024 Joint AE Institute, says. “We can rewire our brains and change our story anytime we want to. Emotional intelligence is about knowing yourself, managing yourself and managing relationships.”

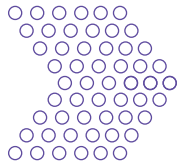
- **Be aware of the stories you tell yourself.** You can do this by observing your own thoughts and feelings and considering how you feel about yourself and how others feel around you.
- **Understand the core fears that unconsciously drive us:** “I’m not worth loving,” “I’m not good enough,” “I’m unsafe in some way,” or “I don’t fit in.” If you’re able to dispel these fears in yourself and others, people will feel better around you.
- **Manage yourself and your mood to build resilience and to model the right spirit for your team.** For example, use “gratitude glasses”; there’s always something to be grateful for. During moments of stress, take two deep breaths and blow the air out forcefully.



- **Manage relationships by giving people recognition and acknowledgement.** Create a “ta-da” culture by recognizing people’s accomplishments, big and small. And smile with your eyes as well as your mouth.

“The first emotion in response to change is fear,” adds Gore. “Your mission today, should you choose to accept it, is to challenge your fear story and consciously choose gratitude. That’s what starts rewiring the brain for joy.”

📍 For more, visit [amandagore.com](http://amandagore.com).



# AOR IN ACTION

NEWS AND IDEAS FROM YOUR PEERS



Stephanie White and Christy Guy

## Why I Joined the AE Mentor Program

Stepping into an association executive role may be everything you thought it would be—only a lot harder.

That's why Christy Guy, CEO of Mobile Area Association of REALTORS®, is glad she embraced the National Association of REALTORS® AE Mentor program—as a mentee working with her former CEO, Stephanie S. White, CRB, RCE, now at Arkansas REALTORS®.

"As a leader, it is important to know that you can't and shouldn't do everything.

"Stephanie helped me to overcome my thoughts on being uncomfortable with delegation. It turned out to be a chance for me to allow my team to develop new skills. Approaching the thought process this way allowed me to not feel like I was pawning my work on others, but rather providing them

with an opportunity. [Mentorship] turned out to be a way to guide my team, learn my team members' strengths and invest in them."

[nar.realtor/ae/ae-mentor-program](https://www.nar.realtor/ae/ae-mentor-program)

## Congratulations to New RCEs



**Veronica Cardello, RCE**  
Ohio Association of REALTORS®



**Danielle Jacob, RCE**  
Howard County Association of REALTORS®, Maryland



**Joey Sale, RCE**  
Bright MLS, Maryland



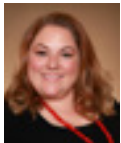
**Lauren Cooley, RCE**  
Fredericksburg Area Association of REALTORS®, Virginia



**Jim McMillen, RCE**  
Pensacola Association of REALTORS®, Florida



**Anne-Marie Siudzinski, RCE**  
National Association of REALTORS®, Illinois



**Meredith Ford, RCE**  
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**Connor Miller, RCE**  
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**Christy Slaton, RCE**  
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Abilene Association of REALTORS®, Texas



**Ramona Ruskuls, RCE**  
Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS®, Illinois



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The  
**REAL VALUE** of  
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**MEMBERSHIP**

# We asked NAR members to tell us what benefits them most about their association membership—and what we can do better.

BY LIISA ANDREASSEN

In today's dynamic real estate market, staying ahead of the curve is a necessity. For real estate professionals looking to enhance their knowledge, network and professional stature, joining a professional association can be a strategic investment.



But that's only true if the association remains responsive to members' ever-changing needs. "Consistent and routine inquiries to the members must be a part of the association's culture," says **Anne Marie Matteo, RCE, CAE**, president and CEO, Tri-County Suburban REALTORS® in Malvern, Pa. "Their input is vital to ensure meaningful value is delivered."

We asked several National Association of REALTORS® members and association executives to give us their take on what benefits members most value.

## What's Working?

### Networking



When it comes to the value of membership, networking tops the list for **Paul Bullington, ABR, CRB**, principal broker and property manager in Dickson, Tenn., and a member of Greater Nashville REALTORS®. He often networks with fellow professionals across the nation to exchange experiences, insights and expertise amid various market conditions, he says, primarily through affiliated institutes and societies, including the Real Estate Business Institute, the Institute of Real Estate Management, and the Real Estate Buyer's Agent Council. "I credit NAR with building the foundations for these things to exist," he says. "Given the inherently solitary nature of the real estate profession, fostering connections offline and online with like-minded entrepreneurs has proven invaluable."



**Beverly Pindling, GRI, PMN**, agrees. She's an award-winning real estate professional in the greater Orlando, Fla., area and has been a member of Florida Realtors® for 40 years. As a Florida-licensed instructor for 30 years, she values the opportunity to encourage and inspire other members. "NAR empowers me to positively influence the next generation of real estate professionals," she says.

### Advocacy



For **Michael Maerten, 2024** chairman of the board of Tri-County Suburban REALTORS® (Pa.), the high-level advocacy efforts at national, state and local levels are key. On a wide range of topics, from extending the National Flood Insurance Program to preserving 1031 like-kind exchanges to protecting independent contractor status for agents, the association's advocacy benefits not just all members but property owners and tenants, too.



**Carlos Alleyne, ABR, CIPS**, a luxury real estate agent and secretary of Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie REALTORS® (Fla.), places high value on opportunities to advocate personally as a member of NAR and encourages others to feel empowered to share their voices.

"Serving as an NAR director and being an RPAC Platinum Hall of Fame recipient gives you a heightened sense of shaping policies and regulations that affect the real estate profession," he says. "The average member does not always see the efforts that NAR employs to advocate for its members' interests at local, state and national levels."

### Education



**Zack Wahlquist, RCE, CAE**, chief operating officer at the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, agrees that advocacy is an essential and valued service, but at the individual member level, he believes education tops the benefits list.

"From licensing and continuing education to successful business practices and industry and legal updates—all these are critical to member success," Wahlquist says. "And associations are uniquely positioned to be that source of information at every stage of a member's real estate journey."

The educational resources available through NAR are "exceptional," says Bullington. He appreciates how NAR continually provides relevant resources, such as "Right Tools Right Now" and designations and certifications to enhance members' value from initial client contact to contract.

"I firmly believe NAR's real estate-specific education stands out as the most comprehensive and accessible option for agents striving for career success," Bullington says. "The depth and relevance of the content offered by NAR have played a pivotal role in shaping my professional journey and bolstering my ability to excel in this competitive industry."

He also finds top value in designations and certifications. "The credentials show clients and peers that we have additional industry-specific training and a dedication to honing skills."

Alleyne, who is a member of NAR's Global Business and Alliances Committee, says earning his Certified International Property Specialist designation helped him transform his business. He has become an expert in identifying buyers from various countries who are interested in U.S. buying opportunities, he says. Alleyne implemented a targeted strategy to establish his expertise, curating a portfolio of international



## Find Your Member Value

NAR's Value Proposition Toolkit can help you highlight why real estate professionals should join your association. It covers everything from how to get members involved to how to communicate your value proposition once it's set. The process starts with a simple questionnaire that walks through:

- What products and services you offer
- Your target audience(s)
- The problems you solve for members
- What differentiates you from other associations, brokerages, vendors, and so on

Access the toolkit now at [nar.realtor/ae/value-proposition-toolkit](http://nar.realtor/ae/value-proposition-toolkit).

clients, which produced seven-figure sales. "I attracted more qualified referrals, ultimately leading to a quicker sale at a higher price point," he says.

The most rewarding part of becoming a CIPS designee, he says, has been his ability to share this newfound knowledge with global committee members at several local associations in his state—REALTORS® Association of Lake and Sumter Counties, Emerald Coast Association of REALTORS®, Central Panhandle Association of REALTORS® and Pinellas REALTOR® Organization—which in turn empowered them to build global programs within their associations.



As a past NAR board member and executive committee member, **Christopher Tenggren, CRB, CRS**—a managing broker based in Rochelle, Ill., and a member of HomeTown Association of REALTORS®—regularly gleans key insights from NAR through its website, blogs, REALTOR® magazine and its social media. "I try to participate wherever and whenever I can and value my association insights, especially in these times when the landscape is shifting," he says. "Weekly and daily updates and insights make a difference

in my ability to train my agents and answer their questions."

Local associations are a great source for insights into local market conditions, as well as legislative and regulatory news, Alleynes says. His association runs a live panel event called Legal Lane Live, which features six 20-minute speed rounds with subject matter experts from the Broward County Attorney's Real Estate Council. These are scheduled on an as-needed basis related to current issues. To date, it's held five. "It has sold out to capacity on every occasion," he says.

The Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie association also just rolled out "A Broker's Path to Success"—a guide to best practices that centers around changing market conditions. Another program he appreciates is Community 101, where mayors, city commissioners, state representatives, property appraisers and chamber presidents update members on the legislative landscape.

With members working toward practice changes resulting from the NAR proposed settlement, Tri-County Suburban has expanded its training series, Matteo says. "Specifically, we are hosting a program entitled, 'Navigating Change: An Action Plan to Preparing for the NAR Settlement Agreement.'

Now more than ever, we recognize a REALTOR®'s value proposition must be communicated on a clear and consistent basis," she says.

"Open and candid conversations with buyers and sellers need to take place early and often in the relationship. To assist our members, we assembled a panel of experienced REALTORS® to present what members can do now to prepare for the changes to come."

## Free or Low-Cost Services



"Historically, members have told us that they find the most value in the free and low-cost education provided, so we're working to offer more and new educational opportunities," says **Sarah Rayne, RCE, CAE**, CEO, Howard County Association of REALTORS® in Maryland.

For example, HCAR is hosting a free, in-person Accredited Buyers Representative class; it's using an NAR Smart Growth Grant to offer the national association's new Planning & Zoning Certificate Course; and it recently used an NAR DEI Grant to offer the At Home With Diversity certification.

Maerten says he values his association's educational "season passes,"

## Designations Add Clout

Before Chicago's Zack Wahlquist became a COO, he was the director of education for a small higher education association. As he moved up in his career, earning both a CAE and RCE, those designations gave him the opportunity to learn about associations more broadly, including advocacy, governance, and financial rules and regulations—things he hadn't been exposed to before in his career. But he says the greatest value has been in helping him think outside of traditional boxes so he can better support members.

"There is national law. There is state law. There are the state's real estate governing entities. There is the NAR Code of Ethics. Because there are so many levels and layers to what governs us, it is natural to feel constricted," he says. "Going through the designation process has helped me see the world outside of the real estate lens.

As an example, we had a remote policy in place before we experienced lockdowns related to COVID-19, largely because of the experiences I had through the designation process and in working with other industries. This allowed us to seamlessly support our members during that essential early time of the pandemic. It also allowed us to move more quickly to online learning models and create new learning opportunities."

Howard County Association of REALTORS® Rayne earned her RCE and CAE before she became a CEO. "To pass these exams, you must be deeply knowledgeable in association governance, executive leadership, organizational strategy, operations, business development, member engagement, and marketing and communications," she says. "I lean on this knowledge and experience to make decisions every day."



which enable members to attend various educational offerings for one fee. Through an online school partnership with The CE Shop and through his local association's own hybrid and virtual classes, members have access to a wide range of virtual options for earning continuing education credits.

Plus, valuable technology tools include access to zipForm and zipForm Mobile real estate form software; DocuSign; Forewarn for customer identity verification; and a tech support hotline. Other NAR member benefits that fly under the radar, he says, include the audio library Libby and discounts through the GE Appliance Store; he uses both often.

### Promoting Their Value

Also highly valued by members is customer-facing marketing showcasing the value of working with a real estate professional who is a REALTOR®.

Bullington finds the national "That's Who We R" consumer ad campaign to be very helpful with its downloadable social media graphics and online assets. "Encouraging agents to integrate these materials into their marketing strategies could yield significant benefits," he says.

State and local associations and affiliates can easily leverage and locally personalize the national campaign assets in various ways, including the NAR+ Photofy app (photofy.com/NAR), which allows AEs to create custom-branded galleries, templates and ready-to-share content. Alleyne's association has a targeted "Only a REALTOR®" campaign, with spots on television, the internet and streaming services, to reach the communities and neighborhoods its members serve. "It tells our story and shows the importance of working with an agent who is a REALTOR® while giving the profession a favorable impression," he says.

HomeTown Association of REALTORS® has been repurposing materials from NAR's website to promote REALTORS® as champions of the consumer. Twice each week throughout 2024, the association is dripping out NAR's buyer-focused "105 Reasons Why REALTORS® Are Worth Every

Penny of Their Compensation" on facebook.com/HometownRealtors.

Bullington adds that he makes the most of REALTOR® safety training, partnerships and tools for marketing, and association-branded merchandise.

### Continuous Improvement Is a Must

We asked the members interviewed for this article to talk about what they'd like to see more or less of from their association. Their responses:

- On a regular basis, evaluate individual programs for relevance.
- Reinforce their efforts to communicate the value of working with a REALTOR®, a member of NAR.
- Use member outreach efforts to show that association leadership is paying attention to the individual perspective of members.

On the latter point, in 2024 alone, as of June 15, Leadership Team members had made more than 70 in-person and virtual appearances. That's on top of the outreach conducted by the association's 13 regional vice presidents. NAR is also communicating directly with members through Kevin Sears' videos from the road, as well as sharing important information through mobile app notifications, email updates and quarterly magazines. And through a new grassroots communication program, NAR is helping individual members act as "surrogates," spreading the word about REALTOR® value. (Email [surrogates@nar.realtor](mailto:surrogates@nar.realtor) for more information.)

Even with all that, says Bullington, "it would be great to see more member outreach on the part of NAR. Our local associations are good at creating that sense of community and everyone knows everyone, but most members don't know anyone at NAR. When we can put a face to a name, that helps to foster loyalty, understanding and support."

Rayne places a deliberate emphasis on open and regular communication with brokers. "I plan to pop into every single office in my association to drop off membership value materials and to generally check in," she says. "I want them to see me, as a representative of

## Members Share Reasons to Join

"Our national association provides me with a sense of security. NAR works diligently behind the scenes to safeguard my profession, protect the rights of my family and friends to homeownership, and furnish resources to enhance my professional capabilities."

—Paul Bullington, broker, REALTOR®, Realty Executives Hometown Living

"We are guided by unerring discipline, the Code of Ethics. We represent the crème de la crème of real estate licensees in this industry."

—Beverly Pindling, state licensed real estate instructor and Florida Realtors® member

"The totality of the resources we have access to is so diverse at the national, state and local levels. And being part of a larger collective—there's strength in numbers, and we're currently 1.5 million members strong."

—Michael Maerten, REALTOR®, Keller Williams Real Estate – Blue Bell

"We need to reinvest in ourselves, our education and our profession. We must stay prepared to know as much as our clients do."

—Christopher Tenggren, managing broker/designated REALTOR®, Weichert REALTORS® – Signature Professionals

the association, and know that we are here for them, and we are listening."

Creating member value, after all, should be at the forefront of every decision that an association executive makes, she adds.

"Not only do we have to demonstrate individual member value, we also have to communicate how our existence benefits our industry as a whole," Rayne says. "We must create a space so valuable that licensees look forward to renewing their membership." ●

*Liisa Andreassen is a custom content writer on retail, real estate, architecture and engineering, and business management topics.*



# THE **BIG** ReThink

**Broker outreach was the cornerstone of Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS®' strategy to educate as many members as possible through the positive changes happening in our industry.**

**By John Gormley, RCE, CAE**

**I**n January 2023, the Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS® board of directors decided to take a bold direction.

Our board was concerned about the class-action lawsuits and the U.S. Department of Justice versus organized real estate—and what this unprecedented confluence of events could mean for our brokerage community. We had a nagging feeling that far too many brokers were unaware of the gathering storm.

At Mainstreet, our mission—while it's been rewritten, rehashed and reworked through many different strategic plans—has always been to help members succeed in real estate, no matter what the external environment looks like.

After the board's decision at the beginning of 2023, we got to work focusing on what we could control—retooling our education, forms and contracts, and messaging. We shared pertinent National Association of REALTORS® and Illinois REALTORS® updates, and we created a free broker road show, which we rolled out in June 2023, called the *Big ReThink*.





To prepare their members for change, Mainstreet Organization's leaders took their *Big ReThink* program on the road beginning in June 2023, and then expanded their outreach to more members through *Big ReThink Redux*, rolled out last December.

### Going Where the Brokers Are

The *Big ReThink* featured the latest information on the lawsuits, presented by instructors Lynn Madison and Chris Read. The *Big ReThink* also included a candid discussion led by Mainstreet's leadership team, fielding questions from brokers in attendance.

We marketed the *Big ReThink* exclusively to designated managing brokers, the Illinois license law equivalent to "designated REALTORS<sup>SM</sup>" and the term NAR uses to identify the person in a company responsible for the duties and responsibilities of membership. Designated managing brokers here are typically the broker-owners and office managers. Also in Illinois, there is no agent license, per se. Licensees are either brokers or managing brokers. This can be confusing. For simplicity, I'll just use the generic terms "brokers" and "agents."

Because we already had the budget for a broker road show and two of the nation's top real estate instructors right in our own backyard, we were able to absorb the costs with minimal budget impact. We did incur facility rental, food and beverage, and audiovisual costs along with speakers' fees. Our broker road show budget was \$5,000

per location. There were four locations spread throughout the Mainstreet territory, totaling \$20,000. We went a bit over budget because the crowds ended up being so large that we had to spend extra on A/V and food and beverage.

A side note about Mainstreet: Because our territory is so vast—starting in the north at the Wisconsin border and going south all the way to the Indiana border, with the city of Chicago roughly 20 miles to the east—it is important to go where the brokers are. We have broker offices in 285 ZIP codes, and there are 178 miles between our northernmost and southernmost broker offices.

So, we'd already planned for this type of event, held in four different locations—just not the subject matter. That was our pivot. Because the topics were so timely and relevant, we drew out some folks whom we normally don't see at association events.

### The Aftermath

Overall, the feedback was positive. Accounting for the offices represented by the brokers attending our four *Big ReThink* sessions, we reached roughly 12,000 of our 19,000 members. Most

brokers appreciated that their association was trying to get out ahead of the curve on these seismic shifts in the industry so they could begin with their own preparations for change. However, a few expressed concerns that agents would have questions that they weren't ready to entertain.

Several months later, we followed up with attendees of the *Big ReThink* broker road show, offering them the ABR course at no charge during November, Designation Awareness Month. Approximately 300 brokers took us up on the offer. We brought down the costs with help from our state association, which is our sponsoring school, and instructor, and we hosted the course in our largest classroom, considering it to be a relevant value-add and reward to our broker community for engaging in their association.

We also offered shorter courses, adapting key concepts from ABR and SRS, or Seller Representative Specialist, offering them along with continuing education credit.

At the same time, we began updating our forms and contracts to address anticipated changes, triggering representation

conversations between our members and consumers much earlier in the process than before.

### The Metrics

Like many associations, at Mainstreet we track key performance indicators every month and report those to the board in an infographic. Two KPIs that I like to cross reference are number of member phone calls answered, which measures member engagement, and net promoter score, which measures member satisfaction.

Last December, our dashboard showed 12,582 incoming calls from members, with our staff answering 9,445 of those live. Meanwhile, our NPS had taken a precipitous dip from north of 70% all the way down to 38%, with 64% promoters and 26% detractors. This was at a time when 2024 dues were due and the verdict from the *Sitzer* trial had been out for a few weeks.

For perspective, Mainstreet's membership size is 18,759. Fielding nearly 9,500 live calls in one month was quite a heavy lift for our team. And judging from our all-time low NPS, members were not happy.

One of my favorite books is *Leadership Isn't for Cowards* by Mike Staver. It's about confronting problems and turning them into opportunities. By this time, we'd taken the position of openly addressing the external-threats landscape with our broker community and communicating everything we could coming out of NAR, along with our own context for Chicagoland. Clearly, we took some hits but believed it was the right approach to take.

### Big ReThink Redux

So in December, we did a follow-up session with our brokers called *Big ReThink Redux*. We held these sessions at our headquarters and at our largest satellite location. They followed the same format as the original *Big ReThink* broker road show from the previous summer, with a two-hour update from the experts and a Mainstreet leadership team Q&A.

Throughout 2024, we've expanded the outreach on these issues to include all member audiences, with events for the Young Professionals Network, global specialists and members specializing in senior services, as well as our virtual Coffee & Conversation series, open to everyone.

Another example is our annual Law Day, renamed "Lawlapalooza." Although it is broker-centric and mostly attended by brokers, it's open to all members. This year, Lawlapalooza was packed with nearly 400 attendees (both live and via Zoom). The bulk of the program was centered on the class-action lawsuits, NAR's proposed settlement, Mainstreet forms updates and the coming change to Illinois real estate license law requiring buyer-representation agreements.

### Big, Big News—Huge!

NAR announced the proposed settlement on Friday, March 15, on the last day of AE Institute in San Diego. By the following Monday we shot a three-minute video in our studio and released it later that day to Mainstreet REALTORS® announcing the good news. This video had 2,433 views. For the next two weeks, we released follow-up videos with more information for context and clarity. The overall goals for these videos were to acknowledge what had happened, reassure members that it's good news, and impress upon them the importance of heeding only reputable information sources—their local, state and national associations.

Of course, we followed our own advice, pushing updates from NAR and Illinois REALTORS® via Mainstreet's social media channels. We also posted select links and documents to the broker-centric section on the Mainstreet website, behind the login, and prominently featured NAR's competition.realtor and facts.realtor websites as well as NAR handouts.

### What's Next?

For the rest of this year and beyond, we're committed to this path that we started back in January 2023—to



## Tips for Planning a Broker Road Show

Our members recognize it's more important than ever to stay relevant and successful by addressing consumer questions about their value. Associations are finding the same with members.

Before taking your value story on the road:

- Do an analysis of where your brokers live and work (geographic heat map).
- Determine desirable locations and a budget.
- Think about audiovisuals, and make sure there are enough mics!
- Remember that leadership isn't for cowards. If you're not willing to tell it like it is (and take some initial heat for it), then it's probably not worth doing. Brokers will show up for timely, relevant and meaningful programming but may not ever come back if that's not provided.

continually provide not only up-to-date information for brokers, but also the context in which events and changes are unfolding, the reasons for these changes and, more importantly, which steps brokers should be making to prepare their agents for a successful future.

After all, helping members succeed—no matter what—is baked into our DNA at Mainstreet. I'm guessing you're all about it, too. ●




John Gormley, RCE, CAE, is CEO of Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS® in Downers Grove, Ill.









# REVERSE ENGINEERING

**Putting newer members in the role of mentor is a proven pathway to get them ready for future leadership.**

By Kimberly R. Pontius, ACE, CAE

One of the primary functions of an association's board of directors is to identify new candidates for leadership roles. Sometimes these candidates are identified by a nominating committee, sometimes by a nominating process that includes membership support petitions, and sometimes via last-minute suggestions by members, staff and acquaintances. But one thing used to be universal: Most of the time, these candidates were older and had dedicated years to the profession—and thus needed little preparation before stepping into a leadership role.

It's quite different today when organizations need to invest in-depth effort into developing new leadership.

The environment for advancement in REALTOR® associations is challenged now more than ever by how long members are willing to wait to move up through the ranks of the association. Candidly, it is now just the way of things, and as we move through the many generations that currently make up membership, the time-to-opportunity curve is becoming more compressed. No longer are many younger members willing to invest decades into developing a leadership presence to be recognized as a candidate for higher-ranking leadership positions.

So, the challenge for current leaders becomes this: How do we accelerate the development of members of the board of directors toward the executive level?



# Aspire North REALTORS® Reverse Mentor Position Description

## DEFINITION

Reverse mentoring typically refers to a program in which an older manager meets with a younger subordinate to learn about technologies such as the internet and e-commerce.

## DESCRIPTION

The ANR reverse mentor is a position created for the purpose of creating leadership opportunities for younger members of the organization and at the same time attempting to strike a balance between multigenerational business skills, create diversity, and build communication strategies, innovation and the emotional intelligence of the board of directors.

The reverse mentor is a nonvoting (ex-officio) member of the ANR board of directors, much the same as the CEO. They are appointed by the incoming president to serve for a term of one year. A reverse mentor *may* serve more than one year, but bringing as many new reverse mentor candidates to the board as possible helps to create a knowledge pool of future committee and board leadership candidates.

### Duties of Reverse Mentors

- Provide direct feedback to the board.
- Attend all board meetings and special meetings.
- Attend board retreats.
- Act as a direct adviser to the president of the board.
- Attend leadership development programs.
- Sit on a committee or committees.
- Prepare a report to the board each month.
- Act as a liaison between the board and the members of the Young Professionals Network.
- Meet occasionally with the CEO to discuss leadership opportunities.
- Actively participate in all discussions at the board level.
- Stay apprised of new and emerging technology and inform the board.
- Learn about the benefits of RPAC.

*Courtesy of Aspire North REALTORS®*

## Bright Idea

Here was my approach. Shortly after arriving in 2007 as the association executive for the Aspire North Board of REALTORS®, I asked the board to consider launching a reverse mentor program. This was a pilot plan designed for newer members—primarily drawn from the pool of the Rookie of the Year Award winners, but not limited to those candidates. The purpose of the reverse mentor program was twofold. First, the candidate would be hand-picked by the incoming president to be a direct adviser to said president, and second, the candidate would become a sitting member of the board of directors and would be expected to be present at every board meeting and special function.

The one caveat to this arrangement was that the reverse mentor would have no voting power on the board, yet they could weigh in on every discussion. From what they observed and learned, they could then share their opinion with the president—and even inform the board itself—from their unique perspective as a member just coming into the business.

## Benefits on Both Sides

When the board sanctioned the program in 2009, social media was just migrating into the business of real estate, and the reverse mentors were very helpful in pointing out new business models and marketing tools. Those Gen Xers and Millennials taught Baby Boomers and Silent Generation members the power of these emerging technologies.

Sometimes, too, a board of directors can get stale in its thinking. When that happens, the order of things typically follows the “We’ve always done things this way” approach when any new ideas and solutions try to deviate from the tried-and-true path. The reverse mentor program helps challenge this mantra by adopting the oft-used axiom, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” For us, “step out of the zone and consider some risk” became an alternative approach.

Presidents who took the time to consult with their reverse mentors also gained two distinct advantages: a shift in their perspective brought on by someone who had a fresh view of the industry and the world, and the ability to manifest a younger, more energetic version of themselves—one who ultimately possessed a keen understanding of how technology was rapidly changing the roles of sales agents and brokerage models.

Conversely, the reverse mentors gained much-sought-after approval, respect and acknowledgement by leaders in their chosen profession, and an accelerated pathway to leadership, and local, state and national recognition. While several of the reverse mentors also were a part of the National Association of REALTORS® Young Professionals Network, the reverse mentors were able to build relationships and friendships that transcended the crowd of younger members to include icons in their industry.

## A Decade Later

Since the first reverse mentor was appointed and sworn in in 2010, our association has had seven reverse mentors ascend to the presidency of our board. Once the reverse mentors completed their one-year journey, their president typically engaged them in the process of becoming an elected board member. Because they gained knowledge of the board environment, governing documents and processes during their experience, several of these reverse mentors came to the election knowing exactly what to expect and what would be asked of them.

My first reverse mentor left the real estate industry for a few years and then returned. Once qualified, he immediately ran for the board, saying the ex-

**“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.”**

perience he had early on inspired him to do so. Later he ran for and served as 2022 president and worked closely with his own reverse mentor. He now owns a brokerage specializing in the luxury homes market and finished his immediate past president responsibility at the end of 2023.




I’m expecting many more full-circle moments as the reverse mentor program continues to engage young members, inspire leadership and just make our association better. ●





*Kimberly R. Pontius, RCE, CAE, is CEO of Aspire North REALTORS® and Northern Great Lakes REALTORS® MLS in Traverse City, Mich.*



### Data is Our Passion


-  Continuous Product Enhancements
-  Innovative Customization Options
-  35 Years Perfecting Our Property Data Platform
-  Comparables Include MLS and Off Market Sales
-  Seamless Integration With Your MLS System
-  Extensive Mapping Layers and Features



## Elevate Your Property Intelligence

CRS Data’s MLS Tax Suite delivers the most comprehensive property data in an intuitive platform.

**Scan Here to Start a Conversation!**



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LAW

# What NAR Legal Affairs Does for Members (and You)

It all falls under the bucket of association and member value.

BY NAR LEGAL AFFAIRS



The National Association of REALTORS® Legal Affairs Team offers a variety of resources that help manage risks and keep members informed on legal issues that may affect their day-to-day business decisions. The team is available to respond to legal inquiries regarding association operations. While we cannot provide specific legal advice, we can provide general guidance and help point you in the right direction.

## Association Benefits

### Outreach Visits

Invite an NAR legal team member to provide a virtual or in-person outreach visit. We also provide training for statewide groups of AEs and association legal counsel.

[nar.realtor/executive-outreach-program](https://nar.realtor/executive-outreach-program)

### Trademark Protection and Enforcement

Preserve the federal trademark registration of the REALTOR® marks, create and increase goodwill, and maintain the original intended purpose and meaning of the term “REALTOR.” You can download the Membership Marks Manuals and videos for members. Sample cease and desist letters aid in trademark enforcement efforts.

[nar.realtor/logos-and-trademark-rules](https://nar.realtor/logos-and-trademark-rules)

### Legal Counsel Summit

For association legal counsel each fall, this two-day program provides

valuable information on legal topics, such as antitrust matters and industry litigation updates.

[nar.realtor/events/nar-legal-counsel-summit](https://nar.realtor/events/nar-legal-counsel-summit)

### Legal Action Program

Get financial assistance to support litigation of significance to associations and real estate professionals. Requests for assistance include legal issues such as property rights, First Amendment, enforcement of association arbitration awards and more.

[nar.realtor/legal-action-program](https://nar.realtor/legal-action-program)

### NAR Insurance Program

Gain professional liability, cyber, crime and patent insurance coverage as an association or association-owned MLS in compliance with NAR policies. Directors, officers, member volunteers and staff are also generally covered. ●

## Risk Management Resources

### Window to the Law

Released monthly, these videos provide short, consumable insights and tips on a legal topic of interest.

[nar.realtor/window-to-the-law](https://nar.realtor/window-to-the-law)

### Legal Case Summaries

Topics range from broker disclosure issues to contracts and fair housing, so members can understand the impact of court decisions.

[nar.realtor/legal-case-summaries](https://nar.realtor/legal-case-summaries)

### Reference Pages

In conjunction with the NAR Library & Archives team, Legal Affairs maintains several topic pages on [nar.realtor](https://nar.realtor), covering subjects ranging from artificial intelligence and data privacy to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and wire fraud.

[nar.realtor/the-association-history](https://nar.realtor/the-association-history)

### Real Estate Brokerage Essentials

A comprehensive business tool for brokers to minimize their risk for legal liability, this book covers topics such as licensing issues, dealing with consumers, intellectual property concepts, and how to understand and deal with tough business issues.

[store.realtor/real-estate-brokerage-essentials](https://store.realtor/real-estate-brokerage-essentials)

### Hot Topics in Broker Risk Reduction

Twice a year, the legal team compiles tips and resources to address the latest risks to your business and help you avoid liability.

[nar.realtor/legal/hot-topics-for-brokers](https://nar.realtor/legal/hot-topics-for-brokers)



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will likely want to include more than just those in your bylaws. Always consult your legal counsel when any revisions to bylaws are planned.

NAR also has resources to help with crafting sound policy. One is our Good Sense Governance series ([nar.realtor/good-sense-governance](http://nar.realtor/good-sense-governance)), which is updated regularly with new guidance and best practices. This series replaced NAR's model bylaws, though associations in need of a starting point can request them via email ([ddoepke@nar.realtor](mailto:ddoepke@nar.realtor)). However, use caution when utilizing the model bylaws for any revisions, as they are no longer updated. For example, the model bylaws still list the Code of Ethics training cycle as every two years rather than three. Some portions may also be redundant to the mandatory provisions. Still, the basic structure of the model bylaws can be helpful as a guideline, so associations don't have to start from scratch. Use them in that manner rather than cutting and pasting verbatim.

Of course, always ensure that your bylaws are being updated according to the rules of your association. A board of directors or membership vote may be required to make bylaw changes. Some associations may have a set of rules and regulations, separate from bylaws, that deal with more specifics of association management. Those tend to contain rules that can be changed more readily out of necessity. For example, your

association's bylaws may establish that there shall be regular board of directors or membership meetings, while your rules and regulations would establish specifics such as monthly or quarterly meetings. Again, your legal counsel can help you determine what belongs in bylaws, and NAR is always available to address inquiries at [narpolicyquestions@nar.realtor](mailto:narpolicyquestions@nar.realtor).

**Q: Our association is looking to expand our products and services for commercial practitioners, but we aren't sure where to start. Can you help?**

A: NAR has resources for associations looking to expand their reach into the commercial world. Start with NAR's guide to forming a commercial structure within your association. We offer commercial grants to help fund new programs, as well as the Commercial Services Accreditation, which serves as an award program for associations that go above and beyond for commercial practitioners. The accreditation process is a road map to finding new and creative ways to serve the multitude of REALTORS® who practice commercial real estate. To connect with NAR's commercial engagement staff, contact us at [commercial@nar.realtor](mailto:commercial@nar.realtor). ●

## Bylaws and Expansions

NAR's Governance team answers your top questions. **BY DANIEL DOEPKE**

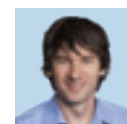


Considering taking a fresh look at your bylaws? Or maybe you're looking to expand your products and services for commercial members? Here are the answers you're looking for.

**Q: Our association is looking to review and clean up our bylaws. Is there a specific way to go about this?**

A: Periodically examining and updating your bylaws is a good practice to follow. First, it's important to note that much of what goes into your bylaws is at the discretion of your association. The National Association of REALTORS® has a handful of provisions that are required to be in the bylaws of every REALTOR® association, and those can be found here: [nar.realtor/bylaws-certification](http://nar.realtor/bylaws-certification). Click the link that says, "View a Sample of the Certification Form." Searching for "mandatory bylaw provisions" at [nar.realtor](http://nar.realtor) will also bring you to this page.

Remember, the mandatory provisions are the only portions of your bylaws that NAR requires. Your association



Daniel Doepke is director of member

policy at the National Association of REALTORS®.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROLE KAPTUR

## During Change, Be Your Intentional Self

Move past fear to lead with strategy, empathy and hope. **BY CAROLE KAPTUR**

**R**ummaging through my desk the other day, I came across a small gift from a former manager. Years ago, in what now seems like another lifetime, I worked at an organization that was experiencing significant change under a new vice president. Knowing that changes were ahead, the new VP gave everyone a framed card as soon as she came on board: “To be outstanding, get comfortable with being uncomfortable.”

Looking at it now, that statement seems to accurately reflect what needs to happen in today’s environment. First, it acknowledges the emotion we feel when experiencing significant changes and transitions—discomfort. But it also leads to a great question: How do we get to a place of being comfortable when there’s little comfort to be found?

### Moving from Fear to Empathy

That’s the question on the mind of our imaginary friend Andrea Evelyn Smith, or AE, as she likes to be called. When we

last met with AE, she’d had a workforce analysis completed and a great team was in place (“*Getting Your Organization Into Alignment*,” Fall 2023). But after a year of dealing with profound business and personal changes, AE found herself getting easily triggered and angered. This led to her being critical of other people and situations involving the changes. She heard herself starting many conversations with the idea of not understanding why things happened the way they did, second-guessing decisions that were made, and generally feeling that things were just not meant to turn out this way.

One morning, she realized she was doing a

lot more complaining than encouraging. So, she reached out to her mentor. At the end of their discussion, her mentor asked her one simple question: “Who do you want to be during change?” The question hit AE at her core, and she knew she needed to behave differently if she wanted to be seen as an effective leader. She understood she had been operating from a place of uncertainty and decided in that moment to be intentional in her behavior going forward.

For AE and many of us, experiencing change is similar to grieving. You and your staff may go through the same emotional stages that you would with the loss of a loved one. But



by being intentional in your response to change, you project strength. Your staff—and often your members—can then take their cues from you.

As we learn, we go through several stages, and we can meet these stages with a variety of attitudes. We can start by identifying behaviors sparked by fear. These might be different for everyone, but here are a few common behaviors that are fear-driven: anger about things we can't control; criticism of others; frequent complaining; being easily triggered and angered; and not least of all, acting against our own self-interest.

As a result of her mentor's question, AE took a mental inventory of her emotions and the responses that ensued. She made a deliberate decision to accept that she had no control over the changes that were underway. This meant she needed to embrace the changes and work with them.

First, she decided that before reacting, she would fully evaluate the information coming her way and recognize it might not contain all the answers she needed. But she would make decisions based on the information at hand, knowing she might have to adjust those decisions later.

AE also thought about the people around her and started to feel empathy for them. After all, they were also facing change. She realized that everyone was trying to do their best. As

she reflected on a recent situation in which she had, to her regret and dismay, lashed out at a staff member, she realized she didn't have the full story before reacting. So, she paused and shifted her mindset toward having full awareness of a situation before responding in the future. That way, she could choose to respond with intentionally positive emotions. As a leader, she couldn't afford to be seen as someone who was negative about change. After all, a leader is someone others want to follow, and who wants to follow negativity?

### The Learning Zone

People have likened the changes taking place in residential real estate to flying a plane while building it. Sounds scary and unrealistic, doesn't it? There's so much we don't know and will have to figure out as we go. We don't want to get it wrong or appear foolish. That's normal, but it's not a response that helps us evolve. By working with intention, we will almost certainly gain new skills and increase our knowledge. We will grow. And growth is the end state of learning. That's where we want to be.

Years ago, I dealt with a situation where a supervisor was challenged by the finance team on the sizeable budget for a corporate initiative. Meetings were scheduled, voices were raised, and a stalemate ensued. It wasn't resolved until the supervisor stepped back from the



## A leader is someone others want to follow, and who wants to follow negativity?

situation and realized the finance team didn't have the whole picture. They were looking at other line items in the supervisor's budget and assumed those funds were sufficient to cover the new initiative. Once the supervisor helped them realize those line items covered other, preexisting organizational needs, the finance team understood the reason for additional funding.

This is an example of someone moving from the fear zone (reacting) to the learning zone (being intentional). We want to take a minute to evaluate and understand a situation before we react. Only then can we respond appropriately and to everyone's benefit.

### What a Difference!

As for AE, in just a few weeks, she was already noticing the difference in her interactions with others. In fact, people were thanking her for her leadership during a challenging time.

With the deliberate change in her behaviors, AE developed new skills. She was taking each day as it came, with a strategic eye

to the future. She was much more empathetic with others and found joy in spreading optimism and hope. There was also an observable difference in how her team was responding to members. They had more energy and renewed engagement. The impact of AE deliberately taking action to lead spread to others.

AE's story demonstrates how we can all benefit from being adaptable and willing to address our own attitudes. The world around her was changing, but so was she. There was a ripple effect that spread to other areas of her life and those around her. The moral of AE's story? Grow with the change, and you will change, too.

Oh, and that framed card? It's still on my desk. ●

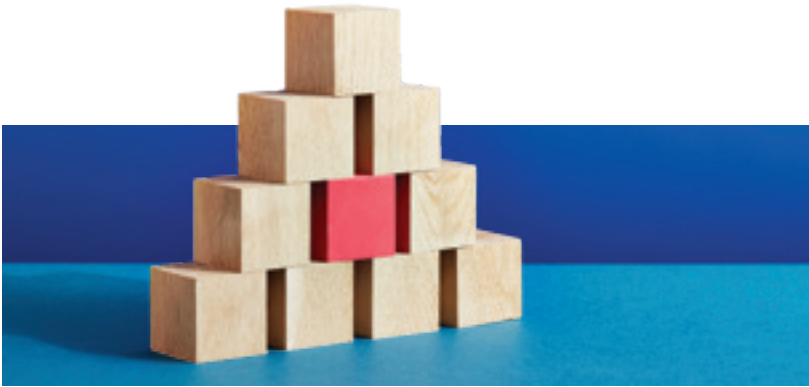


Carole Kaptur, SHRM-SCP, RCE, is

director of human resources outreach for the National Association of REALTORS®, overseeing NAR HR Solutions (formerly Strategic Association Management).



## MIND OF THE MEMBER



# Before the Strategic Plan

You have to ask 'why.' BY BOB TAYLOR



At best, strategic plans for associations are reviewed annually and list “what” you want to do and “how” you want to achieve it.

However, even that process has less value now than it once did, considering the pace at which technology, politics, communication, brokerage business models and the economy are changing. So, why do we set ourselves up to fail, or at best flail around going nowhere, by relying on an incomplete strategic plan for guidance, if it is relied upon at all?

Something else must be added to make it effective. Enter “why.”

According to Simon Sinek in his TEDxPugetSound talk in September 2009, defining “why” is how leaders inspire cooperation, trust and change within a business. Better motivation, focus, passion, and client and member engagement are other benefits, according to a 2022 LinkedIn article by Brian Fenerty, global head of talent acquisition at Logitech.

Although “finding your why” may not be a new concept to you, how effectively have you applied it in your own professional life and your association? I am 74, and its value only became obvious to me recently. Yet in retrospect, looking at my 50-year career as a sales manager, a top-producing real estate agent and now CEO for 10 years, much of my success boils down to having a “why.” For example:

### **‘I don’t sell houses; I help people change their lives.’**

That was the heading on a newsletter I produced monthly for more than 25 years. In it, I never once requested business or offered any business-related thing that was “free.” I did, however, offer services not connected to compensation; personalized homeownership and community tips; observations about the professional services consumers had a right to expect; and a monthly view into what was happening in their neighborhood.

The “why” was “helping people change their lives.” And it rang true. The result was referral-only business, an income

that provided Uncle Sam with substantial tax revenue, and me the ability to serve the industry that put food on my table.

### **‘You answered the phone!’**

That may be one of the more common responses we get when members call the association. To me and our staff, it seems like such a small thing we offer, but if you like to call instead of emailing or texting, you know far too often how surprising it is when you get to talk to a real person. It’s really a big thing because it demonstrates caring and the heart of our “why,” which is *“A caring association that delivers the best member experience.”* This is actually our mission statement, but it’s different from most because it’s emotionally energizing, short and easy to repeat. In contrast, in 2014, our mission statement was: *“We exist to assist members in reaching their goals by providing professional services and education to our membership and to the public, to ensure high ethical standards, and to promote community awareness of real property issues and equal opportunity in housing.”*

Yawn!

### **Why ‘Why’ Matters**

Having a why allows an association and its leadership to always have their eyes on the prize, never losing focus or direction when there is a change in staff or volunteer leadership.

Here are the results our association gained:

- In a market with 11 local REALTOR® associations—and between five and seven MLSs—in 10 years, membership has steadily tripled from 407 to just over 2,000.
- Annually, 45% of our members attend an event, take a class, attend a membership meeting or serve in our governance.
- 84% of our membership lies outside our jurisdiction but chooses to be part of our association.

Once we discovered our “why,” we rewrote our strategic plan, reducing the number of objectives from eight to five and the number of pages from five to two. That rewrite also now includes the requirement for our strategic planning committee to meet monthly at least during the first quarter of each year. It’s also required to “annually evaluate the GPBR Strategic Plan against the perspectives of industry experts and futurists.”

Why? Because we care about our members, and this gets us out in front of our members, not in their way.

We all know the future is “the undiscovered country.” So treat your strategic plan as a living document—one that changes with time because our industry changes with time. More importantly, understand what your strategic plan’s real value is: helping you stay true to your “why.” ●



Bob Taylor, RCE, is CEO of the Grosse Pointe Board of REALTORS® in Michigan.



# REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Safety PROGRAM

## SEPTEMBER IS REALTOR<sup>®</sup> SAFETY MONTH

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- Social Media Tips



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# Transformative Leader

Houston Association of REALTORS® President and CEO Bob Hale



Throughout his 50-plus years with the Houston Association of REALTORS®, President and CEO Bob Hale has been no stranger to change. He shares his perspective on the transformative times we're living in today.

## Q: How have you been preparing for the settlement changes?

I view HAR's role as making sure our agents and brokers know the facts and can make informed decisions. We launched The Reality of Real Estate campaign on har.com, which has six million visitors per month. We also have videos in English and Spanish, social media graphics, and one-sheets that can be branded and that talk about the value our members provide to their clients. We are working on a customizable list of services that we encourage our members to present when they have the conversation about the residential buyer's representation agreement with a new client.

We don't have all the answers, but we are trying to make sure our members and consumers are prepared.

## Q: Amid all this change, how do associations continue to show value to members?

I send an email newsletter titled *Insights* to all members every Friday morning. [Since early May], the last few issues have focused almost 100% on the settlement. We are also continually rolling out new tools and services for our members, including a whole suite of in-house-developed artificial intelligence tools (AI-generated property and photo descriptions, highlighted features, photo tags and audio descriptions) that will make their lives easier.

## Q: How have you fostered broker relationships at HAR?

We have feedback channels for all the segments of our membership, and we actually listen and respond. I can't tell you how many times a broker has been shocked that someone from our senior staff would call them to talk about whatever issue they were having.

## Q: What lessons apply from other changes you've successfully navigated in your career?

Houston remains the only market in the country where a national real



I think the biggest lesson is to not be afraid of failing or of taking big risks.

estate portal is not No. 1. The breadth and reach of har.com allows our members to focus on their businesses and not have to pay a portal for leads or referrals unless they choose to do so. We conduct research through focus groups and surveys so that we know what consumers want, and then we give it to them. Consumers don't have a reason to go to another site that wouldn't benefit our members.

I think the biggest lesson is to not be afraid of failing or of taking big risks. I have learned far more from the times I haven't been successful than I ever did when things went exactly as planned. And always ask if what you are doing is in the best interest of the members. If you can say yes, then you know you are doing the right thing. ●

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