



[www.mdrealtor.org](http://www.mdrealtor.org)

## *MAR Social Media Plan*



[www.facebook.com/RealtorsMD](http://www.facebook.com/RealtorsMD)



@MDRealtors



MDREALTORS



MDREALTORS200  
MARGOVERNMENTAFFAIRS

## INTRODUCTION

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

## OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

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

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

Currently, we reach members via the bi-weekly Hot Sheet and with various Facebook, Twitter and MD REALTOR.org posts. We have adopted a more concise and constant presence within the available social media outlets that will continue to increase traffic to our website. Staff uses the current Hot Sheet information and posts regularly on Facebook, Twitter and MDREALTOR.org via the social media network management dashboard system, HootSuite.

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

According to the recent MAR Social Media survey, a large percentage of our members use one or more social networking sites regularly. MAR continues to be engaged and drive the 'dialogue' with our membership. This has been achieved by proactively participating in and managing our social media presence.

## GUIDELINES

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

Association staff members and leaders engaging in online, electronic dialogue as a representative of the organization must comply with these guidelines. They apply to personal participation in social media channels when communicating with others about MAR. (*MAR employees should refer to the January 2010 MAR Employee manual for further guidance*). Because social networks are accessible by anyone from anywhere, personal posts and comments are easy for people to find – and can be detrimental to both the individual and to MAR.

### 1. [Respect copyright](#)

All those posting on behalf of MAR must use caution when publishing text, pictures, video, or other content not created by the Association. Unless specifically licensed otherwise, all created content is protected by copyright. If copyrighted material is used, written permission must be obtained from the original author.

Whenever possible, **link to content elsewhere** on the Web instead of republishing. It's always advisable to include a disclaimer. Consult legal counsel to determine the statement content.

### 2. [Channels covered by these guidelines:](#)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Flickr
- MDREALTOR.org

### 3. [Our profile](#)

**MAR's social media profiles (through Facebook & Twitter) are our face, our "brand."** It's essential that MAR continue to present itself as a single entity in social media, with one voice. Our members and other audiences are best served by having as few profiles and groups as possible, with many posts and information flowing through them, vs. having a large number of profiles and groups, each with separate followings and few posts. MAR maintains one Facebook and Twitter account to promote all MAR messages and activities. This ensures a 'consistent' brand for the Association and all its programs, services and communications with our members.

#### 4. **To post or not to post**

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

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

#### **USING SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS**

- **Facebook**

To build a relationship with members on Facebook , MAR shares the latest real estate news, show the impact of that information on the membership, and demonstrates the many benefits and resources MAR offers. By providing information and resources that help REALTORS® do business smarter and easier, MAR will continue to cultivate a cadre of members with positive feelings toward the Association.

We select items based on the following criteria:

- Popularity of the topic.
- Value to our members
- Priority to members, based on surveys and past content on the topic.

Our goal is to reach those members who are not already actively engaged with MAR and are not aware of the programs and benefits of their MAR membership provides.

- **Twitter**

Twitter’s forced brevity is the key to its success. Its 140-character limit on each communication forces users to keep announcements and conversations short and simple. Some helpful guidelines in using Twitter:

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

- Communication on Twitter is not necessarily reciprocal. When one member of Twitter finds value in another member’s posts, he chooses to subscribe to that member by following him or her. That member may or may not choose to follow him or her back.

- Each member’s Twitter page links to a list of the members he follows, and of those that follow him.
- If you use a Twitter account exclusively as a channel to broadcast information, then don’t follow back. This is especially important when posting information on behalf of MAR. If you plan to use the channel for two-way communication, then make it a point to follow those you hope to communicate with.  
(See APPENDIX A for more information.)
- [YouTube](#)

MAR uses YouTube to enable brief and rich media content to be shared on other social networks. Our YouTube postings are based on the availability of quality and relevant content.

To build a relationship with members on YouTube, MAR shares only premium content. Items will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Popularity of the topic and content item on MDREALTOR.org or Facebook
- Priority to members, based on likelihood that members will share videos on a particular topic.
- Priority to MAR’s strategic initiatives.

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

## **ORGANIZING MAR’S SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS**

The MAR Facebook General Terms of Use and Antitrust Policy are now in place. We have developed a request system similar to the MAR HotSheet, where staff submits items to the Communications Department for posting, with the exception of Government Affairs during the state Legislative session. (*Government Affairs will ultimately have its own access rights to upload ‘calls for action’ and other issue related content.*) Each department is responsible for content posted to Facebook and must edit, revise wording and submit it for posting. Each department must submit content to the Communications Department in a timely manner for posting on the profile page.

All submissions for posting should include the following:

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

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

Members of MAR should observe the following guidelines:

- **Personal Does Not Mean Private:** When you participate in social media, your professional and private lives become more integrated. Expressing your personal

beliefs in social media raises awareness of your profile among the Association's members.

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

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

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

---

#### APPENDIX A:

##### [Twitter Glossary](#)

##### [@s, Ds, #s, Favorites, and RTs](#)

- When referencing another Twitter user in a post, or publicly addressing a post to someone, use the @ symbol followed by that person's Twitter name in a public post. That user will be notified that he or she has been tagged.
- To send a private message to another Twitter user, type a D, then one space, then the user's name. Note: You can only send these direct messages to users who follow you.
- Attach the # symbol to a topic to create a "hash tag." Hash tags are used to reference a certain event, news item, or can even be for fun. You can search on Twitter for all posts using the same hashtag.
- Favorites are a way to bookmark posts you want to reference later. Click on the star-shaped icon next to a post to mark it as a favorite. Click the "favorite's link to view your favorites.
- "RTs" are retweets – reposting another Twitter user's post to show that you agree or want to share their message. To do this, type RT then @username to give them credit for it. If space permits, you can add a comment or hashtag.