

Community Associations Should Make Effective Use of Social Media

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By **Gary M. Mars** | June 13, 2018



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The use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites by community associations has gained some traction during the last several years. Associations have recognized that these sites provide helpful and cost-effective communications tools, especially for large communities in which a number of activities and announcements are always in play. By following some basic guiding principles, community association boards of directors and property managers are able to make strategic use of social media for the benefit of all of their association members.

There is no doubt that the use of social media can save community associations time and money with some of their communications and outreach efforts aimed at their owners and residents. Adding new posts with photos and videos to an association's social media pages is simple and

free, and millions of Americans are now visiting Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and others on a daily basis.

Some associations are now including community calendars in their Facebook group site as well as meeting notices, agendas and notes. These group pages are also ideal for posting links to copies of annual reports, community bylaws, and other helpful items and forms.

The starting point for an association's foray into the world of online social networking should be the creation of a clear and concise social media policy governing the administration and content of its group site on Facebook and any other platforms. The policy, which should be shared with all of the unit owners and residents prior to the launch of the group page, must state that abusive and offensive language and content in the posts and comments will not be tolerated.

Associations should designate an administrator for their social media group sites to add new posts, and the admin settings should be set to enable the administrator to verify or reject new group members, approve or deny new posts, remove offensive comments, and remove and block members from the group. Some group members may decide to use the sites in order to attack board members and fellow unit owners in an offensive and disrespectful manner, so the site administrator should review all of the comments in order to promptly delete any inappropriate content that violates the social media policy and remove the offenders from the group.

The designated administrator should use the social media sites to provide information that reflects positively on the community. They should avoid discussions of rule violations and violators, disgruntled owners and neighborhood gossip. The focus should remain on association announcements, board meetings, activities, past events, and helpful content for the owners and residents. Also, bear in mind that associations will need to obtain written permission prior to posting photos of members and their guests, and photos of children without parental consent must be avoided.

Respectful discussions by the group members in their online comments should always be encouraged. These comments by a community's unit owners and residents are what make social networking sites effective forums for conversations about community issues and happenings. Negative comments about association policies and issues should receive a reply from the administrator indicating that the board of directors or property management has been made aware of their concerns and would be happy to address them directly with the group member or during the next board meeting as appropriate. Engaging in a discussion of the specifics of their concerns in the online comments is not recommended.

Social media sites enable community associations to keep their owners and residents informed and engaged. By following these caveats for the creation of social media policies and well administrated group sites, associations can make these online networking platforms some of their most effective and cost-efficient tools for membership communications and outreach.

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