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Solutions for Staying Safe with Social Media

Problem: Savvy real estate professionals like yourself frequently update your presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. However, because of the nature of your work, you are likely to have “friends,” followers, and connections whom you don’t know.

Solution: Following these basic steps can help you avoid exposing yourself or your data to risk through social media tools. It is vital to consider what you are sharing through the Internet!

***Keep Business Separate**

One way that you can make sure you are not revealing too much personal information is simple: set up a business account on each platform. Sure, anyone can figure out that Sally Field, REALTOR®, is the same person as Sally Field—but Sally will only accept requests to connect to strangers on the business account, whether Facebook or Twitter. Her personal account stays private (especially once she familiarizes herself with privacy settings), protecting her family photos, links to her kids’ pages, and personal posts from people she doesn’t know.

***Tag! You’re It!**

When a friend posts your photo, you may be “tagged” against your will. If you don’t want clients or others to find a reference like this—such as a less-than-flattering photo taken at a late night party—you can remove the tag and/or ask the person who posted it to do so. And be sure to follow up and ask friends to check first before tagging!

***Don’t Give Away Passwords**

Consider this: One way that hackers manage to crack personal passwords is by searching Facebook for easy answers. They know they may find answers to common security questions such as “What high school did you attend?” and “What are the names of your children?” So keep information about family members, household details, and past events to a minimum in order to help prevent this.

***Guard Against Identity Theft**

These days, anyone can find all kinds of personal information about anyone else. That doesn’t mean you have to make it easy! For example, if you who want to post your birthday, don’t include the year. (And delete any public comments that indicate their exact age.)

***Tweets Are Forever**

Social media usage has an impact on your safety, as well as your reputation. Carefully consider each item you share, and be aware that old posts, even if they’ve been deleted, may be copied or saved—and the Library of Congress is actually recording every single Tweet.

As a savvy real estate professional, you can maximize the business-building potential of social media while minimizing the unique risks it poses. Just follow these basic steps to help safeguard yourself, your data, and your reputation.

To learn about more safety strategies, and access free safety resources, including safety expert Andrew Wooten’s webinar “Social Media and Cyber Safety,” visit www.REALTOR.org/Safety.

(Sources: Andrew Wooten’s REALTOR® Safety webinar “Social Media and Cyber Safety”; www.ftc.gov/infosecurity)



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