

Strategies for HOA Social Media Platforms

It's important to keep homeowners informed on what's happening within the HOA, your community property restrictions, online meeting schedules, as well as amenity updates. With social distancing still a part of our regular daily lives, social media has proven itself a valuable communications tool for HOAs and their committees.



The key to making social media platforms work for your HOA while keeping you connected with your neighbors, their needs as a community, and the general "temperature" of your residents, is proper planning and adhering to agreed-upon social media policies." These policies, much like Robert's Rules, provide a framework which will help keep your Board and relevant committees consistent with your HOA's social media message and branding. This will also provide a roadmap to ensure that all online community responses are handled with diplomacy.

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Designate someone to manage your social media.

The best first steps you can take towards communicating with your HOA via social media is establishing a social media “Manager” or Committee, responsible for your social media in its entirety. Just as too many cooks are detrimental in the kitchen, so it is that too many people involved with decisions related to social media hinder the effectiveness of your communication to your community. Having a designated person or committee to monitor and post factual community information will make sure the social media message is successful.

Outline your Social Media Map.

As a Board, you will want to also design a Social Media “Map”. This can include your branding requirements, moderation policies, audience, etc. It is here where you define your message as a community, what you will and will not allow in terms of interaction with your audience, how you will mitigate grievances, and which platforms you will utilize. A Social Media Map will ensure that your social media is used for information sharing only and not grievances or individual issue posting.

Choose your platform.

Are you going to use Facebook? LinkedIn? Instagram? Do you understand these platforms or do you need training? Not all social media platforms are created equal, and certain platforms work better for some organizations than others. For example, most HOAs find Facebook Groups to be extremely effective at keeping everyone up-to-date on community news and activities. Choose your platform(s) based on your goals and try to stick to one or two.

What is your branding?

Are you going to use Photoshop or Canva to create cohesive branding for your posts? What are your policies for sharing pictures of your community? Is your Facebook Group or Association page private?



Engage your audience.

Success with social media relies on an attentive audience. If social media is new to your community, you’ll need to spend time and energy engaging residents. This can be done by sharing photos from community events and soliciting feedback on the types of events residents want.

Remember confidentiality.

Because social media makes sharing information so easy, always take the time to ask yourself if it is necessary or even appropriate to share something. If you wouldn’t share it at an Annual Meeting or in a newsletter, skip sharing it to social media too.

Post with empathy, respect, and follow the law. Everything you do and say on social media is permanent.

Always consider things like copyright, plagiarism, emotional distress, and violating privacy rights of residents. You always want to think twice before posting, and if you’re hesitant, get the opinion of other Board Members or HOAMCO.

WHAT'S IN A Good Waiver?

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In an effort to minimize the risk of liability, many associations require facility users or event participants to sign a liability waiver or release prior to utilizing facilities or taking part in potentially hazardous activities. A liability waiver is a contract between an organization/entity and a participant in which the participant agrees to excuse or absolve the other party from liability for damage or injury arising out of a particular activity. Liability waivers come in all shapes, sizes and forms, so it is important for associations to recognize the characteristics of a good waiver.

In most jurisdictions, liability waivers are legal and enforceable contracts. However, courts traditionally look upon such waivers with disfavor and tend to construe the waiver strictly against the party relying on it. In addition, due to complex factual issues involved, many legal cases involving waivers go to trial.



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So, while a waiver may not be a “get out of jail free” card, they still can be a helpful legal tool and should be utilized by associations wishing to limit their liability exposure. In many instances, the type of waiver needed will vary based on the particular activity, but well-drafted waivers share many of the same five basic characteristics.



A well-drafted waiver should...

- ...be easy to read and understand. Lengthy documents with exculpatory language hidden in small font on a back page are not likely to hold up in court.
- ...include a section in which the participant acknowledges that he or she is assuming the risks inherent with the particular activity, e.g. a volunteer that agrees to paint would acknowledge assuming the risk of working on scaffolding or a ladder.
- ...include a section in which the participant agrees to waive or release any and all claims, including claims based on the negligence of the released party.
- ...in some cases, include a section in which the participant agrees to indemnify, defend and hold the released party harmless from claims made by third parties that arise out of the particular activity, as well as claims made by the participant. Again, the appropriateness of an indemnity provision will depend on the particular activity.
- ...include a section in which the participant affirms that he or she has read and understood the waiver, understands that he or she is relinquishing substantial legal rights, and that he or she is voluntarily signing the agreement with the intent of waiving liability.

Waivers of liability that meet these five criteria stand a good chance of being legally enforceable.

HOA SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

What it is and How to Remedy it



SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

When an association enforces the rules of the HOA for a specific group of homeowners, or seemingly one homeowner and not the rest of the residents, this is considered “selective enforcement.” A good example would be when one homeowner repeatedly receives enforcement letters and fines for their holiday decorations being left out too long while other homeowners who are also in violation are not reprimanded at all. When this happens, it can cause these residents to feel alienated from the HOA and singled out for behavior that feels acceptable for some but not for them.

It is the Board’s responsibility to ensure that the community’s CC&Rs are followed and enforced consistently and fairly throughout the community. Although many associations assign the responsibility for identifying and reporting violations to the Management Company or in some cases to a Compliance Committee, the Board ultimately bears the responsibility to ensure that this is being done in a fair and unbiased manner.

COMPLIANCE ENFORCEMENT IN YOUR HOA

An HOA’s rulebook for compliance lies in the community’s governing documents. Enforcing the adherence to the governing documents is the Board’s responsibility and each Board Member should be familiar with the governing documents, especially the CC&Rs, as well as any rules and regulations, before actively serving on the Board. Restrictions

within a community exist for a reason – they help keep the peace within the community as well as maintain property values.

For the most part, homeowners will not usually violate HOA rules on purpose. Most of the time if someone is leaving their trash cans out, they are either forgetting their cans are on the street or struggling with the logistics of moving them back to the property in a timely manner as can occur with those who are elderly or physically impaired and must rely on other residents or outside assistance with property maintenance.

Although sometimes community rules are enforced within an HOA only when a complaint is lodged, our “Best Practice” is to have a Compliance Officer or Community Manager do a thorough inspection of the neighborhood according to a regular schedule and issue compliance violations per their visual inspections. In enforcing the governing documents, the Board must assure that compliance procedures do not encourage or pay tribute to favoritism and are applied consistently and diligently to all residents.

Do not create “exceptions” – Board Members may have friends or family within the HOA and it is important to remember that every resident must adhere to the HOA rules and regulations, no matter their relationship with the Board or its Members.

TIPS TO ACHIEVE COMPLIANCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Although every homeowner should have received all governing documents as well as policies and rules and regulations of the Association prior to acquiring title to the home/unit, sending seasonal reminders can help your residents stay in compliance, such as during the holidays when certain rules apply to decorations and time limitations for display. The spring and summer are a great time to reiterate rules and regulations related to weed control and landscaping expectations as well as parking rules during months when traveling and having guests visit is more prevalent. Make sure to include any architectural rules related to “summer building” projects, lest your residents “forget” to submit plans to the Board for home improvements.

Educate and remind new Board Members and residents on and about the HOA rules, regulations, and governing documents. Settling into a new Board position can be overwhelming; new residents are often occupied with settling into the neighborhood and may not be paying attention to compliance. E-blasts are a great way to bring attention to rules and regulations residents consistently ignore.



Community Connect

Community Websites
by HOAMCO



When you choose a HOAMCO Community Connect Website, you get a team of experienced professionals who fully understand the essential needs of community associations.

Some of the major benefits include:

- Posting meeting minutes online in a secure area for members
- Eliminating newsletter postage using email bulletins
- Avoiding extra fees by making dues payments online
- Getting the word out immediately about activities & events
- Eliminating printing costs of community documents and directories
- Reducing email communications from the Association

HOAMCO Community Connect Websites Offer:

- Public and private events and news for your members and perspective buyers
- Private member forums to discuss important topics relevant to your community
- Tiered permissions for Board Members only, Event Planners, and Administrative Staff
- Customized branding and logo design for our Premiere subscribers
- Custom onsite photoshoots for your galleries and homepage
- Up to 5 customizable, fillable PDF forms for your Association

So What's The First Step?

We've made it quick and easy to get started. Just contact us at web@hoamco.com to inquire. We'll help you re-evaluate your existing web services or establish new website needs.

Make 2021 the year you modernize your site, and maximize your community's potential.