

# REAL ESTATE LEADER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Summer 2011



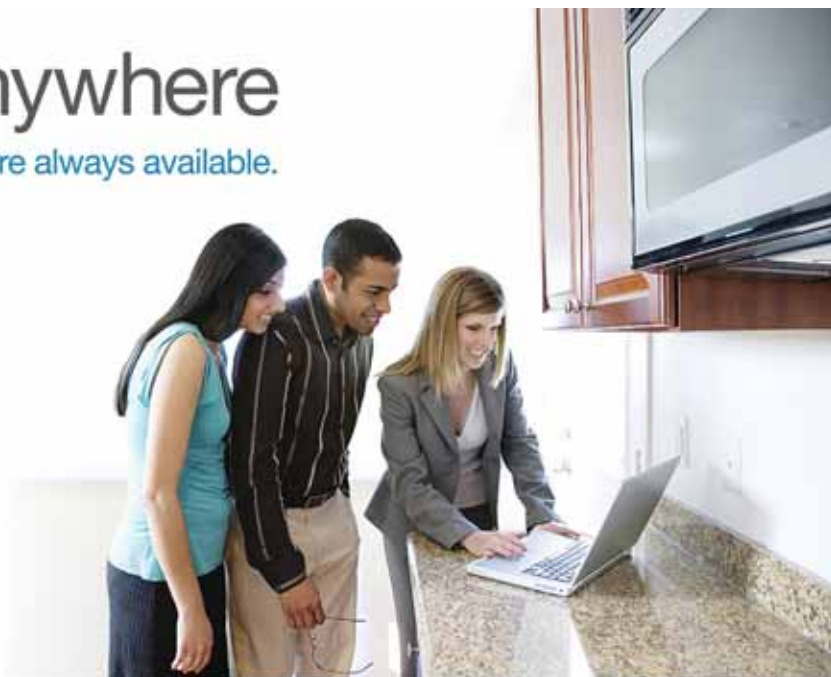
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tendencies innovative  
or antiquated?

REALTORS® draw down for MARPAC  
BPO Standards and Guidelines  
Make the most of your web presence

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*Real Estate LEADER* is the official publication of the Mississippi Association of REALTORS®. The quarterly magazine provides Mississippi real estate professionals with timely information on trends and best practices, tools and resources for professional development, and news about innovative business and community leaders.

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# REAL ESTATE LEADER

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®



Summer 2011

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### On the cover:

Mississippi REALTORS® Damion Flynn, Leigh Ann Mehr and Doug Jumper take on technology as they share a few trade secrets on staying ahead of the innovation curve.



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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



**F**ire up the grill, load up the boat and pack up the car! Summer is upon us and Mississippi REALTORS® are braving the summer heat with a smile as they take advantage of a flurry of buyers and sellers. Even though they find the availability of financing more difficult than in recent years, they remain optimistic, determined and resilient.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual online issue of *Real Estate Leader*. In our cover story, three innovative REALTORS® share their thoughts on remaining cutting-edge in a world of fast-paced and technology-savvy consumers. Glean new ideas and trade secrets from fellow REALTORS® that are innovative and successful.

Our MAR technology wizard Chris Adcock gives us some invaluable insight into making and maintaining optimum internet presence in his column "For the Tech of It." In addition, a must-read is MAR VP of Professional Development John Phillips' column on the Standards and Guidelines of the new BPO bill.

You will especially enjoy the photos from the recent highly-successful "Drawdown Throwdown at Sundown" event which helped to raise over \$32,400 for MARPAC. The Mississippi Children's Museum was a wonderful backdrop for a fun time as REALTORS® anxiously waited to see who would win the \$5,000 grand prize.

Please mark your calendars for our MAR 2011 Convention and EXPO "Full Steam Ahead" to be held November 30 – December 2 in Natchez. Remember that you can get an early bird registration discount until August 31. You can't afford to miss this exceptional convention and the opportunity to hear international real estate guru David Knox.

I continue to be inspired by the professionalism, creativity and knowledge of our members across the state. They are forging ahead and setting the stage by utilizing new scripts to make their 2011 a personal and professional success.

Dee C. Denton  
President

## WORD ON THE STREET REAL ESTATE NEWS BRIEFS

### 2011 NAR Convention & EXPO in Anaheim



Where will you be 11.11.11? The REALTORS® Conference & Expo is coming to Anaheim, CA, November 11-14. Make plans to attend so you can learn how to take your business to a new level. In addition to extensive educational opportunities, Michael Eisner, Former Chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Company will be the keynote speaker for the conference General Session. Legendary superstar Diana Ross performs at the Celebrity Concert. Visit [www.realtor.org/convention.nsf/pages/RegistrationLanding?opendocument](http://www.realtor.org/convention.nsf/pages/RegistrationLanding?opendocument) for information and to register.

### REALTORS® Got Talent Contest

Have you got musical talent? Enter the second national REALTORS® Got Talent Contest and you could be performing for 5,000 REALTORS® and guests in Anaheim in November!

Five finalists will be selected to perform at the REALTORS® Got Talent Show on Sunday, November 13 in Anaheim, just prior to the Diana Ross concert. A panel of judges and members of the audience will vote for a winner!

The winner will receive \$2,000 cash or a donation in the same amount to their favorite charity. The four runners up will each receive

\$500. All five finalists will receive complimentary registration to the 2011 REALTORS® Conference & Expo (a \$350 value).

For additional information or to register go to [www.realtor.org/Convention.nsf/gottalent?OpenForm](http://www.realtor.org/Convention.nsf/gottalent?OpenForm).

### NAR Member Guide now digital



The annual NAR membership guide has gone digital. Enter your NRDS ID and last name at the link below to access the Member Guide,

your guide for member benefits, tools and resources, networking events and much more.

Log in to find:

- NAR core benefits - in "Topics" at the top of the page
- Your NAR membership card - customize and print from 'My Card' in the upper right navigation
- State and local REALTOR® association benefits - in the yellow, center tabs
- Personalized member information in one place - in 'My Membership' in the upper right navigation

To access your Member Guide visit: [memberguide.realtor.org](http://memberguide.realtor.org)



# LEGAL EASE

## NAR's Letter of the Law Use of the REALTOR® Trademark and Logo on the Internet

When surfing the Web for real estate home-pages, it's quite common to come across sites belonging to REALTORS®. If you are looking to add your own electronic presence on the Internet, it is easy to get caught up in designing your own web page and choosing a domain name which will capture the attention of surfers and make you easily identifiable. Whether it is the domain name of your home page or other domain names you use to point to your home page, REALTORS® often want to use the REALTOR® marks as part of a domain name or address to distinguish themselves, but they must keep in mind that there are rules governing proper use of the REALTOR® marks that must be adhered to at all times regardless of the media used. These rules are found in the National Association's Membership Marks Manual, a reference manual available on-line at REALTOR.org, explaining proper use of the REALTOR® marks including examples of correct and incorrect uses. Here is a brief list of the principal rules affecting use of the REALTOR® marks in domain names:

1. The term REALTOR®, whether used as part of a domain name or in some other fashion must refer to a member or a member's firm.
2. The term REALTOR® may not be used with descriptive words or phrases. For example, Number1realtor.com, numberone-realtor.com, chicagorealtors.org or realtorproperties.com are all incorrect.
3. The term REALTOR® should never be used to denote an occupation or business. Do not combine words like "your," "my," "our" or any descriptive words or phrases between your name and the membership mark. JaneDoeMyRealtor.com and YourChicagoRealtorJohnDoe.com are all examples of improper use.
4. For use as a domain name or e-mail address on the Internet the term REALTOR® does not need to be separated from the member's name or firm name with punctuation. For example, both johndoe-realtor.com and johndo-



erealtor.com would be correct uses of the term as a part of domain names and jdoe\*realtors@webnet-services.com and jdoerealtors@webnetservices.com are both correct uses of the term as part of an e-mail address.

5. The REALTOR® block R logo should not be used as hypertext links at a web site as such uses can suggest an endorsement or recommendation of the linked site by your Association. The only exception would be to establish a link to the National Association's web site, REALTOR.org, or its official property listing site, REALTOR.com.

The public has adopted the use of all lower case letters when writing domain names, even those containing trademarks. Therefore, for purposes of domain names and internet addresses only, there is an exception to the rule on capitalization of the term REALTOR® and it may appear in lower case letters.

Whether you use traditional print media or the Internet, it is essential to use the REALTOR® marks in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the National Association. The REALTOR® marks should only be used to denote membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®.

*Used with permission of the National Association of REALTORS® 2011.*



**Call MAR's Legal Hotline**  
**800-747-1103, ext 25**

MAR's Legal Hotline offers free and confidential legal information relevant to broad-based real estate practices and applications, including MAR Standard Forms and Contracts, to MAR members, and is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Voice mails are picked up at 3:00 p.m. M-F and are generally answered by the following business day.



# MISSISSIPPI REALTOR® INSTITUTE

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*The official real estate school of the Mississippi Association of REALTORS®.*

## 2011 REALTOR® Institute Pre-License schedule

### SALESPERSON PRE-LICENSE

Jackson	July 11-21
Gulfport	August 1-11
Nesbit	August 1-29 (N)
Jackson	Sept. 12-Oct. 10 (N)
Gulfport	Oct. 3-31 (N)
Jackson	Oct. 24-Nov. 3

### GRI I - ROOKIE BOOT CAMP (SALESPERSON POST-LICENSE)

Gulfport	July 25 - 28
Jackson	Aug. 15 - 18

### GRI II (BROKER A)

Jackson	July 11 - 15
Gulfport	Aug. 22 - 26
Jackson	Oct. 10 - 14

### GRI III (BROKER B)

Jackson	Aug. 8 - 12
Gulfport	Sept. 19 - 23
Jackson	Oct. 31 - Nov. 4

### BROKER BOOT CAMP (BROKER POST-LICENSE)

Jackson	Oct. 17-20
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**Confirm dates & register on website at [www.realtorinstitute.org](http://www.realtorinstitute.org)**

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### Certified Negotiation Expert (CNE)



Take this popular new real estate designation course from the Real Estate Negotiation Institute. Nationally-recognized Colorado REALTOR® and attorney Oliver Frasca will be the instructor for this cutting-edge course.



*Students who take the CNE course will receive the following:*

- 2-days of professional negotiation and business building training
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- Continuing Education Credit Hours
- Over 150 pages of negotiation summaries and marketing materials for your new designation
- Over 100 scripts for real estate negotiation situation using scientifically proven persuasion principles
- Quarterly newsletters with advanced negotiation tips and advice
- Access to leading edge negotiation research to use in real estate negotiation

**When:** July 26 and 27  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
**Where:** Jackson, Mississippi REALTOR® Institute  
12 hours elective CE  
**Cost:** \$295

### Safety Awareness Education



**Knowledge, awareness and empowerment: A day with Andrew Wooten**



President of Safety Awareness Firearms Education (S.A.F.E.), Andrew Wooten has over twenty-six years of education, training, and experience in crime prevention and security management. Holding various certifications in his field, he has conducted over six thousand training programs worldwide. Wooten is a partner with the National Association of REALTORS® and a safety consultant for the Right Tools Right Now project.

This class will teach you about protecting yourself and your clients from identity theft, social media and open house safety as well as other liability reduction issues.

**When / Where:** Monday, August 8—Southaven  
Tuesday, August 9—Oxford  
Wednesday, August 10—Jackson  
Thursday, August 11—Hattiesburg  
Friday, August 12—Picaune  
4 hours elective CE

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
**Cost:** \$35

Course sponsored by:



**MISSISSIPPI  
ASSOCIATION  
OF REALTORS®**





# FOR THE COURSE OF YOUR CAREER



BY JOHN PHILLIPS

## Broker price opinion: Standards & guidelines

The Mississippi legislature recently passed House Bill 990 which removed the provision in the Real Estate Appraisers Law that did not allow real estate licensees to legally receive compensation for performing broker price opinions. HB 990 also amended the Mississippi Real Estate License Law to allow real estate licensees to perform BPOs for compensation. The effective date of the new law is July 1, 2011.

BPOs are valuable tools that can help a lender make a decision whether to do a short sale, a loan modification or a foreclosure. They aid investors in making buy/sell decisions and can be used for many legal matters including estate planning. Over 10 million BPOs are ordered every year and are a significant part of the business of many brokers.

License Law 73-35-4 (3) states, "A broker's price opinion prepared under the authority granted in this act shall be in writing and shall conform to the standards and guidelines published by a nationally recognized association of providers of broker price opinions. The Mississippi Real Estate Commission shall promulgate regulations that are consistent with, but not limited to, the standards and guidelines of a nationally recognized association of providers of broker price opinions." The real estate commission has chosen the BROKER PRICE OPINION Standards & Guidelines from the BPO Standards Board to comply with the law's directive.

The law, the real estate commission regulations and the BPO Standards & Guidelines outline the requirements a real estate licensee must adhere to in order to legally prepare and accept compensation for a BPO. The BPO must contain several items: (a) a statement of the intended purpose of the BPO, (b) a description of the subject property, (c) the basis of reasoning for your conclusion, (d) list of assumptions and limiting conditions, (e) disclosure of existing or contemplated interest of the preparer, (f) the effective date of the price opinion, (g) the name and signature of the preparer, (h) the name of the brokerage firm, (i) the signature date, (j) a required disclaimer, and (k) proof that the preparer has E & O insurance that covers their BPO activities.

It is very important that BPO preparers understand that they can only give a probable sales price. A broker's price opinion which estimates value or worth of a parcel of real estate rather than sales price will be deemed to be an appraisal. Remember BPO = probable sales price, Appraisal = value or worth. The law requires that the following disclaimer be included in all BPOs: "This opinion is not an appraisal of the market value of the property, and may not be used in lieu of an appraisal. If an appraisal is desired, the services of a licensed or certified appraiser must be obtained. This opinion may not be used as the primary basis to determine the value of a parcel of real property for a mortgage loan origination, including first

and second mortgages, refinances or equity lines of credit."

The BPO Standards Board states that standards are absolute and must be adhered to without exception. Guidelines are best practices and/or procedures that are widely accepted but can be overridden by customer specifications. Standards include: 1) Limitation, 2) Ethics and Conduct, 3) Competency, 4) Applicability, 5) Photo Requirements, 6) Records, and 7) Disclaimer. The guidelines address selection of comparable properties, market conditions, sales to list price ratios, and many other factors that would affect the probable sales price.

MREC Rule IV.A. states that, "It shall be the duty of the responsible broker to instruct the licensees licensed under that broker in the fundamentals of real estate practice, ethics of the profession and the Mississippi Real Estate License Law and to exercise supervision of their real estate activities for which a license is required." The real estate commission will hold the broker strictly responsible for the BPOs prepared by their salespeople. All compensation for preparing BPOs, or for any other licensable activity, must be paid to the broker as specified in License Law 73-35-21 (1).

Complete records of all real estate transactions must be kept for at least 3 years. The broker should keep several items as part of their BPO transaction record as part of their risk management: (1) A copy of the letter of engagement showing the reason the BPO was ordered. The reason can not be as a basis for a loan or mortgage. (2) A copy of the receipt of payment showing that the compensation was paid to the broker, not the salesperson. (3) Copies of all photos that were submitted with the BPO plus any others that were taken. (4) Data sources including MLS printouts and copies of other data used to justify the probable sales price. The date of the data must be current with the date of the BPO.

The requirements for preparing BPOs for compensation are exact and the consequences for doing them improperly can result in having your license suspended or revoked. I recommend that licensees who will be doing BPOs attend one of the continuing education classes that are being held at local boards throughout the state. If one is not scheduled in your area, ask your local board AE to request one. Those who will be preparing BPOs regularly as part of their business might want to consider attending one of the BPO certification courses from either the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) or the National Association of Broker Price Opinion Professionals (NABPOP). We can help schedule one of these in your area, if needed.

*John Phillips, a Hall of Fame inductee and Past President of MAR, is the Vice President of Professional Development for the Mississippi REALTOR® Institute. E-mail him at [jphillips@realtorinstitute.org](mailto:jphillips@realtorinstitute.org).*



## Mississippi Disaster Relief Fund



In 2010, MAR requested and received a gift of \$50,000 from NAR's REALTOR® Relief Foundation to be used to assist victims of the 2010 tornadoes in Yazoo, Choctaw and Holmes Counties. Mississippi REALTORS® added another \$2,325 dollars to that fund. A total of 20 families were assisted with funds for utility deposits and hook-ups, allowing these families to move back into their reconstructed homes. MAR

also made a recent appeal for funds to assist victims of the 2011 tornadoes and floods in our state. The Mississippi Disaster Relief Board voted to send funds to three of our own members who have suffered the destruction of their homes. The remaining funds which is currently around \$8,700 will be used to assist additional victims. The Board is in the process of identifying those individuals at this time.

## MAR contracts new webinar vendor



MAR recently contracted Fuze Meeting as its new webinar vendor, providing a less expensive provider with more modern features. Providing a more user-friendly format for members, Fuze works with

built-in browser software so that there is nothing to download or install, also offering compatibility with all major browsers. Fuze offers HD video streaming, allowing MAR to broadcast webinars in much higher quality and offers multi-party video conferencing that can be used for virtual sales meetings, training and general meetings. By simply using a webcam, a user can chat with up to 10 people or offices. Fuze also supports mobile devices such as the iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry, allowing users to access webinars from anywhere.

## Broker Involvement Grassroots committee

MAR's Governmental Affairs Director Derek Easley and Ellen Short, MAR's representative to the NAR Political Involvement Committee (RPIC) recently organized two call centers where volunteers from MAR's Grassroots Political Involvement Committee called brokers for the purpose of registering them to NAR's Broker Involvement Committee. The call centers were set up in Jackson and on the Gulf Coast, and as a result, 90 brokers were signed encompassing around 586 agents. As of May 1, 2011, 142 brokers encompassing 1,642 agents were signed up for the Broker Involvement Program, putting MAR at approximately 80 percent of NAR's goal. Additional brokers representing 398 agents are needed to reach our goal.

## HEADLINERS

Members in the news

### Cynthia Joachim elected 2012 NAR Region V Vice President



Joachim

Cynthia Joachim was recently officially elected as the 2012 NAR Region V Vice President. Along with her extensive service to her local and state REALTOR® boards, Joachim has served on numerous NAR committees and served as Chair of NAR's License Law, Education and Legal Action Committees as well as NAR's International Forum Chair.

### John Dean inducted to 2010 RPAC Hall of Fame



Dean

John Dean was recently recognized at NAR's Mid-Year meetings in Washington D.C. as one of the newest members of the RPAC Hall of Fame. RPAC Hall of Fame members have contributed \$25,000 or more to RPAC in their lifetime and represent a very select few of NAR membership worldwide. This is a significant honor for Dean and represents multiple years of major donor investment in RPAC.

### Janice Shows graduates from NAR Leadership Academy



Shows

Janice Shows recently graduated from the 2011 NAR Leadership Academy at the NAR Mid-Year Conference in Washington D.C. The Leadership Academy is a nine-month in-person and online training and development program structured around NAR's national meetings and consists of twenty-six REALTORS® from across the United States.

### Jo Usry recognized for MARPAC Major Donors



Usry

Jo Usry, CEO of the Jackson Association of REALTORS® was recognized at MAR's June Board of Directors Meeting for having achieved the commitment of 50 Major Donors to MARPAC for 2011. JAR's high number of Major Donor MARPAC contributors exceeds the major donor goal of 23 of NAR's states and territories. Usry was presented a letter of commendation from NAR by 2011 MAR President Dee Denton.





# CAPITOL WATCH

UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE ISSUES IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS

## If real estate is your profession, then politics is your business!

*by Derek Easley*

### Where does your MARPAC Investment go?

- To educate, support and elect policy makers who support REALTOR® issues
- To protect the professionalism of the industry
- To improve the business climate and to make the quality of life in our communities better
- To protect private property rights for all Mississippians

### What has your MARPAC Investment Done?

- Elected pro business / pro REALTOR® individuals at all levels of government
- Protected homeowners from an increase in construction costs and an increase in existing property costs by defeating attempts to impose impact fees
- Defended your income from proposed taxes on your commissions
- Worked against new and increased fees on your customers and clients

### Why is your MARPAC Investment Critical in 2011?

- 2011 is a statewide election year with 122 House members, 52 Senators and all Statewide Officials on the ballot.

- MARPAC is non-partisan and believes in the REALTOR® Party. MARPAC focuses strictly on the candidates' qualifications and willingness to support issues impacting the real estate industry, not on their political party affiliation.

- It was the success of MARPAC-supported candidates in 2007 that has brought about many substantial legislative victories. If we do not protect our friends in the legislature and

continue to elect pro-REALTOR® candidates then those gains will be easily lost.

### How does your MARPAC Investment affect Local, State and National Politics?

- Local Level - 10% of what each Local Board raises for MARPAC is set aside for that board to use in local elections. Electing pro-REALTOR® candidates for offices such as mayor, city council, county supervisor, etc. is just as critical as electing pro-REALTOR® candidates at the statewide level.

- State Level - Issues such as Impact Fees, AMC Regulation, Compensation for Broker Price Opinions and Mortgage Fraud are just a few of the battles being waged at the Mississippi Legislature, and having MARPAC funds to help REALTOR® supported elected officials is the key to having our message heard.

- National Level - Just as MAR sets a fundraising goal for the Local Boards each year, the National Association of REALTORS® sets a goal for MAR each year. Communicating with our federal officials on issues such as keeping banks out of real estate, support for small business health plans and the protection of the Mortgage Interest Deduction is vital to our industry.



It is only because of your MARPAC investments that we can send a clear united message about REALTOR® priorities in Mississippi. It is the goal of MARPAC to elect public officials who understand that pro-business and pro-REALTOR® decisions are key to the success of your business.

### Please make your investment today

\$25 is your Fair Share for a Salesperson and \$99 is your Fair Share for a Broker

With 2011 being such an important election year, please consider joining the Magnolia Club by making a \$250 Investment or becoming a Sterling R (\$1,000 investment), a Crystal R (\$2,500 investment), or a Golden R (\$5,000 investment).



*Derek Easley is MAR's Governmental Affairs Director. Email him at [deasley@msrealtors.org](mailto:deasley@msrealtors.org).*



# Members draw down

The Mississippi Association of REALTORS® recently held a fundraiser for MARPAC called “Drawdown Throwdown at Sundown” at the Mississippi Children’s Museum in Jackson. Mississippi REALTORS® purchased \$100 chances to win the \$5000 prize. The event in which the members enjoyed a catered buffet, musical entertainment, museum games and a photo booth raised more than \$32,400 for MARPAC. Pam Powers of Oxford and Greenwood was the lucky winner of the \$5,000 grand prize.



*Ernie and Mary Clark, Brookhaven; Nancy and Jesse Lane, Naomi and Bob Ridgway, Jackson*



*Kelli and Randy Knouse, Ridgeland*



*Patrick Gibson and Keiko Palmero, Gulfport*



*Musician Charles Carter, Hattiesburg*



*Kris and Mike Davis, Columbus; Sarah Jones, Jackson*



# for MARPAC



*Paul Shahan, Vicki Reel, Corie Haynes and Kay Jefferies, Northwest Mississippi Association of REALTORS®*



*Brenda Estes, Wade Billiot and Norma Cother, Tupelo*



*2011 LeadershipMAR classmates MAR First Vice-President Ken Austin, Pass Christian; Phil Landers, Jackson; MAR President-Elect Noggin Wild, McComb; Stephanie Nix, Jackson; Karen Glass, Gulfport; Jeanelle Marshall and Megan Hall, Jackson*

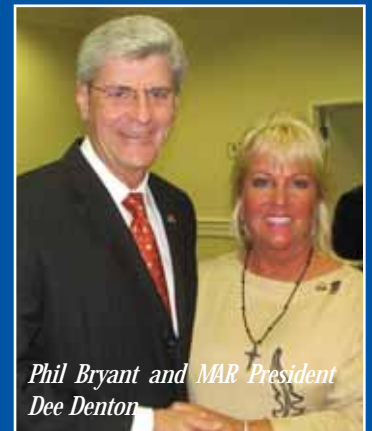


*Dorothy Thompson, Jackson*



## MAR endorses Phil Bryant for Governor

The Mississippi Association of REALTORS® formally endorsed Phil Bryant in his campaign for Governor citing Bryant's proven record of conservative, pro-business leadership in a press conference held at the Mississippi Association of REALTORS® Building on June 9, 2011. The announcement was attended by REALTORS® from across the state.



*Phil Bryant and MAR President Dee Denton*





## FOR THE TECH OF IT

BY CHRIS ADCOCK



# Make the most of your web presence

### Get a website

I am still surprised when I run into business owners without a website. In this day and age, being online is almost a must. Consumers, especially those looking for real estate, are looking for as much information as possible and more and more consumers are turning to the internet first, the fastest source of information. Not only is it fast, but its available 24/7.

According to the most recent statistics from the National Association of REALTORS®, 74 percent of people use the internet to search for a home. Of those, 45 percent said they walked through a home after viewing it online, and 29 percent found an agent to help them find a home online. If you don't have at least some presence online, you could be excluding yourself from nearly 30 percent of consumers.

If you don't have a website, I encourage you to get one. You don't have to spend a fortune. Start small until you are comfortable. Yahoo!, Godaddy, and several other big companies offer low-cost websites and hosting for small businesses. If you want something more professional and customized to your needs, I suggest looking for a local web-development company.

### Improve your website

Maybe you have a website, but you aren't getting the most out of it. First, figure out why someone would come to your site. Are they looking for listings or professional advice? What would someone search for when they visit your site? You should offer consumers information they are looking for or at least enough to make them know you are the best source for that information.

Just like in any marketing piece, you want to turn your website traffic into leads. Make sure your contact information is prominent on your site and encourage prospective clients to reach out.

Taking a fresh look at your design can help your website better present your company image and professionalism. When it comes to website design, more isn't always better. Make sure your website stays easy to navigate so that consumers can find what they are looking for.

One major downside to the internet as a source of information is that much of it is inaccurate or out-of-date. Many real estate website have old listings, inaccurate descriptions and old contact information. It's important to keep your website current.

Your contact information is probably the most important information on your website. If a prospective customer is trying to reach you, you want to make sure he's seeing your current phone number. Make sure you update your contact information on any sites you are listed on. You may be on other sites that you don't even know of. Maybe you have a profile on your broker's site, or other third-party real estate websites. Here's a helpful trick. If you changed



phone numbers over the years, Google your old phone number and see what sites come up.

### Get more traffic

Most website owners have no strategy for increasing hits to their website. They sit back and hope people will just find it themselves. Search engines like Google will very likely find your site and direct people to it, but to get the most out of them, it will take a little effort. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is making changes to your site or sites linking to you to increase your position on search engines. Many companies use professional

SEO firms or consultants to develop a custom strategy, but with some simple tips you may be able to drastically improve your traffic. Search engines read or "index" text. They can't read images or Flash, so make sure you're whole site isn't just images or scanned documents. Choose several phrases or keywords to improve your ranking. Obviously, keywords like "Mississippi" and "homes" are going to have a lot of competition, so you want to be more specific. Let's say you have several listing in a subdivision called Oakwood. Create a page on your website dedicated to that subdivision. At the top, put in big bold letters "Homes in Oakwood". Include some related information describing the subdivision, the surrounding area, maybe links to schools, and make sure to showcase your listings. Use keywords when linking to your pages. Instead of having a link that says "Listings" or "Click here", make it more descriptive, like "Homes in Oakwood". When you link back to your home page, name the link your company name or your name. That will improve your results if someone types in your name at a search engine.

Consider advertising on local websites where your prospective clients visit. There are some inexpensive opportunities that can be very effective. Also, make sure you include your website on any marketing you do including business cards, flyers and even yard signs.

### Track your results

Knowing how many hits your website gets will help you improve. There are several options and probably the best is Google Analytics, a free service that tracks how many people visit your site and what they do there. Analytics will show you where your visitors came from. If they came from a search engine, it will list what keywords they typed to find your site. You can also view reports and charts of how your traffic changes over time. It is a must-have tool for any website, especially if you want to see how your changes affect your traffic.

Like many things, running a successful website can be very complex, but you can start small. If you spend just a little bit of time every month improving your website, I'm sure you'll be surprised at the results.

*Chris Adcock is MAR's Information Technology Manager. Contact him at [cadcock@msrealtors.org](mailto:cadcock@msrealtors.org)*



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## MAR announces new texting program



MAR is excited to announce the purchase of a new texting system to be used in communicating with our members. The texting program is offered by the Mississippi company bfac.com, an international website that features real estate listings, travel, tickets, autos, online garage sales, business directory, and a number of other features. The bfac.com texting program will allow MAR members to opt in to be notified about upcoming MAR events, Calls to Action, meeting reminders and other information on their smartphone no matter where they are. Watch for additional information and how to sign up on [www.msrealtors.org](http://www.msrealtors.org) and upcoming emails as we launch this cutting-edge program. Visit [www.bfac.com](http://www.bfac.com).

brb btw ttyl lol bff asap syl

# Are your technological tendencies innovative or antiquated?

by Kathy Whitfield



## How's technology treating you?

What is it about technology that draws us in and fascinates us with its incredible power? Could it be the mere fact that it is so difficult to understand yet it can make our lives so much more efficient and convenient? Or could it be something as fundamental as its ability to bring the entire world to the palm of our hand in the time it takes light to travel?

Whatever the reason, technology has become the foundation upon which international commerce, military strategy and all forms of communication are built. It is now the essential component in building any type of business and the cornerstone of marketing, communicating and managing. Large corporations, retail companies and whole industries were once governed by the capabilities of the telephone and a good receptionist. However, companies in 2011 who have failed to embrace technological advances have begun to fade into the background in the midst of the cutting-edge progress on which technologically savvy companies thrive.

Real estate is no different. "The phone once was among the most powerful tools in a real estate practitioner's sales arsenal and it still is for some people who can successfully work within the limits of state and federal Do-Not-Call rules," states Michael Russer, NAR REALTOR® Magazine's Mr. Internet. "However, if you attempt to convert online leads using the phone sales techniques you learned when you got into the real estate business, you will likely only succeed in driving prospects away. The Internet-empowered consumer is a very different animal, and you must use different techniques to win their

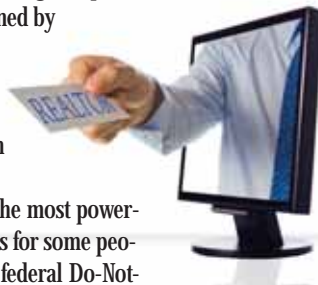
trust and eventually win their business," he says. "Unlike in phone sales, which is largely about taking control as soon as possible, selling to online consumers is about giving up your need for control and concentrating instead on building a relationship." (REALTOR® Magazine Online, June 2006)

Many successful REALTORS® have begun to employ the use of a smartphone for everything from an office receptionist to a global positioning system. With the purchase of a handheld phone that has a mobile operating system, a personal digital assistant, a digital camera, a portable media player, email fax and Wi-Fi or mobile broadband access an agent

can do almost everything that an office full of equipment and a full-time office assistant were once providing. Not only is the cost of doing business a fraction of past years, but the ability to provide top-drawer service in a virtually paperless environment is easier than ever.

From the standpoint of the consumer, the expectations of instant gratification and communication have sky-rocketed over the last decade. Gone are the days of leaving a message on an answering machine. Today the consumer is doing preliminary home-shopping online and then communicating with the agent via email or text.

While in the past the unspoken protocol for responding to consumers was around 24 hours, consumers now expect a response instantly. Agents that delay in responding in a timeframe that doesn't meet the expectations of the impatient consumer often lose the potential client to their competition.







Mehr

### Tech-talking trend-setters

Mississippi Real Estate Leader (REL) talked with three Mississippi brokers who are not only embracing technology, but are leading the way among their peers. Saucier REALTOR® Damion Flynn, Corinth REALTOR® Doug Jumper and Southaven REALTOR® Leigh Ann Mehr answered a few questions concerning the role that technology plays in their real estate business.

**REL:** *How long have you been in real estate and how did you get started?*

**Mehr:** I began my career six years ago after being laid off. I had already gotten my license but was too scared to just jump into a career with no guaranteed paycheck. Being a single woman, that was scary! I started February 1st. and had my first closing in April. From then on, I had closings every month. I knew that I had found my calling!

**REL:** *How much of a role has technology played in your real estate business?*

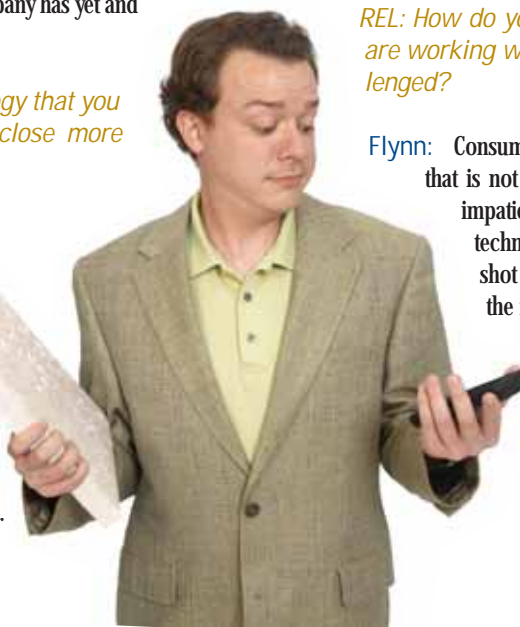
**Jumper:** I have been in real estate as a broker for five years. With over 65 years of combined experience, technology is one of the things that put us in the forefront in our market the first year. We were among the first in Northeast Mississippi to multi-link properties to various search engines and to provide HD virtual tours.

**Flynn:** Technology IS my business. As a prior computer consultant and Internet business consultant, I saw a large hole needing to be filled both for consumers and real estate agents alike. I have spent the past several years developing tools that are friendly for agents as well as for consumers. It is my hope that these tools will eventually fuel a new type of real estate company that caters to agents in a way that no other company has yet and all at a cost that is much less.

**REL:** *What are the main types of technology that you utilize and how have they helped you close more transactions and be more successful?*

**Mehr:** The most important type of technology I use right now is my smart phone. I currently use the iPhone 4. I have access to my database, zipforms, email, MLS and mortgage calculators. Whether I am on vacation or at a home inspection, I am able to keep in touch with clients, write or work offers.

Jumper



**Jumper:** I utilize Realtor.com, Homes.com, JustSnooping.com frequently which are three affordable and efficient ways to be effective. Their automated settings can keep you and your clients informed with little hassle.

**REL:** *In what ways have you incorporated technology into your everyday business?*

**Flynn:** In today's market, consumers are very information driven and they want the information now. I have put together a real estate blog in my market for real estate information and strive to maintain up to date information on a regular basis. Along with specialty search functions, this helps me provide a much faster response time. On the selling side of a transaction, I typically have all my marketing for a property done online within 24 hours of taking a listing. This shows my clients that I am there to help them. At the same time, it limits my out of pocket expenses in advertising.

**REL:** *What expectations do you think the majority of consumers have concerning the use of technology when working with a real estate professional?*

**Mehr:** Consumers today expect agents to be available 24/7! That is not necessarily a good thing, but it is a sign of the times. If you don't text or have a way to work from a mobile office, consumers will find someone else who does.

**Jumper:** For the under-fifty consumer crowd, if you can't email or use a smartphone, your chances of becoming their agent are slim.

**REL:** *How do you feel when you work with another REALTOR® who is totally behind when it comes to technology?*

**Jumper:** It's difficult to say the least. The time lapse caused by their inability to use technology not only harms the technologically-deficient agent, it makes the other agent look bad to clients when they have to wait for follow-ups.

**Mehr:** It is so frustrating to me to work with someone who doesn't have access to email on their phone or doesn't use text messaging.

**REL:** *How do you think the consumer feels when they are working with a REALTOR® that is technology-challenged?*

**Flynn:** Consumers from Generation Y will not accept an agent that is not technically savvy because they tend to be very impatient and want results now. The agent who is using technology to their advantage will typically have first shot at any group of consumers because they will be the first to respond when the lead comes in.

**Mehr:** I worked on a transaction last year with an agent who did not know how to scan a document. It made the whole process time consuming and it frustrated my client.

*REL: What do you see down the road in the way of new technological innovations that will give REALTORS® a cutting edge in the market?*

**Flynn:** The biggest innovation I think you will see in the next 10 years is a serious reduction in the amount of face time with clients. Virtual tours and actual video tours will become the norm, and many buyers will have narrowed down their home search to three to five properties before you show them the first one.

**Jumper:** I predict that there will be less paper and paper filing used in our business.

**Mehr:** I think more REALTORS® will be using a tablet PC or iPad in order to keep up with tech-savvy consumers.

*REL: What do you predict will happen to the REALTORS® who are currently behind, continue to fall further behind and refuse to embrace new ideas when it comes to technology?*

**Mehr:** They will be out of business!

**Flynn:** They will be forced into retirement over the next 10 years.

**Jumper:** They will be in the same place that REALTORS® who thought MLS was too innovative are now. (Laughing)

*REL: Do you classify yourself as innovative or antiquated when it comes to technology?*

**Mehr:** Innovative! I am always looking for the newest technology to help me increase my business.

**Jumper:** Compared to the majority of agents, I am somewhat innovative.

**Flynn:** 100 percent innovative!



*Flynn*

## Tech Watch: Improve Your Technology Skills Online

If you're looking for resources to help build your knowledge of technology solutions, the Web can be a great place to start your search.

Overwhelmed trying to keep pace with technology, or attempting to master the tools that can transform your career? The educational resources you need are readily available online. The latest product updates, instructional videos, insightful advice from your peers—it's all there, once you decide what you need to know and have some idea where or how to find it.

"The problem for most is deciding what to look at first," says Randy Eager, CRS, GRI, and president and founder of Computer Camp, which offers real estate technology training. "There's just so much available now."

When Eager started the company in 1989, his training focused on merely two real estate software programs that were available at the time. Today, real estate professionals have a much larger array to choose from in specialty software, communications, and marketing technologies, and a range of hardware—computers, cell phones and smartphones, digital cameras, GPS, wireless networks, and multi-function machines.

Eager's technology advice for real estate pros: "Start with your Web site, and get it right, as it will point you down the road to increased productivity," with all of these other tools.

### 5 Places to Look for Training

Recent changes in Eager's business underscore the ease with which proactive real estate professionals can now get educated online, whatever the topic. Here are some of those ways.

**1. Webinars.** "People started to shy away from buying tickets to attend seminars at conventions, or put on by their board or association," Eager says. "As a result, we're doing a lot more training now through webinars."

Transmitted over the Internet in real time and often archived after the fact, webinars provide much of the same content as a traditional seminar without the need for attendees to gather in one place. Webcasts, another increasingly popular educational tool, deliver comparable content, although presenter and audience cannot interact.

"A webinar is something you can participate in from your home or office," Eager says. "All it takes is a computer with an Internet connection—click a link and you're in." (View a list of upcoming and archived REALTOR® Magazine webinars on various real estate topics.)

**2. Specialized programs and training** Real estate is a highly specialized career. For an education on how the latest tools and technologies can advance your professional goals, you'll want to explore the varied Web resources available at REALTOR® University from the National Association of REALTORS® as well as NAR's Center for REALTOR® Technology. The REALTOR® University Web site offers more than 400 hours of real estate and continuing education to earn designations and certifications in the business. View a list of their upcoming courses.

**3. Instructional videos and online tutorials.** Instructional videos, posted by users, are also fixtures on sites such as YouTube and WonderHowTo.com.

To learn about the latest products and their use, online tutorials can also be great resources. Look for tutorials produced by hardware manufacturers such as Dell and Apple and software publishers like Microsoft and Adobe—which can be good places to start. Also, vendors such as Lenovo maintain a knowledge base of frequently asked questions about their products, with forums where consumers can





pose questions and get answers from others eager to help.

**4. Online publications and blogs.** Some of the sites that Ryan Shaughnessy, a broker with Lafayette Square Real Estate in St. Louis, checks regularly include technology clearinghouse CNET.com, MakeUseof.com for reviews of useful sites and Web resources, and the Social Media Edge podcast on blogtalkradio.com for insight on social networking. He monitors advances that promise productive benefits to real estate professionals and shares what he learns in his blog.

He recommends ActiveRain for advice on practical use of the latest real estate tools. "You'll find a concentration of people there who are already tech-oriented," he says. "Post a question and you'll get answers from people who understand real estate and are eager to help, encourage, and mentor others by sharing what they know."

Web sites devoted to specific product categories, such as phones or digital cameras, are good resources for new product announcements, reviews, and advice on buying too. (View online buyer's guides for a range of real estate products.)

**5. Simple search.** Still can't find what you're looking for in training? "The best advice I can offer is to start with hardware or software, one at a time and go to Google and type in 'How To Use...' plus whatever you're interested in. You'll be on your way," Eager says.

While a search can point you to some sources on a given subject, results rarely provide any insight into the quality of the content. You may have to check out several sites, blogs, and webinars to find the ones that can provide the kind of instruction or information you need.

Whatever your challenge or interest, answers are always available online, at your convenience—and always just a few keystrokes away.

*By Michael Antoniak for REALTOR® Magazine Online, August 2009. Used with permission of the National Association of REALTORS®, 2011.*

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# Early Bird Registration

## Only \$149 through August 31, 2011

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•One form per registrant.

•Please **PRINT**.

•For more information, contact MAR at 800-747-1103.

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Check all that apply

\_\_\_ Rookie REALTOR®: \$129 by Nov. 21; \$159 after Nov. 21/onsite (open to REALTORS® licensed on or after Dec. 1, 2010).

\_\_\_ REALTOR®: Early Bird registration by August 31, \$149; \$179 by Nov. 21; \$199 after Nov. 21/onsite

\_\_\_ Non-REALTOR® Licensee: \$229 by Nov. 21; \$249 after Nov. 21/onsite

\_\_\_ Non-Licensee Spouse/Guest: \$99 by Nov 21; \$119 after Nov. 21/onsite Non-education events only.

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#### *Method of Payment*

(No registrations will be processed without payment. A \$50 processing fee will be charged for returned check.)

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All cancellations must be submitted in writing or by email. Refunds minus a \$50.00 processing fee will be granted until November 21, 2011. No refunds will be issued after November 21, 2011 and the exhibitor or sponsor will be liable for any unpaid balance if cancellation is received after that date.

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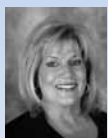
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As of June 30, 2011

MARPAC has reached 78.1 percent of its 2011 goal with \$156,172.48 and 43 percent of its 50 percent fair share participation goal.

Biloxi-Ocean Springs	45.9%
Clarksdale	88.1%
Cleveland	112.1%
Four County	53.3%
Golden Triangle	62.4%
Greenville	230.0%
Greenwood	58.7%
Grenada	89.1%
Gulf Coast	58.9%
Hattiesburg	68.4%
Jackson	96.9%
Laurel	71.0%
Meridian	73.6%
MCAR	176.1%
Natchez	20.9%
North Central	88.3%
Northeast	69.6%
Northwest	82.4%
Pearl River	67.6%
Southwest	73.5%
Vicksburg	48.2%
<b>Total Participation</b>	<b>78.1%</b>



## 2011 Fair Share Investment Form

### Amount:

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☐ \$25 (Fair Share, Salespersons) ☐ \$2,500 (Crystal R)  
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