

Building a Productive Local Network-Local REALTOR® Association

According to a 2012 survey of local network presidents, a healthy majority of Women's Council local networks have a productive relationship with their local REALTOR® Association. The REALTOR® Association provides a range of types of support for network operations, and, in turn, the local network contributes time, talent and support for local Association projects and governance activities.

So, how did they do it? What can the collective experience of the local network leadership tell us about the key steps to follow to build and maintain a positive, productive relationship with the local REALTOR® Association?

Key Steps to Consider

1 *Set a Goal for the Relationship.* Be clear what it is you are trying to accomplish by working to build and maintain a relationship with the local Association. Doing this will guide you to the right type of support or engagement you seek. And remember, solid relationships are those based on mutual value. So be sure that both the local network and local Association will benefit from the relationship. Some possible goals are:

- Raise awareness or gain visibility for the network
- Recruit members
- Increase networking opportunities for network members
- Increase leadership opportunities for network members
- Show support for the industry and organized real estate in your area

2 *Approach the Local Association Staff Executive (AE).* Many local networks have found success by expressing initial interest with the Local Association AE. He or she has a broad perspective of the opportunities for involvement throughout the organization and the possibilities for operational support the Association may provide. Having the AE as a network advocate – someone who understands the value of the network and the distinctive qualities of its members – can go a long way in building solid inroads with the leadership of the Association. In many cases, local networks have also developed positive relationships with key Association senior staff, and in this way have become invaluable to the Associations education, PR or advocacy efforts, for instance.

3 *Get Involved!* There is no better way to showcase the unique abilities and contributions of the Women's Council member than by getting active in the Local Association through committee work, in leadership roles, and through support for Association projects and initiatives, in such areas as political action, community service, etc. Due to the high level of leadership skills Women's Council members have attained, the network has become in many instances an invaluable source for committee chair, vice-chair, Board and officer positions.

4 *Extend the Invitation to Get Involved in the Network.* Inviting the AE, senior staff and Association leadership to attend network meetings and events, or become members is the best way to expose them to the pool of talent and support the local network represents, and to demonstrate the ways in which the network can enrich the benefits available to local Association members and support industry initiatives. Some networks have even offered to pay for the membership of the AE or the board president.



5 **Ask!** With the value of the relationship established, the network has a solid foundation for seeking support from the local Association. Be sensitive to the guidelines or procedures that may be in place within the Association for providing support to related groups like Women's Council, but also be willing to explore a range of options with the AE to help meet the needs of the network. A menu of the types of support and mutual activities many local networks enjoy with their local Associations is below.

6 **Work at It.** Relationships take time to build and must be maintained. Never take the relationship with the local Association for granted. Open communication, a regular show of appreciation, and recognition for the mutual benefits that are resulting from the relationship are the cornerstones of the sustaining a positive and productive relationship. Once a year, the network leadership should evaluate the relationship. Suggested questions to discuss are:

- Are we making progress on the goals we have set for this relationship?
- Are both the local network and local Association gaining value from this relationship?
- Are the needs of the local network and/or local Association changing? And, if so, in what ways should we adjust the value we can provide each other?
- How can we continue to improve this relationship?

Seek input from the AE or board president to help the network leadership team more accurately evaluate the relationship and possible next steps.

Menu of Support Opportunities

Based on the survey results, here are some of the most common ways local networks are receiving support from local Associations, and conversely, are contributing to the local Association.

Support from the Local Association to the Local Network

- Free or discounted space for education programs or monthly meetings
- Promotion/advertising opportunities for network meetings or events (e.g., on website, MLS, announcements at local board or membership meetings, a booth at an Association expo event, etc.)
- Sponsorships (cash or in-kind) for network meetings and events
- Speakers for network business meetings
- Joint meetings with the local Association (for installation of officers or educational programming, for instance)
- Technical support (with the network website, development of promotional flyers, financial services, help with meeting logistics, etc.)

Support from the Local Network to the Local Association

- Pay for AE or board leadership network dues
- Network member service on committees and in leadership positions
- Network sponsorship or support for Association projects or activities
- Promotion of Association services and activities to network members

