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Like heck it's yours; put it back.

My wife's grandfather, like most of his generation, wore a hat. (He also probably gardened in his suit – but that's a story for another day.) Every day at noon precisely, he would leave the Shelley Building on Pender Street and walk over to the White Lunch on Hastings Street. There, he would have lunch with his cronies. On arrival he would hang his hat on the hook by the door. Inside the hat was a label saying, "Like #S%! it's yours; put it back," just in case

anyone was of a mind to take his hat. He cared about his possessions and was proactive in protecting them.

A lot of possessions we accumulate in life are important to us. Some are more important than others. Grandfather's hat was probably dispensable (although being a Scot, he would probably argue with that) but our collective ownership of the real estate profession's websites and their content is not dispensable. We would be incensed if a third party from outside the profession scraped information from our websites to use it for profit or otherwise. Similarly, we have a right to expect our colleagues will also respect each other's ownership rights relating to real estate websites and their content.

Canadian real estate boards have invested millions of dollars on members' behalf to develop www.realtor.ca, www.realtorlink.ca, and MLS® websites and applications. The information these websites contain is there for all members' benefit. Brokerages and REALTORS® have also spent considerable amounts of money to develop their own websites. These websites' content is protected by their Terms of Use as well as Article 27 of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics.

The "Ethics Guy," for example, constitutes intellectual property and is owned by the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver on behalf of all its members. Intellectual property is as valuable an asset to a real estate board, brokerage or REALTOR®'s business as the building that houses the brokerage and its computer hardware and systems.

Intellectual property typically includes copyrights, trademarks, confidential information and trade secrets, industrial designs and patents, all of which are protected in Canada by a common law and legislation. Examples of these include, REALTORLink®, realtor.ca, MLXChange, brokerage and REALTOR® websites and content.

Ownership conveys significant rights. Only owners of a copyright or trademark have rights to use them and are authorized to reproduce, distribute, display or sell the copyrighted work.

Why should we care about this? Simply put, it's not ethical and would be a breach of Article 27 for REALTORS® to take others' ideas, content and trade assets and pass them off as their own. An example of this would be for a REALTOR® to violate the terms of another real estate website by "scraping" content and posting to his/her own website without the owner's permission.

* Yes, you can re-print and quote the "Ethics Guy" just make sure you acknowledge the source as follows:

Source: REBGV or

Source: Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver.

Article 27: Intellectual Property Rights of Boards / Associations

REALTORS® shall respect the intellectual property and other ownership rights of other REALTORS®, Boards, Provincial/Territorial Associations and CREA.

Interpretations

- 27.1 REALTORS® shall only access and use the websites and other databases of boards, associations, CREA and other REALTORS® in accordance with the policies for use established by the owner of the site.
- 27.2 REALTORS® should not infringe the copyright or other ownership interest of another REALTOR® in his/her Listing.
- 27.3 A REALTOR® shall not use the trade names or trademarks or confusingly similar trade names or trademarks of any firm, franchise, or other organization other than those with which the REALTOR® is affiliated or otherwise authorized in writing to use. This restriction includes but is not limited to, unauthorized Internet uses such as domain names, e-mail addresses and metatags.



A Bouquet

Melodie Coelho of Re/Max Advantage Realty, New Westminster, is sending a bouquet to **Antonio Alves** of Sutton Centre Realty, Burnaby. Here's what Melodie told us.

"I showed a listing to my client who is in a wheelchair. The listing REALTOR® was Antonio Alves. We have had a difficult time finding properties to accommodate the wheelchair access and this was one that seemed as though it would proceed without a hitch. But, when we arrived the elevator was not working. Antonio ran around trying to get it going and he did. We got up to the third floor and viewed the unit. When we left the elevator had again stopped working. Antonio again ran up and down the stairs to get it going, but it would not work. He and another family member of my client carried my client in his wheelchair down the three flights of stairs!

This is something that not just anyone would do or even could do. My client and I greatly appreciated Antonio's actions." Congratulations Antonio!