

# 6 Tips to Build Stronger Community Relationships with Your Website

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Imagine a Website that, in addition to communicating bylaws and covenants, actually brought your community together, serving as both the primary communications tool for current residents and as a marketing tool for potential buyers. With an up-to-date Website and the right Web content management tools, you can do just that. Save time and money on mailing hundreds of letters out each month and, instead, empower your residents to view 'paperless' updates online. All you need is the technology and a reallocation of staff time from addressing and stamping letters to simply updating content online.

If you're ready to support the paperless movement, while delivering the same timely updates to your residents, here are the top tips to turn leverage your Website to build stronger community relationships:

## 1. Post Relevant Information

This may seem obvious, but it cannot be emphasized enough. Make sure the content you make available on your Website is information that your community wants to see. Don't overburden them with too much content, but provide just enough that they actually read it, and keep coming back for more.

Examples of relevant content may include:

- [Events Calendar](#) – promote board meetings, swap meets, garage sales and holiday events
- [Photo Gallery](#) – showcase recent community events
- [Newsletters](#) – post current and archived community newsletters, with the option to automatically receive newsletters directly via email
- [Homeowners Area](#) – include pertinent resident information, such as covenants, documents, by-laws and request forms
- [Contact Information](#) – be sure to offer a way for residents to reach out and connect with someone in your office to answer questions or report problems
- [Management Bios](#) – let your community members get to know the Board, staff and volunteers. This will boost future recruiting efforts as well.
- [Online Association Account](#) – enable residents to view payment history and make payments online. Start receiving payments on time through automated reminders and easy online processing to alleviate the burden of manually mailing delinquent notices and processing checks.

## 2. Engage the Community

A key part of Web 2.0 is two-way communication to engage constituents. Allow your residents to submit feedback, ask questions, and post in a forum or message board to feel that they are being heard and have a say in their community.

Examples of engagement mediums include:

- [Online Surveys](#) – request feedback from your residents on important topics impacting the community, such as new buildings and structures, pool equipment, sidewalk changes, parking regulations, etc.
- [Message Boards](#) – provide a forum for residents to voice comments or post questions or problems. Bring the community together to better understand and resolve the situations that, up to now, have taken place behind the scenes.
- [Social Media](#) – create a Facebook Fan Page or Twitter account for the community to follow for up-to-the-minute updates. A few statistics? The 55+ demographic is the fastest growing on Facebook, the largest social network in the world in terms of users. And 89% of social media users believe organizations should be interacting with their constituents online.

### 3. Improve Search Engine Visibility

Website optimization is critical in order for constituents to find your community association. Your Website should incorporate keywords and phrases throughout so search engine crawlers can tag those keywords and make your site visible in searches. To effectively optimize your Website visibility, consider which keywords homeowners may use when searching for your association.

Examples may include:

- Community management
- Community association management
- Homeowners association management
- HOA

And remember to incorporate the name of your city, town or suburb into these keywords to make them even more relevant and searchable.

### 4. Deliver Up-to-Date Content

We already covered the importance of relevant content. And while your covenants and bylaws must be accessible online, they likely don't change every week. Therefore, relevancy is not the end-all. To keep your community members coming back to your Website on a continuous basis, the content must also be new, fresh and timely.

Examples of timely updates may include:

- Announcements
- Events
- Board Meetings and Meeting Minutes
- New Services
- Forms
- Surveys

### 5. Provide Straight-Forward Navigation

User-experience is critical in Website design. Your site should direct visitors to the most important and most sought-after information immediately upon entry. List key information and subpages clearly in the main navigation bar and group information logically. For example, homeowner documents should be grouped together, while a community section should group calendars, forums and photos together. Consider having a 'quick links' drop-down as well for the most commonly accessed links.

### 6. Showcase Pictures and White Space

Pictures, images and graphics not only make a Website look more professional and legitimate, these items also keep visitors engaged through visual stimulation. Avoid having a Website with mostly text. At the same time, avoid cluttering your site with sporadic pictures and white space. Every site needs strategy and structure, so think about your layout, navigation and visuals before launching your online presence.

While these top tips to creating an effective, engaging Website may sound like a lot of work, or a lot of investment, it's important to consider the technology available today that make an updated, relevant Website easy and cost-effective. Web content management tools empower anyone within your community association to easily post new or update existing content as no technical expertise or HTML skills are required. You can reduce bottlenecks as reliance on IT staff or a Web contractor to maintain your website content is eliminated. You'll save time on traditional mailings and you'll save money on hiring an outsourced Web developer.

By leveraging your Website as your primary communications tool, your community association will reap the benefits of improved communication and relations amongst homeowners, increased participation and more timely payments, and a centralized location for disseminating timely news and updates.