

Seven Easy Guidelines for the STAR Program:

1. **Basics**
2. **Place**
3. **Publicity**
4. **Programs**
5. **Advisor**
6. **Creativity**
7. **Food**

1. **Basics.** There are three simple elements required:

- 1) a place to meet
- 2) a few new Realtors
- 3) a professional who'll take 30-45 minutes on a one-time basis to help.

2. **Place.** The place to meet can be the Board, a real estate company, or the conference room of an affiliate (a lender, for example). Wherever it is, it should be free.

3. **Publicity.** The word needs get out to new Realtors somehow. The method for doing so can best be determined in each area. Our group started by word of mouth, then we created an email distribution. Our meetings are announced each month by email which requests a reply if you're coming. People also call from the MLS announcement if they have questions or want to attend. The only reason we need a headcount is for food purposes since an affiliate brings lunch. (Food is addressed in part 7.) The email distribution can be a little time-consuming and is optional. If you have an easier way to publicize meetings, go for it. If you don't need a headcount, don't get one.

Here's the email announcement for our meeting this month:

Home inspections can be incredibly confusing. How do you prepare your buyer or seller? What exactly does a home warranty cover? And when can a warranty be used in conjunction with a home inspection?

These questions and more will be answered at the next **New Realtors Club meeting on **Thursday, April 16th**, 11:45-1:00 at HAAR. Donna Brock of American Home Shield Warranty and Phil Fraley of Amerispec Home Inspection Service will cover the much-needed topics of **Home Warranties and Home Inspections**. Donna and Phil will also provide a light lunch so please respond to this email by **noon Wednesday** if you'd like to attend.**

Here's the MLS announcement:

New Realtors Club meets **Thursday, April 16th**, 11:45-1:00 at HAAR. Donna Brock of American Home Shield Warranty and Phil Fraley of Amerispec Home Inspection Service will cover **Home Warranties and Home Inspections**. Donna and Phil will also provide a light lunch, so please call Linda Taylor at 337-1310 by **noon Wednesday** if you'd like to attend. Reservations are required but there's no charge and everyone's invited!

4. Programs. It's not difficult to find someone to help with a program. Anyone you need is in your area: a broker or other seasoned Realtor, a lender, a closing attorney, a home inspector, etc. At our first meeting, a long-time Realtor showed five of us how to fill out an offer. Shouldn't the broker do that? Yes, the broker should do that but do you learn it the first time? How many times can you hear it and still learn?

I'd suggest that the first meeting have no specific program. The new Realtors and their advisor could get together and toss around ideas. They can set goals and decide who's going to 1) get the word out to other new Realtors, 2) post meeting information somewhere, 3) line up a program, and 4) anything else they want to do.

Program topics are simple. Anything regarding forms is helpful. A good lender could walk them through filling out an estimated closing statement. Another lender could talk about mortgages, not the fancy stuff but basics such as the difference between conventional, FHA, and VA. Someone (probably a Realtor) could talk about marketing on a shoestring budget. The new agents could chime in with free or cheap marketing tools that have worked for them...group effort. Someone (Realtor or attorney) could describe the process from contract to closing and what needs to be done when. Another attorney could tell horror stories from problem closings and how to avoid them.

We never have trouble finding programs. It's a mindset. When you focus on basics, program topics are everywhere and people are willing to help. We actually turn people down who want to present programs. The primary reasons for turning people down are: 1) the program isn't basic enough, or 2) it's flagrant self-promotion. Sometimes the self-promotion thing is a fine line. If a builder wants to tell you about his new development, it's obviously self-promotion and fairly limited. The real program needs to be about new construction terms or what to look for in new construction vs. resale (for example). If he wants to take the time to help in that way, then by all means let him. It seems a program works well if it either gets us to a closing or keeps our butt out of a sling.

5. Advisor. One person should be responsible for overseeing the program on a continuing basis, either a staff person at the Board or an officer position such as vice-president. This person is advisor only for continuity purposes, not as someone who makes all arrangements. The new Realtors should handle details once the group is formed.

This should not be an overwhelming chore for anyone. It's easy and fun. Once the concept is presented to new agents, they should take the bull by the horns. If they don't, forget it. The program is not gonna catch on in this area.

6. Creativity. I believe the new agents should create their own group within STAR parameters, whatever makes sense to them, whatever seems helpful and fun. I also believe they should choose their own name, possibly not STAR for a couple of reasons:

1) You have to explain what STAR stands for so it's confusing. "New Realtors Club" has worked for us because you know what it is. In the beginning, there were people who wanted us to change our name because they weren't new Realtors but they wanted to come, and they didn't want the stigma of showing up at a function for new agents. We would've lost our vision of a monthly program for new Realtors if we'd done that. The long-timers got over it and now they come anyway. Everyone is welcome at our meetings, no matter how long they've been in real estate. No one is excluded.

2) The name STAR contains the word Training and I personally don't see this as training. To me, training is a consistent daily or weekly plan which requires more than a short program once a month. We clearly state that anything your broker says trumps anything presented in our programs.

7. Food is optional. It's nice to have refreshments because food is social and meetings are more light-hearted. If you choose to do anything food-related, it can be simple. Chips, cookies, and a two-liter are fine.

An affiliate currently provides our lunch which is why we need a headcount. Sometimes they bring pizza, other times a buffet or box lunch. This is expensive but for some reason, we have a list of people who want to do it. They're given ten minutes before the main program starts in order to talk about their industry and provide helpful information. They distribute their contact info which is self-promotion but they paid for lunch so we're grateful and we certainly hope people send business their way. We call this the Food for Thought segment. Sometimes the program presenter also provides lunch.

Offer of Help. Our New Realtors Club has been an enjoyable venture and we're willing to help. If you'd like, we could create a list of three affiliates who've provided Food for Thought in case an affiliate from a start-up group wants to call with questions such as how it's handled and if it's worth it. We could also compile a short list of past program presenters which a potential presenter could call with questions. We're creating a website at www.newrealtors.com and will start blogging soon.

Being a new Realtor can be lonely and scary. This group gives new agents a place to "belong" and meet others in the same boat. It provides a rare opportunity to determine for themselves what they need and want to learn, then invite someone to help. If our group can lend any ideas or support, please call! We're celebrating our 8th anniversary in June and you're welcome to attend on Thursday, June 18th, 11:45-1:00 at HAAR!

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