

# NABOR

SUMMER 2011



## All-New SunshineMLS Plus

**PLUS+**

Technology for REALTORS®  
Annual Night of Honors



# All-New SunshineMLS Plus

*Rebuilt for REALTORS by REALTORS to Better Serve You.*

By Ginny Cooper, Contributing Author

In the late 1800s, real estate brokers regularly gathered at the offices of their local associations to share information about properties they were trying to sell. They agreed to compensate other brokers who helped sell those properties, and the first MLS was born, based on a fundamental principle that's unique to organized real estate: Help me sell my inventory and I'll help you sell yours. Over 100 years later, that information is being shared via the Internet through private database systems created, maintained and paid for by real estate professionals to help their clients buy and sell property. In most cases, access to information from MLS listings is provided to the public free-of-charge by participating brokers.

In October 2003, members of NABOR and BEAR (Bonita Springs-Estero Association of REALTORS) launched SunshineMLS, a system built by

REALTORS for REALTORS, not a system owned and operated by a third-party vendor. In response to the swiftly changing technology world, about 18 months ago the SunshineMLS Board of Managers decided to rebuild the system. Not to redesign, revamp, renovate or any other “re-word” you can think of. “This is a completely new system, built from the ground up,” explains SunshineMLS Board of Managers Chair Chris Braun. It is a collaborative effort between the associations and the tech staff at NABOR, who are serving as the architects of the project.

Following tried-and-true best practices of customer relations, each board surveyed its members to determine what features they would like to see upgraded in, and added to, the new system. A “tremendous amount” of information was gleaned from members, who are organically interested in the delivery of data, according to Braun.





The influence is not just local however. The tech staff has spent years in detailed research, analyzing systems from around the country and consulting with both the National Association of REALTORS and Florida Realtors. Looking at this project respective to the advancements in technology, “When this project was given the green light in concept, there were no iPads!” said Braun. The new SunshineMLS Plus “speaks strongly to the talent” of the technical staff at NABOR.

It is a versatile system with a robust search capacity, Braun explained. And the data capacity of the system is “unlimited,” he said. The new SunshineMLS Plus is supported by both Internet Explorer and Firefox, so PC and Mac users alike will benefit from the MLS Help Desk.

Having completed a successful beta test, the new SunshineMLS Plus was released on May 31. Training protocol was communicated to the support staff at each association and onsite training was conducted. There are also online help videos built into the system. “We will take a very thorough look at servicing the members post-cutover,” added Braun, gauging the need for continued training and identifying those needs which are current as well as those expected in 6-12 months.

If members have mobile devices they are currently using to access the MLS, Braun assures them they will be able to access SunshineMLS Plus as well. As Chair, with the responsibility that carries for the user’s experience with SunshineMLS Plus, Braun wants customers to understand that SunshineMLS Plus will be working diligently to support the transition for Internet Explorer and Firefox browser users at cutover and during

member training. The SunshineMLS Plus Help Desk **will** provide support for both desktop and laptop Windows users, as well as Mac users. It will also be assessing the number of current users (and near- to short-term future users) of mobile devices such as iPads and other mobile devices in order to quantify and prioritize member needs from the perspective of potential future MLS Help Desk support.

For example, functionality already exists for core iPad (i.e. Safari) or Android (i.e. Google



Chrome) mobile devices for search and other capabilities; however, it is user need and input that will direct where that functionality goes after the cutover has been successfully completed and assessed by the Board of Managers. Whether either or both of those types of browsers for mobile devices will be supported by the MLS Help Desk will be reviewed by the Board of Managers based upon data from the respective memberships who subscribe to SunshineMLS Plus.

SunshineMLS Plus is built to accommodate members’ needs in a dynamic environment for



the delivery of MLS information. It provides four major benefits to member REALTORS:

1. It saves them time, allowing them to accomplish more and accomplish it faster.
2. It increases their functionality as the new system is much more comprehensive.
3. It increases the REALTOR's exposure to the public by allowing agents to personalize all outgoing SunshineMLS Plus emails and printouts with information, a photo and a logo.
4. It improves the consumer experience with the REALTOR.

In addition to the "Top Ten Features" highlighted on the next page, SunshineMLS Plus boasts other new and improved features. Search functions on the new system have been enhanced to allow for unlimited search results, the ability to search any field on the Hotsheet, and include a brand new Open House search feature. Search results will return all listing statuses together, as opposed to returning them with individual status tabs. Agents are able to search any field in the database simply by specifying additional

fields through an improved interface (no more scrolling through long lists of available fields). Searches can be saved and attached to a contact in the user's SunshineMLS address book. Those searches will be accessed directly and easily from the Welcome Page.

Improved communications functions such as access to information, photos and listing details and a map of all returned results, which represents each individual listing, save time and serve to improve the consumer's experience with their REALTOR.

On the data management side, the enhanced listing management module allows for faster input of data from the convenience of a single place. Contacting tech support is easier too, with a streamlined method that doesn't require a user to exit what they are working on in order to ask a question or send a suggestion. Improved statistical reports with results on the fly will also save time and improve functionality.





## Top 10 New and Enhanced Features

**1 Mac support** through the Firefox browser- Mac users can simply download the free Firefox browser to access and use SunshineMLS Plus on a Mac. This is one of the top features members have requested. **(NEW!)** *(Increased Functionality and User Convenience)*

**2 Contacts/Address Book Module** offers the ability to add, edit, remove and export contacts. Agent's interactions with contacts, such as sent emails, saved searches, CMAs, prospecting profiles, etc., are attached to the contact for easy tracking and management. **(NEW!)** *(Saves Time; Improves Consumer Experience with REALTOR)*

**3 Enhanced prospecting module** allows the user to set up a profile that will **automatically** email the customer listings that match the profile's criteria. Agent sets up the parameters one time and system automatically sends appropriate listings. *(Saves Time; Improves Consumer Experience with REALTOR)*

**4 More photos** (24 instead of the eight previously allowed) that are **double the size**. *(Increased Functionality)*

**5 Improved searching capability** shows the **count on the fly** and a summary of search criteria prior to fully executing a search. This time saving feature allows users to know right away if they have too many or too few listings matching their search criteria. *(Saves Time)*

**6 Enhanced custom columns management** offers the ability to **add or remove columns on the fly** while reviewing search results, as well as specify a sort order of the results 3 levels deep (3-field sort order). *(Saves Time; Increased Functionality)*

**7 Listings Cart** allows the user to "carry" all listings they are interested in, as well as print the cart contents, email the cart to a customer and/or save the cart for later retrieval. Listing Carts can be attached to a contact record in the contacts module so agent can easily track searches for any given client. **(NEW!)** *(Saves Time; Improves Consumer Experience with REALTOR; Increased Functionality)*

**8 Improved printing and email modules** offers the ability to print or email multiple report types at the same time, i.e. a Realtor Report as well as a Customer Report with a single click. *(Saves Time; Increased Functionality)*

**9 A more robust CMA module** provides a rich and easily customizable CMA package allows comparison of 25 field instead of the previous eight fields – and you can adjust the fields being compared on the fly! *(Saves Time; Increased Functionality)*

**10 Improved help** throughout the application. Each search field has a **[?] "help"** symbol beside it that explains what the field pertains to. Additionally, **online "How To" videos** offer step-by-step instructions for each module. **(NEW!)** *(Saves Time; Increased Functionality)*



# Technology for **REALTORS**

*Capitalize on the Latest Advancements to Take Your Business to the Next Level.*

By Ginny Cooper, Contributing Author

The numbers are impressive and growing on a daily basis. According to the National Association of REALTORS (NAR), 66 percent of REALTORS feel a good Web presence attracts buyers. Forty-one percent of REALTORS' business development time is spent on online marketing activities. Sixty-three percent of REALTORS use Facebook on a monthly basis. Fifty-eight percent of REALTORS use a smartphone to conduct real estate business.

Eben Moran, REALTOR with Prudential Florida Realty, is one of those 58 percent. His iPhone is so

integral to his business that he says he can run his entire business from it! "Showing property is the only thing that requires me to be on the ground," Moran says. "I stay connected to my clients and customers better, my job is a lot easier," he says of the constant improvement in technology. A recent post on his account at [www.facebook.com/eben.moran1](http://www.facebook.com/eben.moran1) cautions: "FYI - iPhones are not waterproof. If you need me before tomorrow afternoon, email, Facebook or leave a message and I will get back to you ASAP!" Messaging on Facebook is one of the methods his clients and customers use to get in touch with him.



Moran's use of technology revolves around mobile apps, electronic newsletters and texting. Texting, he says, is preferred by some of his clients over email, "I will send them an email and then text them to tell them to look at their email." Although he does maintain a website at [www.ebensellsnaples.com](http://www.ebensellsnaples.com), Moran sees a movement away from the Web as a starting point in the home search. "Where it used to be that people would search on Google, find your website and call you from there, I find myself talking to people first and then sending them to my website or to [NaplesArea.com](http://NaplesArea.com). There was a time when if you were in real estate and didn't have a website, you weren't taken seriously," Moran says. He sees that prejudice passing as more and more people are getting used to living with smartphone in hand.

He will be building his Twitter account, [www.twitter.com/realtor\\_eben](http://www.twitter.com/realtor_eben) this summer. Moran hasn't ventured onto Foursquare yet, but says the application is big in Atlanta. "Yelp! is huge in metropolitan areas," he adds.

When Moran needs to catch up on the latest technology for use in the real estate industry, he heads on over to [www.shannonwking.com](http://www.shannonwking.com) to read her latest blog post. Or he'll log on to [www.techsavvyagent.com](http://www.techsavvyagent.com) to see what's new.

Doug Devitre, of Doug Devitre International, Inc., presents educational seminars and provides consulting services on social media to real estate associations, often teaching the teachers. He focuses on strategic planning and getting started in social media, from goal-setting to setting up the accounts. He champions blogging, searching/viewing YouTube and being a better listener online as the top three

technology-related activities a REALTOR should be engaged in.

Listening online can be as simple as setting Google alerts, social media alerts or alerts at [Topsy.com](http://Topsy.com). It can also become as complicated and expensive as you want to make it, through software and services geared toward social media measurement. Devitre doesn't see the need for individual REALTORS to invest in multi-platform listening products.

It may take a little effort, but listening online can prove to be profitable. Consider for instance the news of a company moving into the area. People will need homes. But what kind of people? How much money do they make? What is the company's corporate culture; what will the employees be familiar with? Devitre suggests targeting your prospecting by listening online. Google the company; search YouTube to see if the company has a channel or has contributed videos online, thereby giving you a visual reference; and search SlideShare.com for additional subject matter, perhaps even the company's annual report. Are there any podcasts available from them on iTunes? Webinars? In other words, don't wait for them to call you, go find them online!

Are you likely to sell a home or take a listing on Facebook or another social networking site? As a global traveler and communicator, Devitre sees Facebook everywhere. "It is the number one social networking site," he says, "but there are a variety of others and the way people communicate on social networks varies. The true value of online social networking is determined by real relationships." So, pick up that smartphone and call someone!

