

Secure Content Group

Perspective...



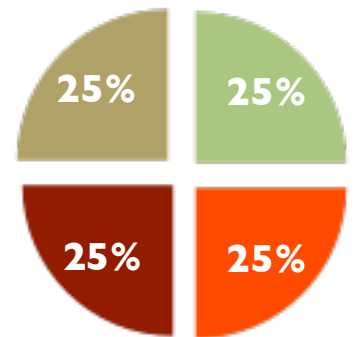
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The Success Factors of MLS Security

Real estate brokers face several competitive challenges, none more difficult than bridging the **“trust gap.”** Brokers who manage information like financial services companies, will be prepared to comply with regulation, embrace new business models, and reach new markets. MLSs are positioned to help accelerate the transformation of their customers because of their unique role in the security architecture of their market area. MLSs should focus on four success factors as they develop their security programs:

Factor One: Manage the Chain of Trust

Trusted applications are arriving that will streamline the transaction and turbocharge on-line marketing. Encryption, digital signatures, two-factor authentication and role based authorization are integral to the next generation of on-line applications. Brokers will require new business rules for the exchange and use of sensitive and confidential information between trading partners. These “Federated Trust Models” have helped propel the growth of retail, telecommunications, financial services and healthcare. New standards can help ensure the integrity of content, the confidentiality of sensitive content, the rights of content owners and the authorization to access different forms of contents. MLSs should help brokers create and enforce a **“chain of trust”** extending from consumers to brokers and eventually to all transaction parties. The first success factor for any MLS is to help brokers appreciate the first rule---that security is 90% effective policy and 10% technology.



Factor Two: Close the Open Windows

The access and visibility of MLSs across a market area is a position of both responsibility and risk. MLSs are accessed by thousands of individuals from thousands of companies. The vulnerabilities of the internal systems of member firms are a risk factor for MLSs. Conversely, MLSs are gateways to the systems of thousands of companies creating a growing community exposure and management liability. For example, the widespread practice of exporting unprotected data over an open network to thousands of member systems could be used by a malicious party to disable the operations and damage the brand of the entire industry. The second success factor for an MLS is to **close the open windows** by monitoring the activities of their users and mandating that protective measures are in place at any company that accesses the MLS.

Factor Three: Get Identity Right

From a architecture perspective MLSs are **“Registration Authorities”** charged with assuring the identity of the individuals who access not only listings but other applications within their trust domain. Verifying identity and issuing credentials in the form of smart cards, tokens or certificates is central to the secure operation of any electronic market. Authentication is another open window and the cornerstone of any trust model. Two-factor authentication is necessary but not sufficient alone to prevent or mitigate a widespread security event. However, getting identity right is the third success factor for the “Trusted MLS.”

Factor Four: Provide education and support

Effective **digital governance** enforces policy and balances opportunity and risk. MLSs are hubs of data exchange networks in dire need of a systemic approach to information security. They can either be threat multipliers or they can help brokers detect threats, reduce compliance exposures and ensure the control of member and consumer assets. Education and support programs are the fourth success factor of MLS security because brokers, in a fiercely competitive business, must bridge the trust gap as they have met other challenges...together.

Secure Content Group serves associations, government, financial services, pharmaceuticals and real estate. Read more about Secure Content Group's unique perspective on digital governance in real estate.

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