



Automated MLS Data Verification

Ensure
Accuracy of MLS Data

Detect
Rule Violations

Provide
Notices of Listing Errors

"ICHECK's automated MLS Data Verification makes our MLS better! It's been in place since October 2006, and since then our errors have decreased from 15% to 2%. On all counts - efficiency, accuracy, timeliness, and ease of use - ICHECK exceeds our expectations. Our Board of Directors and MLS Committee are thrilled with the results that we had in only a few months."

Steven Louchheim,
Executive Officer
Tallahassee Board of
REALTORS®

"The accuracy and reliability of MLS data is key to our REALTORS® conducting day-to-day business. RAGFL has proactively taken steps to maintain MLS data integrity and ICHECK has provided us with much needed automation. Since implementing ICHECK, visibility of violations has increased from 30% to 90%. Members are thankful for the new e-mail notification system and are quick to make the requested changes."

Richard Barkett,
Executive Officer
REALTOR® Association of
Greater Ft. Lauderdale

"Continually amazed at the infinite capabilities of your product, the speed that logic statements are modified and the willingness to reduce manual steps within the program."

Bill Cole,
Director of MLS & Technology
REALTOR® Association of
Greater Fort Lauderdale

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Do You Check ICHECK?

MLS REPORT from the Tallahassee Board of REALTORS®

By Barry F. Rose, J.D., GRI, e-PRO
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Have you received an e-mail from ICHECK? Do you know what ICHECK is? If you don't, then you have perfect input of your listings into the MLS and you don't read any of the weekly eBoard Briefs from your Tallahassee Board of REALTORS®. If you are like me, or most other members of our Board, then you have received an ICHECK e-mail at some time and you have read about it in our eBoard Briefs. However, most of what you have read about is the amount of fees collected for violations of our MLS input rules and regulations.

"Since the inception of the ICHECK system, input errors in the MLS have dropped drastically".

The ICHECK system is an automated check of our MLS listings to ensure that input conforms to established criteria and limits set by your Board in accordance with our MLS Rules and Regulations. In essence, be guided by the fact that what the input sheet calls for is exactly what should be put in that field. If it calls for the Owners' Phone, that is what it means, not your phone number or someone else's phone number. If it is not appropriate to put in the Owners' phone number (e.g., vacant, out-of-town), then put in 000-0000. If it asks for Lot dimensions, don't put in 2.5 acres. Pretty simple, really. What may require a little headwork is the Remarks fields. There are two of them and both are required fields. The first is for other REALTORS®. These are the so-called Confidential Remarks. They are intended for the REALTOR® community. This is where special telephone numbers go, additional information just for other REALTORS®, etc. The other is Public Remarks, and it is intended solely for public consumption; i.e., the window to the World. No confidential information is to go here: no telephone numbers, etc.

The ICHECK system is rather relentless; it operates every day, every week, every month, including weekends and holidays. If it discovers an error, both the agent and the managing broker are sent an e-mail, to the e-mail address you and your broker have provided to the TBR!

You are given three days to make the correction. When the three days have expired, if the correction is not made, the agent is fined \$100 and MLS privileges are suspended until the fine is paid. Now, if an input is made on Friday, and Monday is a holiday, and you don't check your email that often anyway, you probably won't make the correction in time to avoid a fine. ICHECK does not take weekends or holidays off! The e-mail that you receive will state that it is from maria@TBRnet.org, but it is automated and not personally sent by Maria Wallace. So, please don't blame Maria. Blame the person that inputted the data to the MLS system, and yourself for not checking it after it was put in the system.

Since the inception of the ICHECK system, input errors in the MLS have dropped drastically. This makes for a better system for all of us and our clients and customers, as well. Review your MLS input and help us have a system we can be proud of for its accuracy and completeness.



ICHECK Scans Virtual Tours

Effective Time Saving Rules for MLS Staff

IMAPP is proud to introduce our new Virtual Tour ICHECK rules. The following set of rules greatly simplifies the task of sorting and identifying Virtual Tour URLs in the MLS.

- Branded Virtual Tour - Pragmatically identifiable using keywords in the URL contents
- Apparent Branded Virtual Tour - URLs that appear to be Virtual Tours facilitating manual human confirmation
- Invalid Content in Virtual Tour Field - non URL entries

Branded Virtual Tour

In our initial list of popular Virtual Tour links we've identified a consistent format in the URL format allowing us to identify branded and unbranded virtual tours.

When a Virtual Tour link does not contain the "Not Branded" key word indicator, it is identified as 'Branded Virtual Tour' with a link to the URL. Conversely, a Virtual Tour from our list can also be identified as not branded and filtered from being reported. What a great time saver!

By identifying additional 'no brand' indicators for a Virtual Tour URL, we can grow our list of automatically identified Branded Virtual Tours, reducing the workload for manually checking the virtual tour field in the MLS.

Apparent Branded Virtual Tour

If a virtual tour URL does not match one of the currently identified Virtual Tour URLs, it's flagged as an 'Apparent Branded Virtual Tour' to be manually verified. ICHECK makes it easy by allowing the reviewer to simply click on the Virtual Tour URL and view the Virtual Tour contents in a pop-up window. When you close the Virtual Tour window, you immediately return to ICHECK to take the appropriate action.

Invalid Content in Virtual Tour Field

A Virtual Tour field containing anything other than a URL, such as phone numbers or "BONUS", etc., is flagged as 'Invalid Content in Virtual Tour Field'.

Automating MLS Compliance - New Options - by Clareity

The following is a high-level overview of a session from Clareity Consulting's 2007 MLS Executive Workshop. Every year the Clareity's Workshop provides fresh, in-depth updates on the most pressing issues facing MLS executives and leaders and creates an intimate environment for participants to share their knowledge and experience with each other. You can check the dates and/or register for next year's event on the Clareity Consulting web site – www.callclareity.com

Accurate listing content is one of the greatest strengths of the MLS, and is one of the greatest barriers to entry for outside companies that think replacing local MLS organizations is easy. Even MLS subscribers don't always understand the entire value of the MLS – in one recent survey Clareity performed for a regional MLS, an agent asked, "Why am I paying so much for MLS when the consumer gets it for free from Realtor.com and other web sites?" Our answer to that question is that the data has to come from somewhere, and if it's not accurate, it has nowhere near the value to the real estate professional - or to the consumer - when it is posted on an advertising web site. Maintaining listing accuracy is a constant battle for MLS staff, but thankfully there are new tools that can be added to the traditional arsenal, making MLS staff more efficient while improving the accuracy of the database and the value of the asset.

There are several ways to approach data compliance – some old and some new - each with different capabilities, advantages and disadvantages:

1. MLS listing maintenance business rules

This is the best place to enforce many areas of data quality. Unfortunately thorough controls are rare – sometimes Clareity even finds MLSs that don't even ensure a valid link between state, county, city, zip code and school district, let alone some of the more complicated checks. Some MLSs have not explored adding additional checks at this level while others fear possible MLS vendor programming charges. Keep in mind that MLS subscribers are adept at finding ways around MLS system checks, and rule adjustments may take additional time and possibly money.

2. Manual review by MLS staff

Some of the checks performed by staff are the types that would be better enforced during listing maintenance, but it's important to have staff review items that computers don't yet have the capability to check – especially the content of media such as photos, virtual tours, documents, and videos. But manual review is often not thorough or reliable; it is difficult to look through all new or changed listings in a timely way, before the listing is sent to Realtor.com or other sites. It can also be seen as unfair ("The MLS staff is picking on me."). Still, there's a place for manual review – it's just one part of a comprehensive compliance toolkit.

3. Community reporting

If there is an easy way for MLS subscribers to anonymously report bad information when viewing a listing and if they are encouraged to do so, this method can save staff time during manual reviews and also keep the staff abreast of new tricks for dodging the methods already in place to catch issues. There are dozens of areas where community reporting is the best or only way to track bad information, including entry of inaccurate listing physical attributes, an unreported change in price or media issues as described above. Like the manual review, this method leads to the "picking

on me" complaint – but it's still an important part of compliance checking.

Ideally, both staff manual review and community reporting all feed into an automated compliance system so that issues can be tracked and dealt with efficiently.

4. Automated Compliance System testing

These systems are the latest and greatest addition to the MLS compliance toolkit, and less than 10% of MLSs utilize them to date. They improve compliance staff efficiency, are fast, reliable and impartial and can catch a wide variety of bad information, including but not limited to fair housing keyword violations, invalid address, incorrect area, re-listing (tricking DOM), agent and office mismatch, late submission, secretary as the listing agent, listing price (or other fields) that must not be zero, property address in remarks, agent contact information in remarks or other misuse of free-form text fields, duplicate listings by the same agent/broker/office, and late reporting of pending or final sale.

These automated compliance systems have hundreds of features that differentiate them, but at a high level, they do most of the same things – allowing MLS staff to set rules, run automatic daily checks, accept manually caught violations, report violations and repeat offenses, take or allow manual courses of action (ignore, continue, hold for review, or mark corrected), send notifications, detect corrections, report repeat offenses per listing, agent or office, and create fine exports.

There are several approaches to automated compliance checking. Last year Solid Earth introduced "Citation Manager", a tool built right into their MLS system. Other vendors will likely follow with built-in tools of their own. Clareity also knows of two regional MLSs that have chosen to build their own automated compliance system using staff resources. For most MLSs though, the short to medium term solution will likely involve licensing an add-on tool. At the present time, Clareity is aware of three market leading add-on tools:

- IMAPP – ICHECK™
- PropertyInfo (Stewart Title) - Listing Checker
- MarketLinX (First American) – MLS Data Checker (MDC)

Clareity tracks the features of each of these systems extensively, and each has a number of advantages and disadvantages depending on the needs of the MLS. Unfortunately, the length allotted to this article precludes an in-depth review of each.

All of the products have opportunities for further evolution. The most desired additional feature, according to those who already use such systems, is fax notification of violations. We also will likely see additional deeper system integrations that enable new kinds of automated tests. Ideally all of these products will eventually evolve to include a complete compliance toolkit that goes beyond data compliance, covering IDX web site compliance testing, and use of search engine integration to look for listings and media outside of approved sites on the Internet.

Together, robust MLS listing maintenance business rules, manual thorough listing review by MLS staff, community reporting mechanisms, and automated compliance system testing comprise a toolkit that can help maintain the greatest strength of the MLS, accurate data. Clareity Consulting encourages its clients to use all of these methods to their fullest and explore the new options for automated compliance testing.

About the author:

Matt Cohen is Clareity Consulting's Chief Technologist. Matt has spoken at many conferences, workshops, and leadership retreats around the country on a wide variety of MLS-related topics, and is a well-regarded real estate industry expert on software design, product management, project management, data center reliability, scalability, and information security. Clareity Consulting was founded in 1996 to provide information technology consulting to the real estate industry and its related businesses. For more information, visit www.callclareity.com

ICHECK is the industry's leading provider of MLS Data Verification currently scanning over 1.5 million listings per day, servicing over 40 REALTOR® Associations nationwide and operational with 8 MLS vendors. Our clients include:

FLORIDA:

Daytona Beach Area Association of REALTORS®
Hernando County Association of REALTORS®
Tallahassee Board of REALTORS®
North East Florida Multiple Listing Service
Gainesville Alachua County Association of REALTORS®
Dixie Gilchrest Levy Board of REALTORS®

Mid Florida Regional MLS:

Orlando Regional REALTOR® Association
Osceola County Association of REALTORS®
Greater Tampa Association of REALTORS®
Lakeland Association of REALTORS®
West Volusia Association of REALTORS®
Greater Lake County Association of REALTORS®
East Polk County Association of REALTORS®
Bartow Association of REALTORS®
Lake Wales Association of REALTORS®
Englewood Area Board of REALTORS®
Punta Gorda Port Charlotte North Association of REALTORS®

Sarasota Association of REALTORS®
Venice Area Board of REALTORS®
Manatee Association of REALTORS®

Southeast Florida Regional MLS:

REALTOR® Association of Greater Ft. Lauderdale
REALTOR® Association of Greater Miami & the Beaches

VIRGINIA:

Central Virginia Regional MLS:

Richmond Association or REALTORS®
Southside Virginia Association of REALTORS®

NORTH CAROLINA:

Wilmington Regional Association of REALTORS®
Brunswick County Association of REALTORS®

NEW YORK:

Buffalo Niagara Association of REALTORS®

ALABAMA:

Birmingham Association of REALTORS®

CALIFORNIA:

Sandicor, Inc.:

Coronado Association of REALTORS®
East San Diego County Association of REALTORS®
North San Diego County Association of REALTORS®
Pacific Southwest Association of REALTORS®
San Diego Association of REALTORS®

ARIZONA:

Tucson Association of REALTORS® Multiple Listing Service

Arizona Regional Multiple Listing Service:

West Maricopa County Regional Association REALTORS®
Phoenix Association of REALTORS®
Southeast Valley Regional Association of REALTORS®
Scottsdale Area Association of REALTORS®
Western Pinal Association of REALTORS®

WASHINGTON:

Northwest Multiple Listing Service
Tri City Association of REALTORS®

PENNSYLVANIA:

Greater Scranton Board of REALTORS®

CANADA:

Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board