NAR launches 'That's Who We R' Realtor ad campaign

The nation's largest residential real estate trade group, the 1.3-million member National Association of Realtors (NAR) today announced the launch of a new ad campaign that leans into its classic "R" logo to help the public further distinguish its member Realtors from generic real estate agents.

"'That's Who We R' reinforces that partnering with a Realtor, delivers the peace of mind that can only come from working with a real person who is committed to their clients' futures and neighborhoods just as much as they are," John Smaby, 2019 president of NAR said in a statement.

An online video ad for the campaign entitled "Inside the R," seen above and on YouTube here, has a Realtor in the role of narrator saying "we're more than agents and apps…," clearly seeking to highlight the value of Realtors in age of technological disruption and companies that employ mobile applications, programs, and teams of human experts to accomplish some of the traditional agent tasks (such as the iBuyer startups Opendoor and Offerpad).

Though often used interchangeably by people outside of real estate, there is actually a major distinction between the terms "Realtor" and "real estate agent."

NAR owns the trademark on the word Realtor (often insisting on spelling it all capitals with a registered symbol "®," following it). The organization only allows agents to call themselves Realtors if they agree to abide by NAR's code of ethics, take an orientation, join one of many hundreds of local or state Realtor associations across the U.S. and pay applicable joining fees, as well as pay annual dues to NAR.

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Meanwhile, someone can become a licensed real estate agent without becoming a Realtor. Real estate agents must just be certified by their state governments to practice the profession, but are not usually required to go the extra step of becoming a Realtor and joining NAR.

NAR’s code of ethics is a pledge of honesty, integrity, professionalism and community service, according to Smaby.

The integrated marketing campaign comes from Havas, a French multinational advertising agency who partnered with the BET award-winning music video director Director X, who’s worked with hip hop and pop music superstars like Drake, Jay-Z, Justin Beiber and Rihanna.

“Our society has created trusted symbols from ‘Verified’ Instagram accounts to the Good Housekeeping Seal,” Karen Goodman, group creative Director at Havas Chicago. “As we dug into this brand, we knew Realtors were the real deal and needed to find a way to telegraph that to everyone. We needed to turn the ‘R’ into the trusted symbol you should look for when buying and selling property.”

The video advertisement and involvement of Director X, further shows that NAR is eyeing millennial home buyers more with its outreach. Last year, the 1.3 million-member association rolled out surrealist style advertisements targeted towards millennials.

NAR is also partnering with content makers Vice Media, Apartment Therapy, *The Atlantic* magazine, streaming video platform Hulu and others, in an attempt to capture audiences that consume media through different platforms than traditional cable television.

Last year NAR unveiled a $250,000 brand refresh conceived by the Conran Design Group, that was swiftly rebuked by its members. NAR canceled the rollout of the new logo after the backlash.

Inman asked NAR how much the campaign cost members, whether the money was pre-allocated or if it’s a capital expense, and for an update on the status of last year’s logo controversy.

A NAR spokesperson said that the campaign is funded by a special assessment of $35 per member, each year, a budget item that the NAR Board of Directors has maintained since 2009.

The spokesperson also provided the following statement from Victoria Gillespie, NAR's chief marketing and communications officer.

The "That's Who We R" campaign was designed not only to educate consumers on the benefits of working with a member of the National Association of Realtors but also to highlight all the ways Realtors go above and beyond to help and improve the lives of their clients, neighbors and communities. We want this campaign to serve as a rallying cry for Realtors and inspire pride in the work they do every day to benefit their clients.

Last year, NAR heard from Realtors that they love the traditional Realtor R membership mark. So it only made sense to lean-into this iconic trademark and leverage it. This is a national branding campaign for Realtors and the membership mark which represents them, so it is featured prominently in the creative work.

Email Patrick Kearns

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