

Businesses & MASA: RTAW Forum Participation

Businesses are encouraged to participate on the RTAW Forums however participation is preconditioned on adherence to the following.

A - Business Users

The following rules apply to all users with an association to a business as defined by MASA operating in the aquarium industry unless specifically exempted in the exemption section below.

The following list shows the types of people that we consider to be associated with a business

A - Owner, partner or employee, agent or associate of a business

B - Immediate family member including de facto partners of a person in (A).

From hereon in people in the above category are defined as business users.

B - Posting on RTAW Forums

In order to post on the RTAW forums a business user must have that association clearly marked in their RTAW Forums User Profile through a link in their signature to their business in the RTAW Business Directory using the specified icon made available for this purpose.

Business failing to comply with above will be issued with a breach notice. Failure to comply within 7 days of breach notice will result in an automatic suspension of the account until registration has been completed. Where a business has been deemed to have deliberately tried to circumvent the registration process a suspension for a period of up to 12 months for all user accounts associated with that business will be applied at the discretion of the MASA Committee.

A business user may post to any forum on RTAW providing they adhere to the following guidelines.

Posts that promote or advertise your business: We have dedicated a whole section of the RTAW forums for businesses

to promote their products and services. This section is known as the Business Forums. As set out below you are required to make any post that falls into this category into the appropriate business forums. Posting what we consider to be commercial content outside of the Business Forums may lead to the suspension of your account. Following are some examples of posts that we consider to be commercial in nature.

- unsolicited posts where the content of the post makes reference to product range, availability or performance. To be considered solicited a post must be either (a) in direct response to a question asked by another non commercial user and be limited in content to the scope of the question or (b) totally within the context of an existing discussion.

- all posts where the content of the post makes reference to price, business announcements or any other subject that could be reasonably be construed as directly promoting or advertising that business. The purpose of this is to provide a place for businesses to promote and advertise their wares (Business Forums) and keep the general forums for the sharing of advice and experiences without a sales pitch. The onus is always on the poster to ensure any content posted outside of the commercial forums is of primary interest from an informational/educational perspective to a hobbyist first and foremost. The rule here is if you aren't sure then post in the Business Forums rather than one of the non business ones.

Posts that are based around the sharing of information: We would also like to encourage you to participate in any of the discussions taking place in the non business forums whether that be to provide answers, ask questions or just share your experiences. If you do post in these forums it is your responsibility to ensure that your posts cannot be interpreted as non solicited sales pitches. It is fine to make reference to your business but only within the context of the existing discussions. For example should a user ask where in their city can they buy a certain product a business specifically in that location may respond saying they supply it. A business located outside of that location including those that supply to that area via an online store may not respond. If the question had been phrased without mention of where the business was located rather than specifically in their town/city then any business that supplied to that location regardless of business model or delivery method may respond.

The key principle s that if you believe that someone could interpret your post as being a sales pitch then it must go in the Business Forums. Otherwise it is fine to go in any forum.

C -Business Forum Rules

In addition to the rules that apply to all forums on RTAW, the following rules apply specifically to business users posting in the Business Forums.

- The number of posts made in the Business Forums soliciting business by a business user must be of a reasonable number. Excessive spamming and flooding of the Business Forums is unacceptable.

- A business user may not:

- Reply to posts made in the Business Forums by another business.

- Post in any topic about another business on the RTAW Forums.

- Start a topic about another business on the RTAW Forums.

D - Exemptions

MASA acknowledges that there are many people involved in the commercial side of the aquarium industry that are either as much hobbyists as they are a business or that their business association is not generally of the type to use RTAW as a tool to promote that business. Consequently users that meet the following criteria are permitted to either use a personal user profile on the RTAW forums that makes no reference to their business interests to allow them to participate on the RTAW forums purely as a hobbyist or to use a business user profile without being required to include the defined business signature.

Personal User Profile Exemption

To qualify for a Personal User Pro exemption a user must first be a MASx member and secondly have their personal participation endorsed by the committee of their local society or by the MASA Committee. If the RTAW moderator group or MASA Committee feels that based on forum behaviour a user needs reviewing then they are to refer it back to the relevant local committee for a decision. If no correspondence is received back within 30 days then review decision is passed to the MASA Committee.

The types of factors to be taken into consideration in the endorsement decision include

- does the individual actively participate in their society as a hobbyist?
- does the individual have the capacity to participate in the general forums of RTAW free of commercial bias?
- other similar factors.

Business User Signature Exemption

To qualify for a Business User Signature exemption a user must have first completed the standard business registration and have the business listed in the RTAW Business Directory. They should then make an application to the RTAW Forums Moderator Team for a signature exemption. The moderators will then have seven days to make a decision as to whether to approve the signature exemption. Should a user disagree with the moderators decision they may appeal to the MASA Committee.

Note that this exemption applies to the signature requirement only and does not exempt the user from automatically receiving the business rank on their profile.

The types of factors to be taken into consideration in the endorsement decision include

- whether the person uses that profile to mention or promote the business
- what role the person plays within the business and whether the individual is truly a spokesperson or representative of that business
- whether the business itself wants the individual to have the association publicly displayed
- whether knowing who the person is associated with rather than just knowing there is a business association truly adds value to the general members of the RTAW forums.

A list of approved exempt individuals is to be provided to MASA listing their commercial interests for display in the moderators forum to be used to assess whether the individual is operating within the spirit of the business rules (posts aimed at commercial gain rather than information sharing). Users found to be abusing the system will have their exemption removed and will subsequently have their personal profile reclassified to a business user.