



Executive Connection Summit

AI emerges as a predominant topic of discussion

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Office technology dealers, vendors, consultants and members of the industry media gathered Jan. 14-17 at the Scottsdale Resort and Spa at McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale, Arizona, to attend the 2024 Executive Connection Summit (ECS2024). While imaging is the past and present commonality of the attendees, the summit solidified the understanding that artificial intelligence (AI) is being added to the list of their commonalities going forward.

Several of the summit's educational sessions were specifically focused on the promise and perils of AI, while many of the other sessions' presenters made reference to the impact of AI in changing the landscape of the industry. On the first morning of the four-day summit, Michael Cozzens, CEO of the Cozzens Group, moderated a panel that set the stage for the AI dialog, "Putting AI to Work."

Panelist Keven Ellison, vice president of marketing for Advanced Imaging Solutions (ASI), based in Las Vegas, Nevada, made it clear that dealerships are already embracing the use of AI. At ASI, ChatGPT has been used to assist sales reps who are "too scared of a customer coming back ... with objections" when selling IT services, telecom and other services outside of transactional office equipment sales. "It [ChatGPT] actually comes up with all of the objections that a salesperson could possibly have from a prospect," he said. "Then, it tells them how to handle each of those objections."

Ellison said ASI also uses ChatGPT to improve the quality of its sales rep phone and video conference calls. Recordings of such calls are uploaded into ChatGPT. "We can now use that for training," he said. "The sales managers don't have time to listen to every call, but do you know what does have time in the day to listen to every call and then mentor them [the reps] on how to handle objections in the future and get better? AI does. This is how you can use it just for the sales process."

Increasingly, dealers are going to recognize the enormity of AI's impact on the industry, said panelist Laura Blackmer, president of dealer sales for Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A. Inc. "When I was introduced to AI ... I knew immediately that this was going to be a seismic shift for us," she said. "This is [like] going from analog to digital; this is going from mono to color. It is that important and that big in our industry."

Despite the expressions of great expectation and optimism, panelists likewise emphasized the importance of being cautious with and educated about AI. As panelist Joseph Brunsmann, managing member of the Brunsmann Advisory Group,



Participants in the "Putting AI to Work" panel discussion, left to right: West McDonald, GoWest.ai; David Tan, CrushBank; Anthony Sci, Keypoint Intelligence; Joseph Brunsmann, Brunsmann Advisory Group; Jim George, Donnellon McCarthy; Keven Ellison, AIS; Laura Blackmer, Konica Minolta; Peter Kujawa, ConnectWise; and Michael Cozzens, who served as moderator.

put it regarding the risks of AI as it relates to cybersecurity: "The risks are going to be legion." With similar bluntness, he emphasized that AI is the focus of plenty of emerging legislation that will lead to compliance requirements. "I've ... spoken to people on Capitol Hill; you are going to see legislation in a quick hurry," he said. "You need to keep track of the regulatory side and the statutory side, because that is going to very quickly have large material impacts on [how you are using AI within] your business."

The panelists also addressed the impact of AI on jobs. While Brunsmann said implementing AI could "start destroying jobs," others offered another perspective. "You can't replace people with AI," said David Tan, chief technology officer at CrushBank. "If that's how you go into this journey, you are bound to fail. That's not what it's about. It's about making your people better at what they're doing." Echoing the point, panelist Anthony Sci, president and CEO of Keypoint Intelligence, offered advice on discussing the implementation of AI with employees: "You talk to your people and say, 'I'm not looking to get rid of you. What I am looking to do is utilize your time in a way that will further grow the company.'" ■

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