

# Meet Adam Gregory

## BTA's 2024-25 national president assumes office

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

On July 1, Adam Gregory became the 89th national president of the Business Technology Association (BTA). He first stepped forward as a volunteer for the association in 2017, serving as the 2017-18 BTA Southeast vice president. He has been a member of the association's national board of directors for five years.

After an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy in 1999, serving as a boat-swain mate aboard the USS Dewart (stationed at Mayport Naval Station, Jacksonville, Florida), Gregory worked for about five years at Atlanta Office Machines in Marietta, Georgia, where he advanced from sales rep to sales manager. Gregory established Advanced Business Solutions (ABS) in 2004 in the Atlanta, Georgia, metro area. He then sold that company and opened ABS in Florida in 2015. Today, ABS has operations in St. Augustine and Lake Mary, Florida. The company has been named Small Business of the Year by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and among the Fastest 50 Growing Companies in the northeast Florida region by the Jacksonville Business Journal. The dealership represents Xerox, HP, Epson and Lexmark. In addition, ABS represents partners such as ConnectWise, Lenovo, WatchGuard, Crexendo, Zultys, Alibi Security and others within its IT, VoIP and security divisions.

Recently, Office Technology magazine had the opportunity to interview Gregory, asking about his career in the industry, the value of BTA membership and his role as a volunteer. Following are the questions asked of him and his responses.

**OT: Thank you for your service in the U.S. military. How did your service prepare you for owning ABS?**

**Gregory:** It helped me in setting up an organization with a good chain of command. In the military, you do see bad



chains of command. You see guys who kind of mess up the chain. So, that experience helped me a lot with developing the structure of ABS by way of helping me with the things to look for in people. In the military, you have people from all over the country working together. You have to find where you fit and where other people fit best. So, absolutely, it helped a lot with setting up and building ABS.

**OT: How has ABS evolved over the years?**

**Gregory:** We were just a copier dealership until about eight years ago.

ABS is a full-line Xerox dealership, all the way through to production. We are an HP Power Services dealer, and also carry Epson and Lexmark. Those are our main four lines. When I started in this industry, I was just an OKI dealership. How many people can say that?

In recent years, we've diversified. We are offering managed IT. We've been doing that for about five years. We also offer VoIP phone systems from Crexendo and Zultys — thanks to BTA. It was at the association's events that we developed a lot of our vendor relationships. BTA has helped us to diversify.

**OT: It has certainly become commonplace to have more than one generation in a family working in an office technology dealership. You and your wife Melissa have seven children, with several Gregorlys working at ABS. Tell us about that.**

**Gregory:** My wife, Melissa, handles all of our receivables, including the billing for our contracts. Our daughter Destiny handles all of our logistics, supply shipments and inventory. Adam Jr. is cross-trained. He's a sales rep, but is also trained to service copiers. Another one of our sons, Austin, is a service technician. They know how to get it done. We

have a third son who is 16. We'll see what he wants to do. We would certainly welcome him, but would never pressure him to work in the business. The same goes for our two younger daughters. We have another daughter — our oldest child — who works outside of the industry. Our other employees are like family as well. We are a tight-knit group.

### **OT: What led you to first step forward as a BTA volunteer? How has serving as a volunteer helped you in your business?**

**Gregory:** That's easy. It began with Jerry Jackson, a dealer in Kennesaw, Georgia. He's a good friend of mine. It was my last year in Atlanta and we were about to return to Florida.

That year, I attended my first BTA event. It was in Orlando. I saw Jerry there and he said: "Adam, I've known you a while up in Atlanta. I'm telling you, BTA could really help you. There's a lot of opportunities to meet and connect with other dealers and to meet vendors that you might never have known existed. Plus, I feel you are a person who could help others. I think you'd fit well in the role of a volunteer for BTA Southeast."

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So, he was the one who got me interested in BTA. Not long after that I received an email from you, saying: "I caught wind that you might be interested in serving as a volunteer." That's how it all started.

How has BTA volunteerism helped me? Number one, it's really helped me pay more attention to my budget, I can tell you that. But seriously, it has given me an opportunity to work alongside

other dealers, planning events — putting things together and coming up with ideas. We're in a situation right now in our industry where we are trying to drive people — to motivate them, right? That's what BTA volunteerism has done for me. It has given me the opportunity to think of new ideas and bring things to the forefront in order to help our industry and our association. It has helped me to expand my thinking process beyond just Advanced Business Solutions. Instead, my thinking is now about our industry. You don't really think that way if you're just solely focused on your dealership.

### **OT: What is your message to those dealers who, for whatever reason, are not currently**

## **BTA 2024-25 President-Elect Debra Dennis**



Debra Dennis, BTA's 2024-25 president-elect, is vice president of support services at CopyPro Inc., located in Greenville, North Carolina. The company has been a BTA member since 1973. She started her career in the industry in 1986, working at CopyPro in customer support. Today, Dennis has extensive experience in all aspects of the office technology industry, as her position covers support for all the company's customer-facing divisions.

She has served on the BTA Southeast board since 2008 and on the national BTA Board of Directors since 2020. As a longtime volunteer, Dennis has also been named BTA's Volunteer of the Year not once, but twice (in 2022 and 2024). In addition, Dennis has also served on the national board for IBPI.

She became a BTA volunteer after attending a BTA Southeast-hosted event in Asheville, North Carolina, and the rest, as they say, is history. "I was about 38 or 39 when I joined the BTA Southeast board and it was a game-changer for me," she says. "It's a whole different ball game when you have that inside view and have access to people in the industry other than those you have worked with. You get new perspectives and advice from those who work at different financial levels."

Dennis is not the only one who has benefited from her service on the board; her company has as well. "We've gained a lot of knowledge from networking and have learned different practices that we've brought over into our business," she says. "It really is about

what people are doing and how they're making money. As a BTA member, you learn what others are doing to grow their businesses, take those practices and adopt them into your own business, and then share that knowledge with other people. It's been very beneficial."

When asked about BTA's successes in recent years, Dennis is enthusiastic about the addition of breakout sessions to the educational mix at BTA events. "I think the way we've restructured our events to have the breakout sessions, where you can hear specific things about the part of the business you're in — whether it's service, sales, etc. — has been very impactful," she says. "I also think having a focus on getting new blood into BTA has been great. Once people come into BTA, we make sure they know they are welcome, give them resources and connect them with each other."

"One example is through the Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups," she continues. "These groups are wonderful and I think they are what BTA is all about — connecting the right people at all times. A member can ask: 'Have you experienced this?' And then someone can say, 'Let me tell you what I did.' I think that's the beauty of BTA — the connections made between dealers."

What advice does Dennis have for other long-time industry employees? "Be a mentor," she says. "Find people who are up and coming in your organization who share the same passion and want to grow. Spend time teaching them the things that you know and bring them to BTA events. That's the biggest thing. Bring them to a BTA event because if you do, they'll be in this industry for life."

— Elizabeth Marvel

## members of BTA? What do you say to those dealers when you encounter them?

**Gregory:** The first thing I ask them is: “Why are you not a member?” I say: “You know, as dealership principals, we think we know everything we need to know about our businesses. We’re stubborn sometimes, right? BTA will open your eyes to help you understand that there are opportunities — things out there — that you’re not paying attention to that you need to look at, you know?” I think about the connections you make through BTA with other dealers around the country, being able to fellowship with them, hear their ideas, hear about some of their successes and failures; you don’t get to hear those things just sitting in your office.

When you just sit in your office, you’re trying to figure these things out alone. But, through BTA, you can call somebody and talk to them. Better yet, when you are face-to-face, you can really share those emotional moments together about the successes in your businesses, some of the setbacks you’ve had, things like that. So, that’s what I say to non-members. “You are losing out on those opportunities to not only hear great new ideas that the association is bringing

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into our industry, but also making connections that will benefit your company, not just today, but for years to come.”

## OT: Looking to the year ahead, what will be your primary areas of focus as BTA’s national president?

**Gregory:** For a membership organization, most people would say they are focused on the membership numbers,

right? I understand that, but, to me, you drive membership numbers up by providing things that are a necessity at the current moment and will be a necessity in the future, and by ensuring prospective members easily see that when they are considering BTA membership. So, my focus is going to be on the association’s offerings. What can we offer our member dealerships that we’re not offering now that would cause them to see an even greater importance of being a member?

I was talking to a dealer just yesterday on the phone. His company is not a BTA member. It’s never been a member. But it’s been in business for more than 20 years.

I asked him: “Why are you not a BTA member?” He replied: “Well, I haven’t really had a need.” My response: “How do you know you don’t have a need until you see what’s there?”

## BTA 2024-25 Vice President Mike Boyle



BTA’s 2024-25 vice president, Mike Boyle, is president of BASE Technologies, located in Bethel, Connecticut. He founded the company in 1992 with a partner after Fujitsu discontinued its facsimile business, leaving them unemployed. The company started by selling copier/MFPs, printers and support, but its offerings have evolved over time. Today, it focuses on network support, managed print services and document management solutions.

Boyle served on the BTA East board about 10 years ago, and did a second stint starting in 2019. He then moved on to the national board in 2022. Why did Boyle decide to get involved as a BTA volunteer? “The industry has been very good to me, my family, my company and my people, and I wanted to give back,” he says, noting his time as a previous volunteer and explaining why he decided to return. “This is my second go-around. I served on the BTA East board and then I came off. I was asked if I would do it again, so I’m here now to help on this next level. There’s a need right now, so I want to continue to support BTA.”

The benefits of being a BTA member have enriched Boyle’s life and his company’s business, he says. “With all the education and the events, I walk away with nuggets of information that have helped me in so many ways,” he explains. “It helps with decision-making. It helps with people. The nice thing about BTA is that it covers such a diverse amount of information. It can be overwhelming,

particularly if you don’t have a lot of experience with it [the industry], but at the same time, if you can pick up a couple of nuggets and take them back, and they help move the ball in terms of advancing your company and your goals, then it’s a success, and that’s what BTA is good for.”

There has been a lot of talk about how the office technology industry is in transition today, and Boyle agrees with the sentiment. “Our industry is in the midst of a transformation from an evolution standpoint,” he says. “We’re in a mature business and a lot of our members are looking for ‘What’s the next mouse trap? How can we be successful?’ And I’m very sensitive to the needs of members because I look back at when I was a new BTA member and having people who could actually listen and act on my behalf. So I just want to make sure that the board stays true to the core mission of supporting and doing right by our members, and guiding our industry so that we can all enjoy success.”

When asked about his advice to other dealers, Boyle gives a list of seemingly simple responses: “Be honest,” he says. “Be respectful. Never lose the trust of your staff. Do what you say you are going to do. Follow through. Treat people the way you like to be treated. You know, I’m not coming out with anything that’s ‘Oh, I’ve never heard that before,’ because guess what? Running our business is still common sense. But being able to do what I just said — and to do it right — requires discipline and fortitude. So if I tell you I’m going to do it, it’s going to happen.”

— Elizabeth Marvel

You're talking to me on the phone about expanding in other areas, trying to pick up another line, do all these things. You could go to one place — BTA — and find guidance in all these areas of expansion." With this example in mind, we need to ensure offerings lead dealers to easily understand joining BTA is something they really need to do. That's going to be my focus as president.

### **OT: What are your thoughts on how today's office technology dealerships can best thrive and grow?**

**Gregory:** That's easy. Diversification. You have got to diversify. We are not just copier dealers anymore. Those days are long gone. If you are not diversifying, you are going to be left behind.

Beyond diversifying, you have got to make sure your people are in the right positions to succeed. I think that is a big key; if you're going to grow, you've got to make sure that you're giving your people the opportunities to grow.

When you are diversifying your offerings, it can be very overwhelming for your staff. Your people may be thinking: "I don't know how to do any of this. What are we going to do?"

So, you have to be willing to invest in your people. You can diversify all you want, but if you're not investing in your people to do that, it's not going to benefit you. Instead, it's going to be more of a heartache and a headache than anything. To thrive in our industry, you have to be willing to see the changes, accept them, adapt to them in the way that fits best for your dealership, and be willing to invest in it. BTA gives you opportunities and connections to help you to invest in ways that are friendly to your budget and open your thought process to those ideas.

Without attending BTA events, I would have never known that TAG [Technology Assurance Group] or WatchGuard existed. It's not like they advertise on television. If you don't see them, you don't know they exist. If you don't go to BTA events, you're not going to know those types of companies are even around. Probably 75% to 80% of the vendor contacts I have met who have helped us diversify came from BTA events.

As I mentioned, we diversified into managed IT. Then we diversified into VoIP phone systems. I'm looking at other ways to diversify. We're just not there yet.

Like I said, owners have to understand where they're at and when they can take the next step — and it's going to be different for every dealer. But I do see a day coming when we may add things like LCD displays and security systems — things like that. In fact, we've started investigations and are talking

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to people about such opportunities, but we are not ready yet to dive in. We must first ensure the areas in which we have diversified are fully succeeding and that we have the right things in place.

### **OT: Looking to the future, what is your vision and hope for BTA?**

**Gregory:** I would like to see BTA become even more of a "go-to" resource. Let me give you an example. Let's say

that I have a problem with a vendor that is not just a legal matter. In those cases, I want more dealers to always look to BTA first, and to manufacturers or vendors second. "We're here for you. You pay your dues. We're your association. So, if there's a problem, if there's an issue, if there is something that you need help getting resolved, BTA can help make the right connections and figure this out." Don't get me wrong, we love our vendor members and our manufacturing members, but when something is not right, we want all dealers to turn to BTA first.

How do we get there? I believe we need to further improve how we market BTA, reminding dealers that we are here for them. After all, that is why we're here, right? We are here to help our members' businesses grow. So, when a problem arises, I would like to see all of our dealer members turn to BTA first. I think we at BTA need to improve on how we do that. That's for the BTA board and staff members to figure out. Perhaps we need to reach out to dealer members even more than we do now, saying: "Hey, is everything going well? Is there anything you need from us?" So, in the future, more dealers will think: "If I have a problem, I'm getting on the phone with BTA. They're going to help me out."

Another idea I would like to develop originated with a conversation I had a few years ago when talking to then-BTA President Tim Renegar. I said: "Tim, a lot of people know you, from the West Coast to East Coast. And a lot of people who don't know you may have heard of you — they've heard your name or have seen you in BTA's magazine. Have you ever thought about engaging the BTA board members and saying: 'Why don't we, once every month or once every two weeks, share a video of one of the board members that essentially says, for example: "Hey, I just want to let you guys know I'm Adam Gregory. I'm from Florida. I'm on the BTA board. We're here for you guys. Let us know how we can help you.'"" ■

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