

Gateway to Success

BTA Mid-America & BTA East host event Sept. 24-25

by: Elizabeth Marvel, Office Technology Magazine

The 2024 Gateway to Success event, co-hosted by BTA Mid-America and BTA East, was held Sept. 24-25, at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio River Walk in San Antonio, Texas.

The event featured three dealer panels: “Leveraging AI for Enhanced Business Efficiency & Growth,” moderated by Mark Spears, Amplified Solutions; “Strategic Insights & Steps for Successful Acquisitions,” moderated by Andy Slawetsky, Industry Analysts Inc.; and “Strategies for Selling Cybersecurity Services,” moderated by Deborah Hawkins, Keypoint Intelligence. The additional main stage sessions were: “Preparing for Economic Shifts: Insights for the Upcoming Months,” led by John Beriau, Morgan Stanley, and “What’s Happenin’ in the Imaging Industry,” led by Slawetsky. Breakout sessions included: a two-part sales management track, “Building a Sales Culture Where Activities Drive Results,” led by Derek Shebby, Modern Sales Training; a two-part service management track, “Setting the Pace in Service Automation” and “Setting the Pace in Managing the Technical Workforce,” led by Hawkins and Ken Edmonds, 22nd Century Management; “Profiting From the AI Revolution as a Dealer,” led by Steve Cunningham, Simple AI; and “Practical AI & ChatGPT Applications for Quick SOP Documentation,” led by Spears.

The event sponsors: ACIDI, AgentDealer, ARCOA, Brother, Crexendo, DLL, ECI, ecoprintQ, eGoldFAX, FP, GreatAmerica, IBPI, Intermedia, Keypoint Intelligence, LEAF, Miramar Copies, MPS Monitor, NA Trading, NEXERA, PEAC Solutions, Quench, Ricoh, SalesChain, Sharp (breaks sponsor), Source Technologies, Square 9, Static Control, Toshiba, Upland, Xerox (lunch sponsor) and Zultys (reception sponsor).

BTA’s next event, Spring Break, will be held March 6-8 at Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa in Orlando, Florida. See the ad on page two or visit www.bta.org/BTAEvents for more information as it becomes available. ■

Elizabeth Marvel is associate editor of Office Technology magazine. She can be reached at elizabeth@bta.org or (816) 303-4060.



Clockwise from top left: 2024-25 BTA East President Chip Denlinger serves as an emcee during the event; Spears (far left) moderates the AI dealer panel with panelists (left to right) Anthony DelGrosso of Milner Inc., Peachtree Corners, Georgia, Bob Doucette of Smart Technologies of Florida, Daytona Beach, Florida, and Keven Ellison of AIS, North Las Vegas, Nevada; Beriau presents his main stage session; 2024-25 BTA President Adam Gregory (left) presents the Past President’s Award to 2023-24 BTA President Don Risser; attendees visit with exhibiting sponsors during a break between sessions; and the acquisitions dealer panelists were (left to right) Thomas Fimian of Levifi, Charleston, South Carolina, Bill Patsouras of Function4, Sugar Land, Texas, and Rich Simons of EDGE Business Systems, Roswell, Georgia.



Clockwise from top left: 2024-25 BTA Mid-America President Grant Goldsmith serves as an emcee during the event; dealer panelists (left to right) Keith Johnson of Obviam, Cincinnati, Ohio, Pamela Feld of Triumph Technology Group, Tustin, California, and Davis Tran of C3 Tech, Santa Ana, California, discuss their strategies for cybersecurity services; (left to right) Carrie Witham and Scott Stanford of GreatAmerica visit with Kerry Wright of CPI Technologies LLC, Sulphur Springs, Texas, during a break between sessions; and Slawetsky presents his main stage session.



Breakout session presenters (clockwise from above left) Shebby, Hawkins, Edmonds, Cunningham and Spears lead their sessions on Sept. 24.



Brittany Bagwell (middle left) and RJ Shephard (far right) of eGoldFax visit with Bill Hancher (far left) and Marc Segal (middle right) of Doing Better Business, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Selling Cybersecurity

One of the main stage dealer panels at Gateway to Success, “Strategies for Selling Cybersecurity Services,” looked at how three dealerships got started selling these services, their strategies for success in the space and their advice for dealers who may be interested in adding cybersecurity to their lineups.

One of the first — and most important — points all three panelists made was the importance of cybersecurity as a diversification strategy, especially as traditional printing is on the decline. Pamela Feld, founder and CEO of Triumph Technology Group, Tustin, California, shared her perspective: “We still have the other side of the business [copier/MFPs, printers, etc.], but at this point ... the cybersecurity side of the business is much more interesting to me after doing it for a few years,” she said. “Diversification has been our key for a long, long time ... At this point, [cybersecurity] is probably close to 50% of our organization, and I’m hoping at some point it’ll be more ...”

“When we started seven years ago, we didn’t know COVID was going to happen,” said Davis Tran, vice president of operations at C3 Tech, Santa Ana, California. “2020 came around and then the whole business shut down. No one was printing and revenues were really low ... Luckily we had an IT division and people needed to work from home ... So we needed to figure out some type of subscription service to maintain that revenue and grow it ...”

All of the panelists acknowledged the importance of cybersecurity education and training for traditional sales reps. “Our approach was to educate Modern Office Methods [MOM] sales reps on the initial conversations,” said Keith Johnson, executive vice president of Obviam [a MOM company], Cincinnati, Ohio. “We did four webinars specifically geared toward [Obviam’s] four pillars as a company. Next, I did five webinars ... on the different verticals, because each one has different compliance and security requirements ... I took the stance to educate our sellers on why security matters in those different verticals and then taught them the answers to key questions they may be asked ... Each of the MOM reps is now wrapped to a specialist on my team who is a cyberaccount executive who knows how to sell cyberservices.”

What advice did each panelist have for dealers looking to get into the cybersecurity space?

Johnson: “Contracts are everything. Agreements are everything. You have to make sure that you’re buttoned up in terms of your liability that you have as an organization ... Make sure that your contracts [lay out] what happens if there’s a breach. Have that language within your contracts. Know where you start and stop ... Starting with good contracts, good agreements and a good responsibility matrix helps things move forward.”

Tran: “Have the best security for your own environment ... protect that first. The other aspect is to draw a scope of what you can and cannot do. Tell your customers: ‘This is what we’re going to do today. This is what we can’t do. These are all the services that we can add.’ You can’t tell them that [just] because you’re a security firm you can do everything to protect their networks.”

Feld: “[I suggest] taking baby steps and not biting off more than you can chew when you’re first starting out. Get those key [vendor] partners set up and really vet them carefully. Do your homework and decide what you want to do in cyber and what you don’t. Because there’s a lot ... There’s much more to it than just having an IT department. You really need to train your people properly and make sure they’re on those education tracks.” ■

— Elizabeth Marvel