



Discussion Groups Are BTA at Its Best

I have written here before about the BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups I host on a regular basis via Zoom. The format is simple. I email a single question as part of the registration process for each call: "What topics or questions would you like the group to discuss in this call?" In each call, we spend an hour going through the submitted topics and questions, with the non-competing BTA member attendees helping one another. It's BTA at its best.



Currently, there are five groups — three for owners and senior management, one for sales management and one for service management. Three of the groups meet monthly; two of the groups meet every other week. The first group's inaugural call was in May 2020. Since then, the group has met 77 times. In all calls, the members remain focused on sharing best practices, helping one another with business challenges and discussing topics related to achieving an optimum level of success in the office technology industry.

The groups' members do not limit their communication to the calls. It didn't take long for them to begin asking questions of one another between calls via email. I am copied on those emails. I have my PC set to share an audible ping when emails arrive in my inbox. When I see it's a Dealers Helping Dealers dialog underway, well, that ping is music to my ears.

Allow me to share an example of what I am talking about. Here's a question from June 9 of this year asked by a member via email of the others in his group: "Since COVID, we've noticed our clients' hours are all over the place, and since summer is coming, we see the phone isn't ringing much in the

afternoon. The 40-hour work week is fading into the past. What are you all doing in your business that is different from the usual?"

Among the responses: "We aren't changing our service delivery schedule (Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). If there is a trend in lighter workload (which we haven't seen), we can always adjust staffing accordingly. About 80% of our staff works remotely and we don't track the hours of exempt team members. The approach we're taking is goal- and task-based. Meaning, as long as the goals are reached and the required tasks completed, we don't care about when and where the job is completed. Some work late hours and take time out of the day to run errands and do activities with their kids. To create a sense of belonging and team spirit, we have implemented cloud-based tools and work processes that facilitate cloud-based collaboration (Microsoft Teams, Motivosity, DocuWare, SalesChain, e-automate/CEO Juice)."

I know this is only one sample question and one answer, but you get the idea. The groups' members take the time to provide meaningful, helpful responses. After so many Zoom calls, they've gotten to know one another pretty well. They want to help each other. Collectively, the five groups currently have a total of 138 members. To date, they have met on 230 Zoom calls with total attendance of 3,142.

Does every member attend every call? No. Things come up. I would say some members are regulars, while others join somewhat regularly. If you are considering joining one of these groups, don't be thinking: "I can't commit to joining every call." You are welcome to attend whenever you can. Are you interested in joining a BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Group? If so, email me at brent@bta.org. The time you invest will be well worth it. ■

— Brent Hoskins

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FLASHBACK



The association's magazine cover 73 years ago this month — the NOMDA Spokesman, August 1950.