

Dealers Helping Dealers

A look back at BTA's first century

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

We have arrived at the most significant milestone in the distinguished history of the Business Technology Association (BTA) — our 100th anniversary. It is a testament to not only the perseverance of the leaders of the association through the decades, but also to the endurance of the independent dealer channel of distribution.

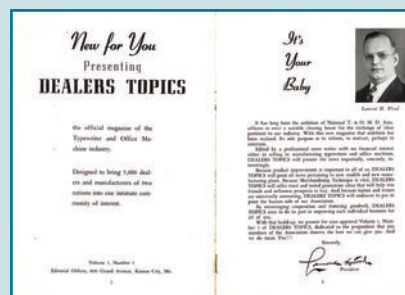
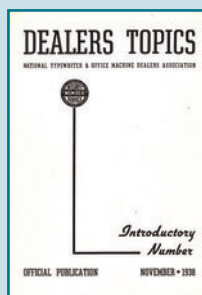
Below is a look at the association, by decade, since its founding in 1926. Space only allows for select highlights. However, collectively, these highlights reflect the incredible story of the dream of a group of typewriter dealers, the founding members of the association, motivated by the realization that there is strength in numbers. They had a vision that the independent dealer channel would remain the premier channel of distribution by way of dealers helping dealers.

This brief historical account is based largely on articles appearing in the association's various publications throughout the decades. BTA's archives include most issues since 1949, as well as four issues from the 1930s. In addition, BTA's 60th anniversary book, "The Parade of Progress: NOMDA's First 60 Years," served as a valuable resource in preparing this compilation. Enjoy your journey through the decades.

1920s

The association was established as the National Association of Typewriter Dealers at a meeting held on Jan. 22-23, 1926, in Kansas City, Missouri. This is confirmed by the program of the association's first annual convention, held Aug. 26-28, 1926, at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. An image of the program appeared in the 1969 Convention Issue of the NOMDA Spokesman. The cover of the program reads, in part: "National Association of Typewriter Dealers (Organized at Kansas City, Mo., Jan. 22-23, 1926)."

George S. Walker was named the association's first president, serving less than a full year. He was followed by 1926-27 President W.R. Schilling. A photo of Schilling appeared in the October 1955 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman magazine. (See the photo on page 16.)



Top to bottom: The oldest photo in the BTA archives is a picture of the banquet from the typewriter convention held Aug. 20, 1928, at the Hotel Hollenden in Cleveland, Ohio; the second oldest shows the group attending the Annual Convention of the National Typewriter & Office Machine Dealer Association, held July 23-27, 1938, at the New York World's Fair site in Queens, New York; the first issue of the association's publication, Dealers Topics, was released in November 1938.

"The ability to openly share best practices, ask questions and exchange ideas with others facing similar challenges has been invaluable to both me personally and to our company. The insights and collaboration we've gained through BTA have helped us continue to grow and evolve while always keeping our people at the core of what we do. We appreciate everything the organization has done to support the industry and look forward to many more years ahead."

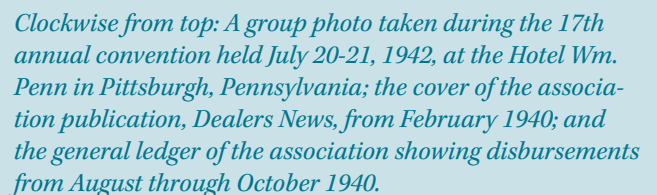
Following the first convention in Chicago, there were three additional annual conventions hosted by the association in the 1920s — at the William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1927; Hollenden Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio, 1928; and Congress Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, 1929. The photo at the top of the second column on page 10 was taken at the 1928 convention. It is the oldest photo in the association's archives.

The original name of the association did not last long. It was changed in 1933 to the National Association of Typewriter and Office Machine Dealers (NTOMDA) during the 1933-34 presidency of William Clausing. He was followed by C. Elmer Anderson, 1934-36 national president. It was during Anderson's tenure that the association hired its first executive secretary to serve as administrator of the association — J. Paul McWilliams, then located in Kansas City, Missouri. (McWilliams later left the employ of the association to open his own dealership in Little Rock, Arkansas. He served as 1960-61 president of what was by then NOMDA; his son Michael L. McWilliams served as 1971-72 NOMDA president.)

1938 ANNIVERSARY DANCE
 3524 TOWNSHIP & OFFICE BUILDING
 DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA
 JULY 22, 1938
 CLEVELAND, OHIO

July, 1939		Disbursements						
		Amount	Receipts	Postage	Printing	Stationery	Travel	Banking
July 13	Brought forward	191.89	22-	538.12	50.53	152	1	89.10
	Admission ticket							
	Return ticket, St. L.	130.59			1	130.59		
	Postage	50.53			50.53			
	W. A. Williams, Salary (approx.)	50-						
13	Expenses of leaving for the							
	Postage	53.9			53.9			
	Return ticket	41.9						
	Expenses of telephone	137.50		137.50				
	Expenses of telephone	50.53			50.53			
	Postage	41.5						
	Expenses of telephone	141.50		141.50				
	Expenses of telephone	141.50		141.50				
	Postage	130.59						
	Return ticket, St. L.	130.59						
	Postage	50.53						
July 29	Expenses of leaving for the							
	Postage	53.9						
	Return ticket	41.9						
	Expenses of telephone	137.50						
Aug 14	Postage	42.44			42.44			

A large black and white photograph showing a crowded assembly hall filled with people seated at long tables, likely attending a formal meeting or conference. The room is filled with rows of people, mostly men in suits, seated at long tables covered with white cloths. The room has high ceilings and large windows on the right side. The perspective is from the front of the room, looking down the length of the hall.

[illegible]

"Congratulations to BTA on an incredible 100 years! FP is proud to be a part of an industry built on strong relationships, collaboration and innovation, and we appreciate the role BTA continues to play in bringing this channel together. Wishing BTA continued success for many years to come!"

— Mia Partipilo, communications, events
& executive operations manager
FP Mailing Solutions, Addison, Illinois

all of you." (Images of the cover of that issue and Woods' column appear on page 10.)

In the first issue, among the articles was "The First 15 Years Were the Easiest," written by L.H. Witgraff, the association's 1926-27 second vice president. He wrote about the struggles resulting from the Great Depression. "Business dropped off; we had to accept less cash and more and poorer trade-ins; we were obliged to add a few more sidelines," he wrote, also writing about the recession that followed. "Time and tide wait for no man. We had to keep in line with progress. Many new specialties were added to our regular typewriter line, such as the automatic typewriter, the Line-O-Time copy holder, adding machines, Dictaphones, cash registers, check protectors, The Stenotype, duplicating machines, pencil adding devices, etc."

BTA has three additional issues of publications in its archives from the 1930s, each with a title change from Dealers Topics to Dealers News. Among the articles in the December 1938 issue, "Well-Dress Windows Increase Typewriter Sales," plus a feature with the admonition that some typewriter sales reps "handle a hot prospect like he was a hot iron." The March 1939 issue featured a Q&A on the Social Security Act, reporting that "wages in excess of \$3,000 to an individual in any one year by a single employer are not taxable."

1940s

By 1940, the association's headquarters had moved to New York City, New York. The locale appears to have been short-lived. By 1941, the headquarters had moved to Topeka, Kansas.

In 1943, led first by 1941-43 President Irving Vincent and then by 1943-44 President Nick H. Fucci, the association's name was changed to the National Office Machine Dealers Association (NOMDA); the name remained the same for 50 years until it was briefly changed to NOMDA/LANDA and then to the Business Technology Association (BTA) in 1994.

The earliest issue of the NOMDA Spokesman in the BTA archives is the September 1949 issue, labeled as issue number six. By then, another move had occurred; the association's headquarters was located in Los Angeles, California. The issue reflects the frustration with a detrimental federal



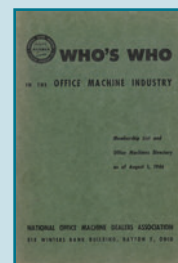
Top: Attendees of the June 13-14, 1944, War Conference pose for a photo at the Chelsea Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Right: The



1949-50 Board of Directors of NOMDA meeting is held in June 1949 in Los Angeles, California, just after the 1949 convention at the Ambassador Hotel.



Above photos (top to bottom): Dealers gather for the 23rd annual convention, which was held July 19-21, 1948, at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City, New York; and the Pacific Northwest OMDA starts off the 1949-50 season with a meeting and party at the BOF Club in Spokane, Washington. Right: "Who's Who in the Office Machine Industry" serves as a membership list and office machine directory for dealers in 1946.



"You [Brent Hoskins] and the association have made a huge impact in the lives of so many businesses and I am honored to have been a part of it over the years.

"Congratulations to the Business Technology Association on celebrating 100 years of service to the office technology industry. From my years as editor-in-chief of ImageSource Magazine for copier/printer dealers to my time with ECI Software Solutions supporting e-automate, I've had the opportunity to see firsthand the important role BTA plays in supporting the dealer community. Its commitment to connection, education and industry advancement has made a lasting impact across the years. Thank you for a century of service to the office technology industry and best wishes as you celebrate this extraordinary milestone."

— Alicia Ellis, senior marketing manager,
Field Service, Office Technology & Distribution Divisions
ECI Software Solutions Inc., Westlake, Texas

law of the day. One article notes that the "number-one item on the Executive Committee's order of business for October 8th is to lay a plan of battle to get rid of the excise tax on office machines." The article notes that "many people are waiting until its repeal before buying."

NOMDA advocacy on behalf of its dealer members was further covered in the October 1949 issue with a lengthy article on the 1949 Manufacturer's Relations Committee Report, which covered, in part, the committee's interviews with representatives of seven manufacturers, all of them supportive of the Fair Trade Act. However, the article noted that "little attention is being given to upholding prices," particularly in "large metropolitan areas." The article expressed concern that "you can purchase at most any price any portable at but a few dollars above dealers' cost."

1950s

In early 1950, the Chicago Convention Committee was busy planning the 25th National Convention, scheduled for June 28-July 1, 1950, at the Palmer House hotel in Chicago, Illinois, site of the first convention in 1926. A photo of the hotel appeared on the cover of the April 1950 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman. The preview announced only one educational session at that early stage of planning, a panel: "The Cost of Doing Business." There were a record number of exhibitors scheduled: 36.

Much of the editorial content within the NOMDA Spokesman in the 1950s focused on the national conventions, with many front-page articles. However, a brief article in the May 1955 issue summed up the value of the conventions to dealers. The comments shared could just as easily apply in 2026. Member Al Foxcroft of Los Angeles is quoted as saying, in part, that the reasons dealers attend NOMDA conventions



Top: Dealers gather for the annual convention in June 1954 at the Chase Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. Bottom: NOMDA's second president, W.R. Schilling of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, visits the BTA office after being named member of the month in October 1955.



Above: The 1957 repair apprentices of Southern California OMDA take weekly classes on office machine repairs, adjustments and cleaning in Los Angeles, California.



Right: By winding up NOMDA's 1958-59 membership drive with an increase of 56% and a net of 38%, Oregon OMDA wins the Sweepstakes Prize, the Liston Jackson Trophy. Jackson (right, 1951-52 NOMDA president) presents the traveling trophy to Mark Seaman of Portland, Oregon, the treasurer of Oregon OMDA.

"The Business Technology Association has been a valued partner and resource since the very beginning of our careers, and its legacy of support and collaboration remains steady to this day. We wish Brent and BTA the absolute best as they continue to support our industry while helping future generations of Toshiba employees!"

— Jim Hawkins, chief operating officer, and Peter Morisco, vice president of national dealer sales, United States Toshiba America Business Solutions, Lake Forest, California

have to do with the "stimulating effect it has on their businesses, as a result of ideas they gain through close personal contact with their fellow dealers, discovery of new products, and applications and promotional ideas for old products." (Foxcroft later served as 1959-60 NOMDA president.)

Despite the focus on the conventions, news regarding NOMDA's many local chapters prevailed within the pages of the NOMDA Spokesman throughout the decade. A sampling of the headlines: "Texas OMDA to Hold 4th Annual Meet," January 1951; "Chicago, Indiana-Kentucky Gunning for Liston Jackson Trophy in Membership Race," February 1955; and "Cincinnati OMDA has Plans for the Year," September 1959. The NOMDA Who's Who in the Office Machine Industry, released July 31, 1952, lists 28 locals. By 1958, in a list included in the November issue of the NOMDA Spokesman that year, the count had increased to 42 locals.

1960s

As noted, Paul McWilliams served as 1960-61 NOMDA president. In the January 1961 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman, he reported on the results of a dealer member survey. The survey results revealed that the average annual volumes of business transactions by department were as follows: supplies, 8%; outside sales, 35%; annual service contracts, 12%; service department, 15%; inside sales, 21%; and rentals, 9%. "It may be that you do not want to enlarge your business in some of the listed departments," he wrote. "However, if you have the facilities or desire to do so, the figures presented can give you information as to which departments need bringing up to the national average."

In the March 1962 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman, a past leader of the association, 1954-55 NOMDA President Wilber Walker, contributed an article titled "Why NOMDA is Important to Me." He wrote, in part, that he was told that "NOMDA would help my business not only survive, but also to prosper." He said he "immediately made application to join this young and energetic national organization. It was like parting with teeth with that first year's dues." He looked back pleased he had made the decision to join (in 1934): "Every dealer, supplier and manufacturer



Clockwise from top: George Chadwick (left) of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, accepts NOMDA's first Dealer of the Year award from 1961-62 NOMDA President Edgar Noll in July 1962; Carolyn Re (left), August 1964 Spokesman guest editor and president of the Ladies of NOMDA group, talks with Roy Kennedy at the opening of the new NOMDA office in September 1964; and the 1964 NOMDA convention is held in St. Louis, Missouri.



Clockwise from top left: (left to right) Bud Bills, Dorothy Ames (whose retirement led to the founding of the BTA Scholarship Foundation), Tony Kartous and D. Marvel attend the TOMDA convention on March 9, 1963, in Fort Worth, Texas; Art Williams (center) presents the gavel to incoming New Jersey OMDA President Chester Trzcinski (right) in December 1966, while Dave Scadden (left), chairman of the nominating committee, looks on; and (left to right) Hazen Ames, Art Ames and Ralph Terry at the September 1964 opening of the new NOMDA office at 2590 East Devon in Des Plaines, Illinois.



who belongs to NOMDA co-operates with each other in every way possible to attain one common goal — success.”

By the summer of 1964, NOMDA had once again moved its headquarters — from Los Angeles, where it had been located since at least 1949, to Des Plaines, Illinois. In the June-July issue of the NOMDA Spokesman, the newly hired executive secretary of BTA, Ralph Terry, introduced himself. He noted, in part: “We are now situated at the crossroads of America, just five minutes and \$1.50 by taxi from O’Hare airfield in Chicago.”

In the “Spring 1969” issue of the NOMDA Spokesman, the association announced that membership had reached

“BTA does exactly what it claims in its tagline and more. The Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups have been a huge help to our company. I can ask questions and get answers from other dealers across the country. They are individuals who do what we do every day and some have been in the business for multiple decades. They give great advice based on their experience. Others are fairly new to the industry and they give great advice based on where they see the industry going. “We have been to multiple BTA events and have met face to face with vendors before we decided to add their products to our portfolio. This has allowed us to grow our business through multiple revenue streams. BTA has allowed CopyLady to continue to grow and we are thankful for everything it has allowed us to do.”

— Dan Detrick, vice president
CopyLady Inc., Fort Myers, Florida

2,000. John H. Siegmund, owner of Louisiana Business Machines, New Orleans, Louisiana, had the distinction of being that 2,000th member. “I weighed joining NOMDA very heavily,” he said. “You have to unite ... you just can’t battle it by yourself. Through NOMDA, we had the IBM Corporation set up their service program ... When you get big companies like that to work with you, you’ve accomplished something ... The big companies like to talk to 2,000 people, rather than just one.”

1970s

During the 1970s, the NOMDA Spokesman took on a more modern look and included lengthier articles, often interviews and dealer-bylined articles. A good example appeared

"All of the peer-to-peer networking [through board service and at BTA events] has given me people to bounce ideas off of. These relationships have been tremendous in helping me work through problems [in my business]. Over the years we have also benefited from programs ranging from health insurance offerings to freight discounts. And when we became an ESOP, Bob Goldberg helped us rewrite our company doctrine and employee handbook, and provided trusted advice during a major transition.

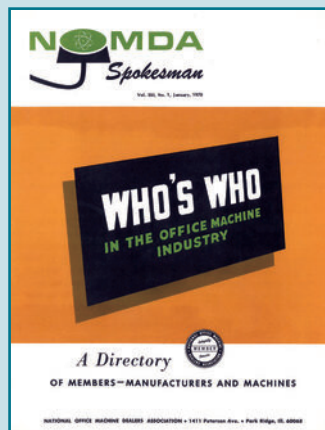
"Beyond the programs it offers, BTA's advocacy on behalf of independent dealers is extremely valuable. As president and CEO of a smaller dealership, I need that voice because mine isn't always loud enough on its own."

— Mike Hicks, president & CEO
Electronic Business Machines Inc., Lexington, Kentucky

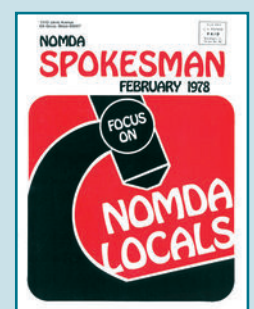
in the October 1970 issue of the magazine, which featured a three-page Q&A interview with Gil Barner, vice president of Westminster Office Machines Inc., Lake Bluff, Illinois. One of the interview questions: "If you were today going to take on a new product line, what might that line be?" Barner's reply: "I guess I would have to refer back to our conversation about mini-computers. I would start right now to get into it so that we would get the software and hardware background that I think would be necessary."

Interestingly, toward the end of the decade, the dialog on computers was still underway. The cover story in the May 1979 issue: "Everything I Always Wanted to Know About Business Computers But Was Afraid to Ask!" The Q&A-formatted article began with the question: "When should I consider a computer?" The answer, provided by author Howard C. Johnson, president of Management Analysis & Control Inc.: "Is your business growing? Are you considering adding personnel? Are you losing control over accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll or inventory? Are you reducing your accounting staff? Is your competitive edge suffering because of lack of timely, accurate financial information? If any of these situations are familiar to your business, then it's time that you consider electronic bookkeeping."

Another noteworthy trait of the 1970s issues of the magazine is the heightened focus on dealer learning by way of NOMDA educational programs. In a column appearing in the December 1972 Spokesman, 1972-74 NOMDA President Jim Charles wrote, in part: "Take time to explore the programs of NOMDA. Their express purpose is to help you professionalize your own operation and, in turn, your industry." That issue's articles featured: STEER, a three-day program focused on dealership financial management; the NOMDA IBM Selectric



Clockwise from top: 1971-72 NOMDA President Mike McWilliams (left) receives the gavel from James Ayres, outgoing president, at the 46th annual convention held July 15-17, 1971, in St. Louis, Missouri; the Aug. 16, 1971, issue of the NOMDA Hotline newsletter; the 1978-79 NOMDA officers include (left to right) President Alfred Aus, Vice President Don Wright, Treasurer Tom Van Gelder and Secretary Joe Stuart; the February 1978 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman; Paul Rickard (left) accepts the Liston Jackson trophy on behalf of the Madison OMDA from Midwest Regent Steve White in 1978; and the January 1970 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman features a "who's who" directory of the office machine industry.



School; and the NOMDA Stem-winder program, training dealers to present sessions within their communities or to other dealers within the industry.

In the NOMDA book, “The Parade of Progress,” 1969-71 NOMDA President James Ayres expressed his passion for NOMDA’s educational programs. “I would say that the most important single event that occurred during the years I was an officer of NOMDA was the beginning of the educational programs and the development of the seminar system of training,” he said, noting that such programs as SELL, FIX, STEER and Selectric training, etc., “were ‘my thing.’”

1980s

The 1980s began with the successful conclusion of an

“Congratulations to BTA on reaching this remarkable 100-year milestone!

“Distribution Management (Supplies Network) has been a proud supporter of BTA over the years. Throughout my 30-year career, I have had the privilege of attending many BTA events across the country. Those experiences have provided valuable opportunities to connect with industry partners, strengthen relationships and continue fostering the strong partnerships that drive success throughout our channel.

“Congratulations again on this incredible achievement and see you in Kansas City!”

— Mike Wyatt, senior business development manager
Distribution Management, St. Charles, Missouri

antitrust lawsuit NOMDA had filed against Monroe, a calculator company, on behalf of the dealer channel. The association was challenging an abrupt change in policy that had effectively prevented NOMDA members from servicing Monroe calculators. As reported in the “The Parade of Progress” book: “In the final settlement, Monroe agreed to sell parts, schematics, reference manuals and parts catalogs to independent dealers

upon the placement of a \$10 order.”

As the decade progressed, the 1980s also saw the dawn of an era when the association’s national conventions achieved a significant surge in attendance, in the days before the OEMs began having their own dealer meetings. While the attendance saw growth in the 1970s — the 1978 convention,

"My company has been a member of BTA for 32 years. At the reflection point of 100 years, I am certain the same values exist today as they did 100 years ago which, in my view, is how we dealers can improve ourselves and increase our chances of success.

"I can say my experience has been about networking, attending events, educational activities and having legal advice available when I need it. If I can walk away from any BTA gathering and gain a nugget(s) of something new to help my company, it is worth it.

"Thank you BTA for offering myself and countless others a platform to better learn our industry and business.

"Congratulations on the 100-year milestone!"

— Mike Boyle, CEO/president

BASE Technologies & The Office Works, Bethel, Connecticut

for example, drew "more than 6,800" attendees — by 1988, the attendance had grown to 18,146.

In addition, during the 1980s, the association saw continued successful events among its districts — EROMDA (now BTA East); SEROMDA (now BTA South-east); Mid-OMDA (now BTA Mid-America); and WOMDA (now BTA West). The December 1983 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman includes coverage of WOMDA's 32nd annual convention, held Oct. 20-22, 1983, in Las Vegas, Nevada. "We had a registration of approximately 3,800, which is almost 1,000 more than last year," said Hank Hanson, convention chairman, quoted in the coverage. "Exhibitors were ecstatic over the number of attendees."

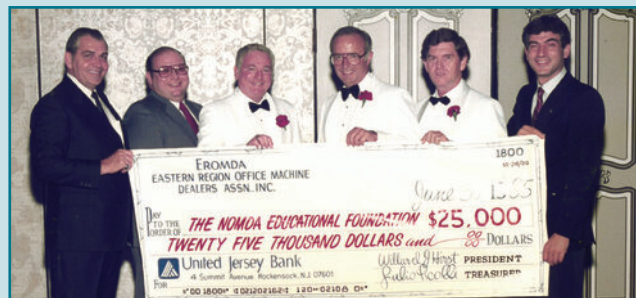
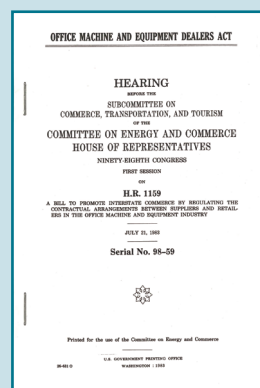
It was during the decade of the 1980s that a decision tied to the current BTA took place. In 1985, the association moved from Wood Dale, Illinois, (its final of at least three other homes in Illinois — Des Plaines, Park Ridge and Elk Grove Village) to its present home in Kansas City — returning to the city of its founding. The September 1985 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman reported that the association had purchased a 125,000-square foot building on 36 acres. The building became known as the association's National Educational/Conference Center (NECC), and was used for many years by not only NOMDA and the industry, but also by businesses in the Kansas City area for educational meetings, banquets, etc. (In the early 2000s, the decision was made to sell the building; BTA remains a tenant.)

Near the very end of the decade, NOMDA hosted the forward-looking Focus 1990 event in Kansas City. The event was held Oct. 20-21, 1989, featuring such leading minds as Robert Reich (who later became the U.S. Secretary of Labor in the Clinton Administration), Dr. Arthur Laffer (best known for developing the Laffer Curve influential in U.S. tax policy) and futurist John Naisbitt.



Top left: Senator James Exon addresses NOMDA members on July 17, 1982, in Kansas City, Missouri. Exon introduced S. 1256, the Office Machinery and

Equipment Retail Dealers' Agreement Act. Top right: The act evolved into the Office Machine and Equipment Dealers Act, which aimed to regulate supplier/dealer contracts, prevent unfair franchise cancellations and require fair compensation for inventories. The act ultimately failed to pass, but the proposed legislation resulted in the Manufacturer Dealer Statement of Principles that guided relationships for years.



Clockwise from top: EROMDA members present their "big check" to the NOMDA Educational Foundation in June 1985; the 1989 NOMDA convention was held in New Orleans, Louisiana; the 1983 WOMDA convention featured a Mardi Gras dinner/dance; the NOMDA Board of Directors approves a new budget during the 1988 board meeting; and the 1988 NOMDA convention was held in Las Vegas, Nevada.

1990s

In the early 1990s, NOMDA continued to be known for its large national conventions. The 65th annual convention held July 11-14, 1990, at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, drew “more than 17,000 attendees from the United States and 39 foreign countries” visiting the exhibits of 350 vendors, the September 1990 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman reported. “Most exhibitors that I had the opportunity to visit with indicated that they had come to the show with an optimistic outlook and left satisfied with their success,” said 1990-91 NOMDA President Perry Wells in that issue. “And, of course, for the exhibitors to be successful, the dealers attending the convention had to have been successful, too.”

Several years later, in 1993, NOMDA merged with LANDA, the Local Area Network Dealers Association, the trade association for the networking industry. The result was the fourth name change for the association to NOMDA/LANDA.

“The office technology industry can be a lonely, isolated industry if we let it. BTA has given me the chance to learn and connect with dealers and professionals across the country. What a gift it has been to find BTA. Here’s to 100 more years!”

— Ashley Whisonant, managing owner
Capital Office Products Inc., Columbia, South Carolina

The May 1, 1993, issue of the NOMDA Hotline newsletter (a printed publication at the time; the earliest issue in the BTA archives: Jan. 15, 1968) reported: “NOMDA/LANDA joins the strengths of the two organizations’ memberships and recognizes the growing

similarities between dealers and resellers, while still responding to their different needs.”

Some additional changes occurred the next year. The March 1, 1994, issue of the BTA Hotline newsletter reported on the NOMDA/LANDA Board of Directors meeting held Feb. 4-5, 1994, in Kansas City. “The board endorsed a plan that will reduce the terms of office for officers, eliminate non-essential standing committees and significantly decrease the size of the association’s governing bodies [the board size was reduced from 100-plus members to 19 members],” the Hotline reported. “The board also endorsed a name change for the association.”

The name change, to the Business Technology Association

"When I think about BTA's 100-year milestone, I don't just think about an association — I think about the impact it has had on me personally and on CopyPro.

"One of the greatest honors of my career has been giving back to an industry that has given so much to me. Having the opportunity to serve on the BTA Board of Directors and as national president deepened my appreciation for the dedicated volunteers and staff members who work tirelessly to make our industry stronger. It also reminded me that BTA's greatest asset has never been its programs or events — it has always been its people.

"At CopyPro, we often say that none of us is as smart as all of us. That philosophy has been reinforced time and time again through BTA. Some of the best ideas we've implemented at CopyPro — whether related to service, sales, leadership, operations or customer experience — started with conversations with fellow BTA dealers. It's remarkable that competitors are willing to share what works because they understand that helping one another ultimately strengthens the independent dealer community.

"Whenever we're faced with a new challenge, one of my first thoughts is, 'I wonder if another BTA dealer has solved this?' The answer is almost always 'yes.' A phone call, a conversation at a BTA event, or an email to another member has saved us countless hours, helped us avoid mistakes and given us ideas we may never have discovered on our own. That spirit of collaboration is something you simply don't find everywhere.

"BTA has made CopyPro a better company and it has made me a better leader. The friendships I've built, the lessons I've learned and the opportunity to serve alongside so many talented people are among the most rewarding experiences of my career.

"Congratulations to BTA on 100 incredible years. I am proud to be part of an organization that continues to invest in independent dealers, encourages collaboration over competition and ensures that companies like CopyPro have the resources, relationships and support to thrive. I look forward to seeing what the next 100 years will bring."

— Debra Dennis, vice president of support services
CopyPro Inc., Greenville, North Carolina

(BTA), the fifth name for the association, was approved by voting members in April 1994. The Hotline reported: "At the time of the merger with LANDA, it was announced that NOMDA/LANDA was a temporary name that would be used until a more suitable name could be found."

The 1990s also saw a name change for the NOMDA Spokesman magazine (dating back to 1949) to Business Technology Solutions effective with the July 1994 issue. The decade ended with the election of BTA's first two female presidents. Carol Wylie served as 1997-98 BTA president;



Clockwise from top left: The 1990 NOMDA convention attracts more than 17,000 attendees from around the world; the 1992 convention draws nearly 15,000 attendees; and the International Business Expo, sponsored by BTA and BPIA (NOPA), was held July 12-15, 1994, showcasing multifunctional connectivity products. All three shows were held at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.



Clockwise from top left: NOMDA's Board of Regents approves the merger between the association and LANDA, the trade association for the network industry, in May 1993; during the February 1994 NOMDA/LANDA Board of Directors meeting, the board endorsed a new name for the association — the Business Technology Association (BTA) — and board members were given t-shirts with the new name; past BTA presidents at the association's headquarters in February 1994 after the board meeting; and a teaching lab at the 1997 Business Technology Expo & Conference held in Los Angeles, California.

Nancy Taylor served as 1999-2000 BTA president.

2000s

By the start of the new century, the era of the association's large conventions was winding down, given the decisions by OEMs to begin hosting their own dealer meetings. The association hosted

Decisions 2000 on April 26-28, 2000. Then, on Aug. 7-9, 2001, it hosted the Business Technology Expo. Both events were held at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

The 1994 name change of the association's monthly magazine to Business Technology Solutions was relatively short-lived. Effective with the September 2001 issue, the name was changed to the present Office Technology. This was the result of an alliance between BTA and 101 Communications, which became the publisher of the association's magazine. By the August 2004 issue of Office Technology, BTA had returned as

"Congratulations to the Business Technology Association on an incredible 100 years of leadership, innovation and service to the industry. For a century, BTA has brought people together, championed innovation and helped shape the future of the industry. Congratulations on this remarkable milestone and best wishes for many more years of success."

— Grant Goldsmith, director of operations
Regal Business Machines/Gateway Business Systems Inc.,
Chicago, Illinois

the publisher of the magazine and remains so today.

Three BTA mainstays got their start in the 2000s. In the spring of 2001, the association began offering the ProFinance workshop, designed to help dealerships achieve double-digit operating income and taught by John Hey and Todd Johnson of Strategic Business

Associates (SBA). To date, more than 1,000 dealers have attended the workshop, dramatically improving the performance of their dealerships as a result.

The second mainstay is the Select Dealer Group (SDG), formed in 2003. SDG is a peer group currently comprised of 37 noncompeting BTA member dealerships that share best practices on a regular basis, but also at three in-person meetings each year.

In 2008, the association launched the third mainstay — its Building My Business Webinar series, held on a regular

"Automated Business Solutions' (ABS') co-founder Alan Albergaria was an incredible man. Not only did he seek to bring people into his business who would help him get ABS to the next level, but he also wanted folks to develop as individuals. Alan saw something in me, but I admit, I had plenty to learn upon joining ABS. Alan proactively encouraged my participation in BTA and that participation continues to this day with the support of our current president, Mike Ardry.

"I have been able to share my ideas and learn from other leaders in our industry. As our business continues to evolve, all of us in the independent dealer channel seek ways to get better, compete and be more profitable. Whether it is via online calls or participation in regional meetings, resources provided within the BTA network have been a great way for many of our leaders at ABS to identify future strategies and develop strategic partnerships that have helped our business proactively change with the times.

"Also, I have two kids who just received BTA scholarships that will help offset some of their tuition payments. That is pretty cool.

"Congrats to BTA and thank you for what you have done for me, ABS and the office technology industry!"

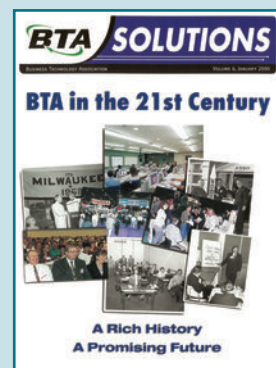
— David Aulisio, vice president of business development
Automated Business Solutions, Warwick, Rhode Island

basis with the goal of helping dealers improve the management of their companies, take full advantage of market opportunities and, ultimately, improve the bottom line. To date, there have been 219 webinars with total attendance of 12,569.

By the late 2000s, BTA began ramping up its district educational and networking events, open to all, but hosted at the district level by BTA East, BTA Mid-America, BTA Southeast and BTA West. BTA Southeast had already been hosting what is now the Fall Colors Retreat in North Carolina for many years. It evolved from an annual event co-hosted by the North Carolina OMDA and South Carolina OMDA locals. In 2009, there were three events held: "Jazz it Up in New Orleans," hosted by BTA Southeast and BTA Mid-America, June 11-13, New Orleans, Louisiana; "Grand Slam," hosted by BTA East, Sept. 24-25, White Plains, New York; and the "Fall Colors Conference," hosted by BTA Southeast, Oct. 16-17, Waynesville, North Carolina.

2010s

BTA's district-hosted educational and networking events hit full stride during the 2010s, with 45 events held between 2011 and 2019. The largest of those events took place June 6-10, 2016, as the industry gathered to celebrate the association's 90th anniversary in Kansas City.



Clockwise from top: Attendees listen to a presentation at BTA's 2001 Business Technology Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada; The January 2000 issue of BTA Solutions magazine, the association's first publication in the 21st century; and 1999-00 BTA President Nancy Taylor awards the 2000 BTA Volunteer of the Year Award to Bruce Bro.



Clockwise from above photos: BTA's modern-day events began with the April 2008 "Educating U" event in Orlando, Florida; The Utility Company's Jason Creally (second from left) visits with BTA Southeast conference attendees in May 2007 in Nashville, Tennessee; Attendees visit with BTA Membership Sales Representative Brian Smith at the "Jazz it Up in New Orleans" event in June 2009; and Phil Boatman (left) gives a demonstration of a Lexmark product to BTA West event attendees in September 2008 in Cypress, California.

"Throughout my membership with BTA, our business and I have benefited countless times from access to dozens of smart and experienced business owners and leaders. This has shaped our marketing, sales and service strategies. We've used the Dealers Helping Dealers program to grow our service business and many times taken advantage of the training and documents in the online library. Congratulations to BTA on 100 years!"

— Jeffrey Foley, co-founder & CEO
Apollo Office Systems, Alvin, Texas

The decade wrapped up in 2019 with BTA events in Orlando, Florida; Austin, Texas; New York City, New York; San Diego, California; and Asheville, North Carolina.

Following the model of SDG, in 2012, the association established the PRO Dealer Group (PDG). The peer group of non-competing BTA member dealerships meets three times a year in person, sharing best practices, with members staying well connected throughout each year. Currently, there are 30 dealerships in the group. Like SDG, the group's relationship with SBA helps members identify the best means to improve the profitability of their companies by way of an annual financial survey.

In 2016, at the June 10 "BTA at 90: A Celebration" event in Kansas City, BTA announced the first inductee into the BTA Hall of Fame — Thomas A. Russo Sr., 1985-86 BTA president. During his presidency, he was instrumental in returning the association's headquarters to Kansas City, helping to locate the building that serves as BTA's home today. He also helped manage the move from Wood Dale, Illinois, to the new building in Kansas City. In addition, he was instrumental in the development of the museum that was housed for a period of time at BTA's headquarters — the National Office Equipment Historical Museum.

During the decade, the association awarded 225 BTA scholarships to the sons and daughters of full-time employees of member dealerships totaling \$260,500. Since the 1984-85 school year, the association has awarded 1,681 scholarships totaling \$1.9 million. The BTA Scholarship Foundation dates back to 1968 when the Dorothy R. Ames Scholarship Fund was announced to honor her retirement. (A photo of Ames appears on page 18.)

2020s

BTA's current decade got underway with the Spring Break event, hosted by BTA Southeast, March 13-14, 2020, at Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resort, with seven educational sessions and 30 scheduled exhibiting vendors. Sadly, the focus at the event did not turn out as planned. On March 13, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in



Clockwise from top left: Winter Break 2011, held in Orlando, Florida, drew approximately 70 dealer and vendor attendees; Grand Slam 2010 begins with a dealer/manufacturer panel discussion moderated by Frank Cannata (fourth from left); the Cruise to Success 2013 schedule allowed plenty of time for attendees to network with their fellow dealers and exhibiting sponsors, including during a welcoming reception; and 2014-15 BTA President Ron Hulett (far left) presents the Bob Goldberg Legacy Award to BTA General Counsel Bob Goldberg (far right), as (center, left to right) 2014-15 BTA President-Elect Dave Quint, 2014-15 BTA Vice President Rob Richardson and 2012-13 BTA President Terry Chapman look on.



Clockwise from top left: Attendees gather for BTA at 90: A Celebration, held June 10, 2016, in Kansas City, Missouri; Delane Wolter (left) of OKI Data Americas, gives a product demonstration to Joe Escamilla of Document Systems, Oxnard, California, at Capture the Magic 2014; fifteen NOMDA and BTA presidents were in attendance at the BTA at 90: A Celebration event; and attendees meet with exhibitors during round-table discussions at the 2016 Fall Colors Retreat.

"My first experience with BTA was about 20 years ago, when a friend invited me to an event. We had a wonderful time, and the people I attended with became friends and mentors. I was especially honored when two of them later asked me to buy their businesses. That was the beginning of my journey with BTA.

"My second experience came through the service side of the industry and taking the FIX class with Ronelle Ingram. She became a friend and mentor who taught and inspired me in many ways. The class offered valuable insight into service management and running a stronger business. She also introduced me to a helpful membership benefit — Bob Goldberg.

"More recently, I was invited to join the BTA leadership team and speak on a panel after expanding my work into cybersecurity, AI consulting and training. This has created an opportunity to help connect generations and support BTA's continued growth through technology and education.

"A particularly meaningful full-circle moment came when I worked with Bob's son, Greg Goldberg, to develop and deliver an AI policy and ethics training. It reflected what BTA has always done so well — bringing people and generations together to share knowledge, build relationships and strengthen the industry.

"As BTA celebrates its first 100 years, I look forward to helping continue that legacy into its next 100 years through new membership and educational opportunities, grants and scholarships. The technology may change, but BTA's commitment to people, learning and connection will continue to move the association forward.

"I am grateful for the friendships, mentors and opportunities BTA has provided over the years. Congratulations on 100 years — here's to the next 100."

— Pamela Feld, founder & CEO

Triumph Technology Group, Tustin, California

response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next day, March 14, many governors also declared states of emergency and public health officials began urging social distancing.

BTA mobilized to help its dealer members throughout 2020 during the early stages of the pandemic. That year, 3,762 people attended 25 BTA Building My Business webinars, including "BTA Guides Dealers Through the COVID-19 Crisis," "Forgiveness, Reopening, Customer Support — The Next Steps for Dealers" and "How to Operate & Manage a Remote Sales Team." The webinar drawing the highest attendance — 771 people — was "How to Prospect with Social Distancing." BTA also launched the Dealers Helping Dealers COVID-19 Q&A, with questions asked and answered by BTA member dealers, appearing on the BTA website. By the end of the year, 70 questions and answers had been posted on the site.



Clockwise from top: BTA General Counsel Bob Goldberg (top left) moderated the "Facing the Future Together: Navigating 2021 & Beyond" panel discussion through a virtual Zoom event during the COVID-19 pandemic. The panelists were (clockwise from top right): Sharp's Mike Marusic, Ricoh's Jim Coriddi and Konica Minolta's Laura Blackmer; the 95th anniversary sand sculpture at the 2021 BTA National Conference held in Coronado, California; attendees at the 2021 BTA National Conference gather for a group photo; attendees brainstorm ideas during the keynote workshop at Capture the Magic 2022; and attendees enjoy dinner during the 2023 Fall Colors Retreat.



Clockwise from top left: Goldberg gives his farewell during the Bob Goldberg Appreciation Reception held June 18, 2024, in Huntington Beach, California; a breakout session at the March 2026 BTA IGNITE Orlando event; Pro Football Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith gives the keynote at the 2025 BTA National Conference; and attendees visit with Distribution Management representatives during exhibit time at Spring Break 2025.

As a result of the pandemic, in 2020, the association launched the BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups, providing dealers the opportunity to discuss the challenges of the pandemic in live calls with fellow dealers. Today, there are seven such groups that meet via Zoom on a regular basis. Initially, the calls focused on pandemic-related matters; the topic has long since been replaced by discussions on a wide range of issues dealers face on a daily basis, with dealer participants helping one another. By July 2026, there were 186 BTA members participating in the discussion groups, with total attendance since May of 2020 of 5,057.

By 2022, BTA had resumed hosting four educational and networking events. Among them was the June 17-19 Capture the Magic event, hosted by BTA West in Huntington Beach, California. At the event, the association celebrated the distinguished service of the retiring Bob Goldberg, who had served as general counsel for the association since 1977. During the “Bob Goldberg Appreciation Reception,” Goldberg was named the second inductee into the BTA Hall of Fame. (See Goldberg’s photo on page 30.)

Ultimately, the decision was made to host two national BTA events, one in the East and one in the West. The decision was reflected in the launch of the IGNITE name for the association’s events in 2025. The most recent such event was BTA IGNITE Orlando/Fuel Your Potential, held March 20-21, 2026, in Orlando, Florida. Next will be BTA IGNITE Kansas City/Celebrating 100 Years, to be held Sept. 1-3, 2026, in Kansas City. The event will include a return to the site of BTA’s 90th anniversary event — Union Station Kansas City — to celebrate its first century at “BTA at 100: A Celebration.”

On July 1, 2026, Mike Boyle became the 91st national president of the association. The July issue of Office Technology featured a Q&A with Boyle. In it, he was asked: “You are entering your BTA presidency during the association’s 100th year. Have you considered the significance of that?” His reply: “Yes, I’ve thought about it quite a bit. The celebration we are planning for Sept. 2 in Kansas City, Missouri, is our way of paying respect to all the people who came before us, serving our association and the dealer community, helping to make us what we are today. Their accomplishments and efforts have ensured the association would last not just a couple of years, but 100 years. That is the mantle that has been passed to me as the president during our 100th year. I want to make sure that BTA is in good — if not better — shape when I leave the presidency as we start our second 100 years.” ■

Brent Hoskins, executive director of the Business Technology Association, is editor of Office Technology magazine. He can be reached at (816) 303-4040 or brent@bta.org.



“I joined the National Office Machine Dealers Association (NOMDA), now known as the Business Technology Association (BTA), in 1972. In the 1960s to 1970s time frame, each area in the United States had a local affiliate to NOMDA. I belonged to the Great Plains Office Machine Dealers Association. There were more than 50 local chapters of NOMDA at the time.

“I met Bob Goldberg shortly after he joined NOMDA as general counsel. Bob served the association and its members since 1977. When he joined the association, I was a member of the NOMDA Board of Regents. The board of regents was the governing body of NOMDA at the time, and I worked closely with Bob.

“I was elected president of NOMDA in 1983 and worked every day with Bob. His advice and counsel to dealers and manufacturers always assured fair, ethical and equitable treatment to all. At this time, there were more than 6,000 member dealerships in the U.S., and hundreds of manufacturers and distributors. Bob’s legal and business guidance helped anyone who picked up the phone. If you called Bob, he would always respond personally. To this day, he always returns your phone calls or emails.

“I recall Bob advising dealers on antitrust and supplier issues. He helped address foreign product dumping issues, authored the Model Dealer Agreement and established the association’s Legal Hotline. Bob also created and became a member of the NOMDA Political Action Committee. If there was an issue affecting our industry, Bob was in the middle of it.

“In the early 1980s, NOMDA drafted legislation that was introduced into the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to eliminate unfair dealer agreements. This legislative effort eventually led to a normalization of dealings between the dealer and the manufacturer/distributor. Bob led this legislative charge, creating a fair and equitable relationship for all. The industry flourished as a result.

“Bob guided dealer/manufacturer relationships toward collaboration. He advised mergers, contracts and compliance. Bob is a recognized leader and mentor in our industry. BTA established a scholarship in his honor and he earned the BTA Legacy Award in 2015.

“In the last 10 years, Bob has advised on IT/managed services, AI and other emerging technologies. He retired as BTA general counsel in 2024, but is still very involved in our industry. Bob played a central role in shaping the modern independent dealer channel through legal advocacy, industry standards and mentorship.

“I have a 50-year relationship with Bob, which is my fondest memory of BTA.”

— John Kuchta, Nebraska Iowa branch manager
All Copy Products, Lincoln, Nebraska