



Dealer Community United for 100 Years

In preparing the cover story for this issue of Office Technology magazine, I took some time to more closely explore the contents of the file cabinets that sit just outside my office here at the Business Technology Association's (BTA's) headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri. I know they contain past issues of our monthly magazine and boxes of old photos. What I didn't know was the extent to which they are the home of the association's 100-year history.



What do I mean? When you take the time to flip through the pages of past issues of the magazines and read the articles, the history and stories of the prior generations of office technology dealers come alive, so to speak. It becomes clear that while we are the stewards of this industry and the association now, there were thousands of people who came before us with the same passion for this industry and love for this association. It provides a welcome sense of being a part of something that is far bigger than what we see today or have seen during our careers.

BTA was founded as the National Association of Typewriter Dealers in 1926. Of course, the technology of the day was the typewriter, taking care of document creation and information preservation. It was the springboard for connecting people across the business world. Sound a bit familiar? Isn't that a part of what technology handles today, but on a larger scale and far more quickly? Doesn't this reveal that the technology of the day is transitory when you think about the 100-year time frame? Yet, history has proven that it is the purpose of technology in the workplace that has endured through the years — creating documents, disseminating information, connecting people, etc.

So, while we can count on the purpose of technology in the workplace remaining consistent, we do not know what technology is in store for us in the future. What we do know is that independent office technology dealers are eager and prepared for whatever is next. One hundred years have proven that. It is clear to me that the entrepreneurial spirit inherent to the dealer channel is the glue that holds everything together. More specifically, it is not the technology or even the purpose of technology, it's the people. I see their faces in the pages of a century of BTA history. All of them represented the dream of the association's founders. They ensured the association that united them has persevered.

I have seen those same faces during my nearly 40 years with the association, serving as a member of the staff for 38 national BTA presidents, working with both national and district board members. I have interviewed hundreds of dealers and vendors for the articles I've written for this magazine. I have joined dealers and vendors for learning, networking and fellowship at countless industry events. I am grateful for the opportunity to have met so many wonderful people and witness what can be accomplished by the drive of that entrepreneurial spirit.

I encourage you to read the cover story in this issue. I could only share very few highlights, given the space available, but in looking at the association through the decades, it will take you to a time that predates us all, while also instilling a sense of connection that spans 100 years. Look at the photos as the BTA family album. Think about how we are all a part of an industry and association with incredible legacies. Think about the next 100 years. Collectively, it all will bring a smile to your face. ■

— Brent Hoskins

Executive Director/BTA Editor/Office Technology

Brent Hoskins
brent@bta.org
(816) 303-4040

Associate Editor

Elizabeth Marvel
elizabeth@bta.org
(816) 303-4060

Contributing Writers

Kristal Cook, RockRoot & ETHERFAX
<https://rockroot.biz> & www.etherfax.net

Rachel Dean, Keypoint Intelligence
www.keypointintelligence.com

Greg Goldberg, BTA General Counsel
Business Technology Association

Troy Harrison, Troy Harrison & Associates
www.troyharrison.com

Brian Suerth, Technology Assurance Group (TAG)
www.tagnational.com



Business Technology Association

12411 Wornall Road
Kansas City, MO 64145
(816) 941-3100
www.bta.org

Member Services: (800) 505-2821
BTA Legal Hotline: (847) 922-0945

Valerie Briseno
Marketing Director
valerie@bta.org

Brian Smith
Membership Sales Representative
brian@bta.org

Naomi Garza
Administrative Assistant
naomi@bta.org

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FLASHBACK



The association's magazine cover 76 years ago this month — the NOMDA Spokesman, August 1950.