

# Meet Debra Dennis

## BTA's 2025-26 national president assumes office

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

On July 1, Debra Dennis became the 90th national president of the Business Technology Association (BTA). Now approaching the end of her 39th year in the office technology industry, she serves as vice president of support services at CopyPro Inc., based in Greenville, North Carolina.

CopyPro, covering eastern North Carolina, is a technology partner representing Konica Minolta, Kyocera, Ricoh, DocuWare and PaperCut. Dennis has gained extensive experience in all aspects of the office technology industry through her various positions at CopyPro since joining the company.

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

### **OT: How did you get started in the office technology industry? Walk us through your roles/experience in the industry.**

**Dennis:** I began my journey here in 1986 as a customer service rep. At the time, I was working at my dad's restaurant; the owners of CopyPro are from the same town where the restaurant was located. I was going to cosmetology school at night and working for my dad during the day. Right before my 21st birthday I was offered a position to work at CopyPro in accounts receivable. I said, "No, I'm not interested. I'm going to open a chain of hair salons." I had some grandiose plans.

About a month later, I did a really bad haircut on someone, picked up the phone and called CopyPro. The accounts receivable position had been filled, but they had an open position in customer service. I have always been glad it was customer service, because I would not have done well in accounts receivable.

So, I started my career in customer service, answering



the phone as a dispatcher, working with the customers and the technicians. In my early years at CopyPro, the dealership purchased another company. As a result, I assumed management of dispatch and customer service. Later I assumed responsibility for managing our delivery service and, when things became connected, the new IT department reported to me. Eventually, I was the general operations manager, reporting to the COO. Today, I am vice president of support services.

### **OT: What is it that you enjoy most about this industry?**

**Dennis:** It's the people — 100% the people. I love all the people I've worked with here at CopyPro. I have been very blessed, working with a great group of people. Today, nobody I work with was here when I started because I was the youngest of the group. They have all retired.

Our industry is full of people who have "toner in their blood." They absolutely love this industry. They love helping people. When people ask me, "What kind of hobbies do you have?" where others may say something like, "I like riding horses" or "I like riding motorcycles," I say that what I really like is working in this industry.

### **OT: What led you to first step forward as a BTA volunteer?**

**Dennis:** It was back when I was managing the customer service team and the delivery team. I always knew about BTA, but I really wasn't involved. At the time, I received a letter in the mail addressed to me from the BTA Southeast board. The letter said they were looking for volunteers. I don't know who sent that letter or why the letter was mailed to me, but I will be forever grateful for it because I went from just knowing about BTA to benefiting from the many networking opportunities the association provides, helping me learn much more about our industry and helping me in my

career. I also began taking advantage of the services the association offers. Prior to volunteering, I did read BTA's magazine, but I had never attended a BTA meeting because our owners were attending; I needed to stay here and work. Today, I can pretty much send anybody I want to a BTA event.

### **OT: How has serving in BTA volunteer leadership positions benefited you?**

**Dennis:** Going back to the people part of it, once I joined the BTA Southeast board I immediately had a great group of mentors. I was sitting at the table with a lot of dealership principals — people who certainly had more industry knowledge than I did. When I had a question, I could pick up the phone and call any of them for guidance. They were open to helping me with whatever I needed to know, even if they were in competing markets. So, as a volunteer, early on I had the opportunity to learn what this industry is about at a different level, not just at the CopyPro level. Beyond the mentorships, I have made many good friends along the way.

### **OT: What is your message to those dealers**

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### **who, for whatever reason, are not currently members of BTA?**

**Dennis:** When you look at the fact that BTA is almost 100 years strong, and the enduring value that BTA can bring to any dealership and any person from an educational standpoint, a networking standpoint, peer collaboration, etc., I would just ask those dealers: "What are you waiting for?" In terms of legal advice, education, training, etc., BTA has

benefited countless dealers through the decades and continues to be beneficial to many of today's dealers.

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

**Dennis:** We have a good plan for moving BTA forward in the future with dynamic and informative events. I'm really excited about the way we're doing events now. I think that needs to continue. Of course, we depend on volunteers to plan these events and make sure BTA provides relevant material to help our dealer members grow their businesses. With that in mind, I will focus, in part, on recruiting volunteers.

## **BTA 2025-26 President-Elect Mike Boyle**



Mike Boyle, BTA's 2025-26 president-elect, is president of BASE Technologies, Bethel, Connecticut, which has been a BTA member for 31 years. When the company was founded in 1992, it focused on serving telecommunication companies. Today, it offers customers total document solutions (including copier/MFPs, printers and supplies) and is a provider of document management and managed print solutions, network services and unified communications.

"The industry has been very good to me, my family, the people who work in my company and their families," Boyle says of the reason why he is on his second stint as a BTA volunteer. "I'm spending time to volunteer because I'm trying to pay it forward. I encourage people to do the same thing, because the mission of BTA is important: to keep the industry informed, for dealers to learn from each other and for them to become better at their businesses. In doing so, it's good for our businesses, it's good for our families and it's good for our industry."

As president-elect, Boyle plans to support 2025-26 BTA President Debra Dennis with a continuation of changes the association has made over the last year under 2024-25 BTA President Adam Gregory. "I think Debra is very much in tune with where Adam has been, and I see a lot of initiatives being continued," he says of plans for the coming year. "Adam, Debra and I got together and talked about the continuity of certain initiatives at the 2025 BTA National Conference so we don't have radical, abrupt changes. I'm

planning to give it my all and provide the best input I can on direction and strategies."

With the goal of continuing Gregory's future-forward agenda, what does Boyle see in the near future for BTA? "I am hoping that BTA continues to be the reliable, go-to independent association that is known for reliable information, truth, education and support for all of the dealers, manufacturers and distributors that are members because we have to maintain a gold standard," he says. "As far as I see it, BTA is the only association that crosses all the lines in our industry, and we are that gold standard — and have been — and we want to continue that and grow."

Boyle knows BTA will continue to be a "conduit of communication" to best serve its members. "As we go forward, we want to continue to be cutting-edge as far as content, support and giving useful information to all of our members," he says. "I think the goal is to try to anticipate what our members need to know, so as we learn things — be it from manufacturers, dealers, and even from industry supporters and followers — BTA can communicate those things to its members."

"I'm always thinking of the small dealerships that may not be in very populated areas," Boyle continues. "They may not be aware of some of the mainstream things that may be going on in the industry other than what they are being told by their manufacturers. Whereas we, as an independent association, can give them information that is not influenced by a manufacturer — something that is just very black and white, and truth that needs to be heard by all."

— Elizabeth Marvel

In addition, I will be focused on expanding the dealer membership of BTA. We need to reach out to both member and non-member dealers who have not attended a BTA event recently and make sure they attend our next event, set for March 20-21, 2026, in Orlando, Florida. That way, they can see the value of what they have been missing, while helping to increase our dealer membership. The result will be a stronger BTA and more successful events for both dealers and our vendor exhibitors.

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

**Dennis:** Dealers need to embrace technology and look to diversify their product offerings. That will give them a competitive advantage and help them increase their revenues. They need to stay informed and adapt. They also need to identify employees in their dealerships who want to grow with them and have them attend BTA events. They need to network with their fellow dealers, join a BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Group — doing whatever they can to get more involved with BTA. When you are networking

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with the people who attend BTA events and participate in our Dealers Helping Dealers calls, you can gather so much intelligence on how to grow your business and save money. Our company has gained from my participation in one of the Dealers Helping Dealers groups and going to BTA events, positively impacting our bottom line.

**OT: What do you see as the greatest challenge for dealers today?**

**Dennis:** The advancement of technology. Most businesses are transitioning from paper-based products to digital workflows. This shift requires dealers to adapt their business models and offerings to meet the changing needs of their customers. So, I think the biggest challenge for dealers is keeping up with evolving technology, providing value-added services and finding quality people who can actually help them implement those changes.

**OT: How do you think BTA can best play a role in helping dealers tackle the various challenges they face in the industry today?**

**Dennis:** Through the educational opportunities BTA offers;

## BTA 2025-26 Vice President Mike Hicks



BTA's 2025-26 vice president, Mike Hicks, is president and CEO of Electronic Business Machines Inc. (EBM), an employee-owned dealership based in Lexington, Kentucky. He has been with the company for 41 years. Hicks started in the board repair/design lab, moved into the service manager position, and then became president and CEO when employees bought the company and it became an ESOP in 2001. Prior to serving on the national BTA Board of Directors, Hicks served on the BTA Southeast Board of Directors and the BTA Southeast Advisory Board.

"Our previous owner stressed the importance of supporting BTA and showed us all the ways it helped him," Hicks says of how he became a BTA volunteer. "He got all the managers, including me, involved in the [now discontinued] local chapters and we have all stayed connected to BTA since becoming an ESOP in 2001."

EBM has received many benefits from its 48-year BTA membership. "From education to training to discount services, the benefits of BTA have been extremely helpful over the years," he says. "Since becoming an ESOP, we have used BTA Legal Services for employee manuals, our company doctrine and many legal questions along the way. The peer-to-peer networking has always been at the forefront of value for me, too."

His goals for the upcoming year involve supporting BTA's current direction. "I want to support the initiatives of Adam [Gregory;

2024-25 BTA President], Debra [Dennis; 2025-26 BTA President] and Mike [Boyle, 2025-26 BTA President-Elect] before deciding if any changes may be needed," he says. "The emphasis on two BTA events with more value (for example, going wider and deeper with educational offerings and having panels made [up of people from] various-sized dealerships), growing the Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups and finding new vendors whose products may be interesting to our dealer members have been topics of focus for the last few years, and I want to help perfect those programs."

As he looks to the future of BTA, Hicks is interested in growing membership by bringing in IT companies looking to expand their businesses. "I hope BTA can become a resource for IT companies that want to expand into print, similar to what TAG [Technology Assurance Group] has done for BTA dealers [looking to get into IT]," he says. "It would be great to share best practices and expand the Diversifying My Business webinars, etc. We want our long-term members to win first, but we also want to also grow BTA membership. This would also help expand the number of people our vendor members have access to."

Hicks offers some advice for his fellow BTA dealer members. "I have gained so much knowledge from peer-to-peer conversations," he says. "I would highly encourage any member to participate in BTA's Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups, attend a BTA event and network with their peers, or become a volunteer. All three of these have been invaluable to me."

— Elizabeth Marvel

not just the training and event sessions the association offers, but education by way of interacting with your dealer peers through BTA. Perhaps, for example, it is learning what other dealers are doing in larger markets that could assist you in your smaller market. BTA does a great job at helping dealers overcome the industry's challenges through education.

Consider AI for example. That is a big, fast-emerging technology that can assist our dealer community in so many ways. But there is a need for a better understanding of this technology. BTA is already educating dealers on AI through articles in its magazine and in sessions at its events. In the coming months, there is going to be more that BTA can do to help dealers — including those with smaller dealerships — understand how they can use AI. Already, I think BTA really has been at the forefront of AI education.

**OT: Looking out five to 10 years from now, what is your vision of how BTA will be best described at that point?**

**Dennis:** BTA will continue to be a dynamic community that fosters networking, learning and growth opportunities

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for those of us in the office technology sector. BTA's commitment to providing networking and educational resources will continue to position the association as a trusted partner and essential resource for individuals and business that look to thrive. My predecessor, Adam Gregory, would refer to the "future forward" focus of BTA. I think we need to always be looking ahead. So, while looking forward five or 10 years is "crystal-ball" thinking, we

need to continually position BTA to always be looking at what's coming down the road, so the association can help the dealer community be ready when it gets here. AI is a perfect example. When I look back, I think about the days when we were all first connecting digital copiers to networks, and I think about the resulting workflow management opportunities, document management, etc. In times like that, BTA was always right there beside us, giving us direction. BTA will continue to do that, helping us to move forward and thrive with new technologies. ■

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