2024 BTA National Conference
BTA Southeast hosts event April 5-6 in Orlando, Florida

by: Elizabeth Marvel, Office Technology Magazine

The 2024 BTA National Conference, hosted by BTA Southeast, was held April 5-6, at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa in Orlando, Florida.

The first keynote address, "What Makes the Great Ones Great," was presented by Don Yaeger, award-winning leadership speaker, executive coach and New York Times bestselling author. The second keynote, "Understanding Why & How Online Attackers Target You," was presented by Brett Johnson, 'The Original Internet Godfather' and former U.S. Cyber Crimes Most Wanted. The additional main stage sessions: "Welcome to the Future! AI Literacy for Professionals," with Tracy L.M. Norton, Louisiana State University Law, and "Thanks for the Memories," with BTA General Counsel Bob Goldberg. The breakout sessions were: "How to Present QBRs" and "ChatGPT Trained on CEO Juice Data," with Gary Lavin, CEO Juice; "Elevating Your 21st-Century Prospecting Strategy," with Kate Kingston, Kingston Training Group; and "Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence & Its Impact on Cybersecurity," with Jay Ryerse, ConnectWise.

The event sponsors: ACDI, AgentDealer, ARCOA, Boundless Design, Brother, ConnectWise, Cranel, Crexendo, Distribution Management, ECI, ecoprintQ, eGoldFax, Epson, First Citizens Bank, FP (breakfast sponsor), GreatAmerica, Hytec, IBPI, Image Star (breaks sponsor), Imaging Solutions Direct, Intermedia, Katun, Keypoint Intelligence, LEAF, MPS Monitor, MyQ, NA Trading, Polek & Polek, Printerpoint, Quench, Rev.io, Ricoh, RISO, Sharp (Yaeger keynote sponsor), Source Technologies, Static Control, TAG (lunch sponsor), TD SYNNEX, Toshiba, Wells Fargo, Xerox (reception sponsor) and Zultys (Johnson keynote sponsor).

BTA's next district-hosted event, Capture the Magic, will be held June 17-19 at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach in Huntington Beach, California. For more information, see the ad on pages two and three and visit www.bta.org/BTA California to register. ∎

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Clockwise from top: Yaeger presents the first keynote address; Johnson presents the second keynote; the 2024 BTA National Conference featured two keynote addresses, two additional main stage sessions, four breakout sessions, time to visit with peers and exhibiting sponsors, and a reception and dinner on the first evening; Norton presents her session; 2023-24 BTA Southeast President Mike Hicks serves as an event emcee; the event featured the products and services of 42 exhibiting sponsors; and Bob Goldberg presents his session.

Top: Dealers network with sponsors and their peers during a break between sessions. Bottom photos: The breakout sessions were presented by (left to right) Lavin, Kingston and Ryerse.

Clockwise from above left: (left to right) Christine and Rick Echols, Total Laser Care of NC Inc., Durham, North Carolina, visit with Shelby Clark of LEAF during a break between sessions; Jake Radic, GreenTrail Solutions Inc., Lemoyne, Pennsylvania, visits with Carrie Erwin of Image Star during a break; and 2023-24 BTA President Don Risser (right) presents the Past President's Award to 2023-24 BTA Immediate Past President David Polimeni.

Top left: Hicks, with the assistance of Debra Dennis, CopyPro Inc., Greenville, North Carolina, draws a name during the prize drawings at the end of the event. Bottom left: Craig Guy (left), Hagan Business Machines of Meadville Inc., Meadville, Pennsylvania, tests out a Sharp AQUOS BOARD during a break while Vince Jannelli of Sharp looks on.

AI Literacy for Dealers

One of the main stage sessions at the conference, "Welcome to the Future! AI Literacy for Professionals," took at look at a hot topic across all industries — artificial intelligence (AI). Tracy L.M. Norton, associate professor of professional practice at Louisiana State University Law, led the session, which looked at what generative AI is, how it can increase productivity, what it can (and cannot) do, best practices and lessons learned from using it.

She began by talking about the basics of AI. "Artificial intelligence, first and foremost, is a field of computer science dedicated to creating systems that are capable of performing tasks that are typically thought of as being human tasks," Norton said. "And the artificial intelligence is instructed through the use of algorithms... Algorithms are already a part of your life. The alphabet is an algorithm. It is a way of arranging and categorizing information ... It's a set of instructions that you follow."

She emphasized that generative AI allows you to write an algorithm through the use of large language models (LLMs), using your own language to write it. You don't have to use code — you write it in "plain English." One pitfall though, Norton said, is that generative AI gives answers that are meant to "sound like" the right answers, but may not be accurate.

"So, think of it [AI] like a psychopath," she said. "Now, it's not a malignant psychopath. It's not malicious. It has no sense of right or wrong. It has no sense of truth or falsity. It has no sense of emotion ... It's taken a lot of information from the internet and figured out, 'Oh, that's how you talk about things.' And, so, it sounds like it's having an experience, but it's not having anything."

Norton then explained that generative AI is different than general AI and is not something to be feared. "General AI is completely different from narrow or weak AI [e.g., generative AI like ChatGPT or Gemini]," she said. "General AI consists of machines that possess the ability to understand, to learn, to apply their intelligence. They can solve any problem with the same level of competence as a human ... Now this would be terrifying if it existed. This doesn't exist. This is science fiction.

"So for all the people who think, 'It's coming for my job,' first of all, it doesn't have any motivation," Norton continued. "It's not coming for anything. Second, it's not going to do your job if your job requires any level of humanity ... [Generative AI] makes up content that is statistically likely to sound like the right answer. Use it for things that need to sound good ... don't use it for anything that needs to be accurate or reliable unless you're already an expert in that and can assess whether the answer is accurate and reliable."

She made suggestions on use cases for AI in a dealership: brainstorming, revision, planning (e.g., marketing, technology integration plans, etc.) and content creation. When writing prompts, Norton advised users to tell the AI what perspective they want the answer to be authored from (e.g., a knowledgeable office technology salesperson), as well as what audience it should write for, what form the result should be in (e.g., a spreadsheet, a picture, a letter/email, etc.) and what the user wants to achieve.

Wrapping up her session, Norton stressed the importance of having an AI policy. "If you don't have an AI policy in your organization, you need one," she said. "My recommendation is that you either have one person or, preferably, you put together a committee of people who meet quarterly to review your AI policy and decide if it needs to be updated or revised based on your experience and changes in AI." ■

— Elizabeth Marvel