'BTA Makes It Easier'

Delivering value to its members for 100 years

Compiled by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology magazine

As the Business Technology Association (BTA) celebrates its 100th year, it is gathering testimonials that reflect on the people, businesses and experiences that have shaped BTA across the decades. Office Technology asked BTA members to share what the association has meant to them and their businesses — favorite memories, experiences when BTA made a difference for them, the value of membership, their perspective on BTA's role in the industry, words of congratulations, etc. Responses have been published in this feature throughout 2026. Below are additional responses received. If you would like to share your BTA story, email it to Brent Hoskins at brent@bta.org.

"Sometimes the things that are easiest to appreciate are the easiest to forget, and the impact BTA has had on so many of us is one of those things.

"The most basic thought that came to mind is this: We are not going through this journey alone. We have an association working every day to put as much information, insight and shared experience in front of us as possible — so that success becomes something we can reach for together rather than figure out in isolation.

"That is the difference. Whether it is a new technology, a shifting market, a difficult hire or a decision none of us have faced before, there is a network of people who have already been there and are willing to share what they learned. BTA turns individual trial and error into collective knowledge. Put simply: BTA makes it easier.

"Easier to learn. Easier to adapt. Easier to lead. And easier to remember that the challenges we face are shared ones — and that there is real value in facing them alongside people who genuinely want to see you succeed."

Jeffrey Cousins, CEO & founder
Kraft Business Systems, Caledonia, Michigan

"Bob Woletz became [NOMDA, now BTA] national president in 1967. Through his leadership, the association held an extremely successful membership drive and began to be successful, establishing the office in Elk Grove, Illinois, and hiring a new executive secretary. Bob served two terms, which established stability for the association.

"Jim Ayres served as president-elect in 1967-68 and president from 1969-71. Jim organized a series of weekend seminars in 1967 starting with SELL — how to hire, train and manage salespeople.

"Jim selected and trained a cadre of instructors composed of successful dealers to teach the seminars. They were held in multiple city hotels across the nation to make travel easier for the dealers attending.

"The sessions started at noon on Friday, broke for group supper at 5 p.m., and then continued from 7 to 9 p.m. Saturdays were 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m., and Sundays were 9 a.m. to noon. The subjects were divided into 30-minute segments with a rotation of three instructors for each session.

"Most dealers were suffering with unprofitable service departments; in fact, service departments were commonly referred to as 'necessary evils.' Therefore, the next seminar developed was FIX — how to run a profitable service department. This seminar was an overnight success.

"These successful seminars put stress on the number of volunteer instructors, so it was requested they submit names of dealers attending the seminars they thought would be good instructors. Then each year those nominees were invited to a weekend seminar titled 'Train the Trainers.' Thereby, a cadre of instructors was developed.

"Dealers were suffering from the lack of business training; many did not know how to read a financial report and develop an action plan to increase profits. Jim felt the next subject should be an administrative seminar. So, STEER was developed.

"Jim thought the motto for the association should be: 'Do for the Dealer What He Can Not Do for Himself.'

"Other seminars were developed over the years, but these three were the most popular.

"A side note on Jim Ayres: He always traveled with two suitcases, one for his clothing and the other packed with books. He would then read until late in the night before falling asleep.

"Bob Woletz and Jim Ayres were two great stalwarts of our association."

Michael McWilliams, 1971-72 BTA President
Little Rock, Arkansas ■

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