Gateway to Success
BTA Mid-America hosts district event in St. Louis

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

With the goal of providing dealers the opportunity to learn from experts, gather new ideas and strategies, and network with fellow dealers, on May 3-4, BTA Mid-America hosted Gateway to Success at the Four Seasons Hotel in St. Louis, Mo. The event drew nearly 70 registrants.

Comments shared by attendees were favorable. A sampling from event evaluations: “All of the presentations had ‘meat,’ not fluff, and all had takeaways that I can use tomorrow,” and “This was a good meeting. I learned where to go to get what I need.”

“It has been many years since BTA Mid-America has hosted such an event,” said BTA Mid-America President Ron Hulett. “So, we were particularly excited to bring office technology dealers together in our nation’s Heartland. Just as the BTA East and BTA Southeast districts have done with their events, we plan to make this an annual event.”


The event also featured 24 exhibiting sponsors: Color Imaging, Crawford Thomas, Densi, Digitek, DocuWare, ECi, EDA, Epson, ESP, FMAudit, Hytec Dealer Services, Great-America Leasing, Image Star, InkCycle, Kyocera, LEAF, MSE, SalesChain, Solgenia, Square 9, Strategy Development, Supplies Network, Toshiba and West Point Products.

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Above: Georgann Gelsi-Piccirillo, a regional manager for exhibiting sponsor ESP (Electronic Systems Protection Inc.), explains the value of her company’s products to attendees during one of the dedicated exhibit breaks held at Gateway to Success; Strategy Development’s Mike Woodard presents “Service Productivity, Efficiency & Effectiveness.”

Clockwise from top: BTA Mid-America President Ron Hulett draws a winning entry from those gathered by Cheryl Paxson of West Point Products, one of various vendor-sponsored prize drawings; BTA General Counsel Bob Goldberg; attendees enjoy the private suite at the St. Louis Cardinals’ Busch Stadium at the conclusion of the Gateway to Success event; Kate Kingston, Kingston Training Group.

Forces of Change

“I think there are some forces of change that are going on in our industry,” said Ed McLaughlin, president of Sharp Imaging and Information Company of America in his opening comments as the Gateway to Success keynote speaker. “I think it is important to understand the things that are going to develop in the world around us that will affect our business and affect it very significantly.”

What are these forces of change? “The most important current changes are mobility, the green movement and something that not everybody in this room has heard about — IFRS,” explained McLaughlin, referencing the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). “Candidly speaking, from a non-technological standpoint, this may be the single most significant thing that is going to happen in the next four to five years.”

The IFRS are a set of accounting standards developed by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), which is becoming the global standard for the preparation of public company financial statements. Of interest to dealers, said McLaughlin, are proposed and pending changes that relate to equipment leasing. While “there are a lot of unanswered questions,” he said there are some proposed leasing-related standards to be imposed by the IASB that “I believe are not going to be changed that are going to affect you.”

Today, explained McLaughlin, there are “pretty straightforward” operating leases and capital leases. In the future, as proposed, all leases (with a few exceptions, such as short-term leases) will be accounted for on the balance sheet, he said. “That’s going to be in effect in 2015,” he told dealers. “You can take that one to the bank.”

The pending accounting changes — making leases more transparent — are the consequence of the fall of Enron Corp., said McLaughlin. “That’s when these things started,” he explained. “You will remember the [news reports] about all of the off-balance-sheet financing that was hiding the debt. So, as typical, the government likes to overreact. This is a big overreaction, but it’s here to stay.”

As noted, McLaughlin pointed to mobility and the green movement as two other important key forces of change. “The mobility that is in tablets, smartphones and all of the other devices is affecting pages and access to information,” he said. “It is dramatically changing the process by which people conduct business and transfer information in their offices. It is also altering user expectations.”

Today, he said, personalization at the MFP control panel is now expected. “I want that screen to show my application and the things that I do,” he explained. “That is no longer going to be an option. That’s required, and it’s going to be required more and more. The more manufacturers can satisfy that requirement, the more it is going to be demanded.”

Like personalization, increasingly end users are going to seek dealerships that adhere to green strategies and capabilities, said McLaughlin. “It is going to start becoming a part of the marketing and satisfaction requirements more frequently,” he said. “If your manufacturer doesn’t have a recycling program, develop one yourself. If your manufacturer does have one, label it for yourself, and advertise and promote it. It will enhance your relationships with your accounts.”

—Brent Hoskins