

# Q&A: Toshiba

## LeBlanc shares successes & looks to the future

Compiled by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

**H**ow are the industry manufacturers assisting dealers in the current environment? What advice do they have for dealers? What changes in the workplace do they expect? In August, Office Technology magazine launched a series of interviews to ask these and other related questions of manufacturer executives who oversee the dealer channel for their respective companies. This month: Ted LeBlanc, vice president of BTA and international sales at Toshiba America Business Solutions Inc.

**OT: In what ways is Toshiba providing additional support and guidance to its authorized dealers during these challenging times?**

**LeBlanc:** We have been doing a number of dealer and end-user webinars focused on the various challenges they are facing with remote workforces. Let's face it, nobody had a blueprint for this. We've had more than 3,300 dealer and end-user attendees. Our webinars have had such titles as "Enabling Success for Remote Workforces," "Remote Office Productivity for End Users" and "Workflow Automation for End Users."

We have also done the best we can to provide information regarding COVID-19 and the strategies that should be looked at, because it's still going to be a tough road ahead. From that standpoint, we have hired people from the outside. For example, we had Kate Kingston present a webinar targeted to dealership salespeople addressing how to manage daily activities, communicate with end users, the things to avoid, etc. We also had Jim Kahrs present a webinar on the basics of the CARES Act and how to file for Paycheck Protection Program funding.

In addition, we've created recurring online sessions, such as "Tools and Best Practices for Virtual Selling." We are averaging roughly 213 live attendees every time we run it. We



also have "The Basics of How to Prospect in the Era of Social Distancing," with an average of more than 180 attendees every time it runs. The one that I particularly love is "Securing Your Customer's Print Environment With Toshiba's Security Solutions." I honestly think dealers are missing the boat if they're not "pressing the security button." We're averaging about 170 attendees for this session.

Finally, we have many people taking advantage of our online Interactive Training Manuals or ITMs. For both end users and sales reps, they are available 24/7. They provide simulated, hands-on exercises for simple functionality, like copying, printing, scanning and e-filing. Plus, we have utilized YouTube to post a number of how-to videos on our MFP features. Each video serves as a vehicle for a rep to share with a customer in lieu of an in-person demo.

**OT: If you owned an office technology dealership, what would you be doing currently to optimize your level of business?**

**LeBlanc:** I would be focusing on managed IT services, if I already had them in place. Customers need help with VPN networks, printing, training on equipment with the remote sales force and setting up patches to get into their systems for employees who are now working remotely. Those dealers I know who have managed IT in place, frankly speaking, are "killing it."

Otherwise, I'd work on the things we can do to enable the remote worker, such as network and device security. Most workers did not have access to their corporate networks from home. Now they have access, but we need to make sure that we have network and device security. Hacking goes on every day at home or at work. There are plenty of feature-rich benefits with Toshiba's equipment that address security. Security gives sales reps something to talk about to new clients.

I would also make sure that reps are using voice-to-voice communication. Let's face it, before the pandemic, things had pretty much gone to texts and email. Reps should call customers, see how they're doing, check on their families — do a "welfare check," so to speak. What's going on inside their businesses on a corporate level? What activities will they be resuming? It's remaining top of mind. Those customers are going to remember who called them, as opposed to those who emailed them or texted them constantly.

**OT: What key changes in the workplace do you expect long term, if not indefinitely, as it relates to the use of imaging devices?**

**LeBlanc:** Fortunately — or unfortunately — corporations have stumbled upon this new horizon relative to staffing. If you don't have to have brick and mortar and the expense of that, it gives you money to hire people. So, I do believe that staffing, as it relates to remote workers, is going to go up. I honestly think that people will say, "OK, we don't need these buildings or that building and we will save X, but we really need analytics. We really need process change. We need someone to manage this or that." So, they will take that money and spend it on hiring more staff members who are working remotely.

What's that going to mean? Probably a nice boon to A4. With A4, you have pretty good functionality and a small footprint. So, no longer will the corporation be asking remote workers: "Don't you have an old HP or an OfficeJet? Can't you print that stuff out?" Many workers respond: "I print three things out for my kids each week. My printer can't stand this abuse." So, the remedy to that is to ship those remote workers an A4 device, which, by the way, will allow them to access Windows, scan, email and not have to run to Staples or Office Depot for supplies, because, with Toshiba, there will be a fulfilment program in place that automatically ships toner.

As I stated, another opportunity with these remote workers is going to be network security. They are going to need to print from the A4 and they don't want the kids playing around with the device. You're going to have to limit some of the access to these. The remote worker now has, at home, a device that is owned, managed and on the corporate network.

Even with a rise in mobile workers, I'm not saying that the office environment is going away. Once people are back in the office, there will be a plethora of printing again, even though those workers have been printing at home on lower-

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speed devices. Back in the office, it will be: "Oh, I can go over and print that 50-page document in just one minute on that device outside my office." Looking at the pre-COVID environment, we'll be headed back that way. However, I think the recovery is going to be a little longer than any of us want it to be.

**OT: What new Toshiba product — recently or soon to be released — are you most excited about at this time?**

**LeBlanc:** What we're most excited about is our new Toshiba-made A4, the e-STUDIO™330AC/400AC series, which is now available. We will now have the same control panel on all of the models that we're offering, A3 and A4. That's the one dilemma that anybody has in the OEM environment; you get a lot of the same features and functionalities when you have it built by somebody else, but you often lack the complete interfaces. There is always a modification or two to the control panels, the color schemes, etc. It is something that dealers have been begging us for: "When are you going to get your own A4?"

Well, the time has arrived — and what great timing for us, in the sense that we're not looking to replace A3 devices with this new A4 as much as we're looking at new opportunities. Where are those new opportunities? Remote employees. We can drop them right in. We add the pricing right to their current agreements and away we go; fulfilment is still Toshiba. Service is still provided by the Toshiba dealership. I mean, honestly, right now you go in there and you're trying to sell them a low-speed A3 device. It's a footprint issue. Who the heck has got enough room for one of those? It's not that big in the first place, but it's big enough that it's a problem. A4 will address that in no uncertain terms — the same interfaces, same capabilities and the same platform as their core MFPs.

**OT: What can you tell us about the status of Toshiba's next national dealer meeting?**

**LeBlanc:** We were going to host a LEAD event in May, but, obviously, we had to postpone that meeting until May of 2021. Now, admittedly, the agenda and the highlights of the 2021 meeting will be markedly different than what we were planning on doing this past May, but we're committed to May 2021. We feel that is a safe date. We will be providing some updates in the latter part of this year. ■

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