

# ShowTime

## Countless exhibitors, educational opportunities abound at the 2008 ETA Annual Meeting and Expo

Brit Hume delivers the keynote address.



### KEY NOTES

- ▶▶ Attendance at the 2008 ETA Annual Meeting and Expo was the second largest in the event's history.
- ▶▶ This year's Compliance Day included new coverage of prepaid topics, along with traditional focus on compliance issues.
- ▶▶ In recent years, the ETA Expo has grown dramatically. This year, more than 183 exhibiting companies mingled with booth visitors, hosted information sessions and cocktail hours, and launched company announcements.

The best and brightest were out in force at the 2008 ETA Annual Meeting and Expo in Las Vegas. Nearly 3,000 payments professionals packed the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino April 15-17 for the three days of education, networking, and product demonstrations.

This year's event attendance was the second largest ever—something that was certainly noticed.

"This year's outstanding attendance demonstrates the continued and vibrant growth of ETA as well as the entire payments industry," says Carla Balakgie, executive director of ETA.

Aside from the huge numbers, this year's conference offered many exciting educational opportunities with industry experts. In addition to more than half a dozen ETA University courses, participants had the chance to go to sessions on targeting the unbanked, understanding PCI security and regulations, and understanding the new wave health-care accounts just to name a few. They also could attend new product demonstrations and industry news announcements on the Expo floor.

"We launched a new product at the show and found that it was well received," said Paul Ruppel, director of marketing for Digital Check Corp. "This was our second time at the show. There is a lot for us to learn about this market, and we believe that this is the right place to understand the merchant/ISO market."

### Popular Picks

Perhaps the educational session that attracted the most attention was Thursday's Technology Super Session hosted by the ETA Technology Committee.

In an area just off the main Expo floor, representatives from IP Commerce, 4Access, VivoTech, Verifone, Ingenico, Skipjack, Way Systems, Hypercom, and USA

ePay displayed their cutting-edge technology through skits and demonstrations to a standing-room only crowd. The vendors discussed how their products are transforming the checkout process and why ISOs should make them available to their customers. The new products included remote deposit capture and check processing for home offices, pay-at-the-table technology for restaurants, backseat touchscreen payment terminals in taxi cabs that offer access to local information, mobile payment systems for home repair contractors, and more.

Following the demos, attendees were able to ask vendors questions as well as see the new technology up-close.

This year's schedule also featured two all-new breakout learning sessions: The Sales Super Session and the C-Level Track. The Sales Super Session comprised five discussions on sales essentials, such as enhancing merchant relationships and building portfolio volume through mergers and acquisitions. Speakers at the three C-Level Track sessions included Global Payments'





Attendees enjoy networking with representatives from exhibiting companies.

COO James Kelley, Visa's Senior Vice President and Analyst Wayne Best, and First Data Mobile Solutions' President Barry McCarthy. In addition, political journalist Brit Hume, correspondent for the Fox News Channel Washington, managing editor and anchor of Special Report with Brit Hume, delivered the keynote address, which delved into the two hottest issues in country—the economy and the presidential election.

Compliance Day featured a new segment dedicated to the emerging legal and regulatory issues in the prepaid and gift card marketplace. Participants learned

about recent changes to card company operating regulations, release management, and technical issuances; due diligence and merchant risk assessment; ideas for using card-company branding in marketing efforts. They also had their burning security questions answered by representatives from the PCI Data Security Standards Council.

"I thought Compliance Day was well-attended and a great success," says Marc D'Annunzio, a partner with sponsor McKenna Long & Aldridge and a Compliance Day emcee. "With the ever-increasing scrutiny on data security and the continued occurrences of breaches of that security, the issues discussed will continue to be important to merchants, card associations, and acquirers alike in the coming years."

### Expo Hall Booms

Over the past several years, the ETA Expo has grown in both size and participants. This year, more than 183 exhibiting companies covered 350,000 square feet, an impressive presence that was felt by all who attended.

"This year was definitely much bigger and more interesting than previous years, and there seemed to be more international exhibitors and attendees," observes Bhavik Vasa, director of strategic marketing for ISTS Worldwide Inc and an exhibitor. He, like many other 2008 exhibitors, is pleased by the traffic his booth received.



A standing room only crowd awaits the start of the Tech Super Session.

Photographs by David Braun

## Breakout Highlights

ETA's Annual Meeting & Expo featured plenty of opportunities to learn about some of the payments industry's hottest issues and products, hone selling skills and get a strategic view of the trends shaping the future. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- In one of the five-part Sales Super Session presentations, "Prospect, Call and Close", TSYS Acquiring Solutions' Mary Winingham offered a high-level and entertaining look at the sales process, while CrossCheck's Bob Ficarra walked attendees through a step by step series of scenarios illustrating classic closing strategies. In other Sales Super Session breakouts, attendees got firsthand advice from peers about such things as using value-adds to close a sale and optimizing relationships with merchants.

- In a session titled ACH vs. Check 21, those in attendance got a detailed side-by-side review of both check processing systems from NACHA's Nancy Grant and MyEcheck.com's Ed Starrs, along with analysis from the payment industry's perspective from Bob Ficarra of CrossCheck and Thomas Carlton of Certegy Check Services.

- Can optimizing interchange for your merchant-customers give you a competitive edge? Consultant Kurt Strawhecker told his audience that ISOs who don't help their merchants get the lowest possible interchange risk losing those merchants, a notion backed by Darrel Anderson of TSYS Acquiring Solutions and John Mayleben of the Michigan Retailers Association, who pointed out most retailers have become extremely aware of the cost of acceptance and that puts pressure on acquirers to help merchants find ways reduce interchange.

"JetPay's booth was busier than ever this year," reports Trent Voigt, chairman. "It was a very successful show for us as we signed numerous ISOs."

Attendees also took notice of the Expo Hall's new layout. Breakout sessions were held behind the Expo floor, allowing participants to move freely between booths and classes. The Cyber Center and Lounge, which was situated just in front of the session rooms, offered weary participants a respite from the busy show where they could relax, chat with clients, and check in with the office.

"We were extremely pleased at how well the new layout worked," said Tom Goldsmith, ETA's communications director. "I think attendees and exhibitors appreciated the fact that it allowed attendees to spend more time in the Expo Hall, in the middle of all the action."

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## Socially Speaking

Of course, no Annual Meeting would be complete without an array of social events for attendees to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

This year's special events included a golf outing at the picturesque Paiute Golf Resort, several welcoming receptions, and happy hours in the Expo Hall. ISOs from around the world packed the Border Grill and patio for the invitation-only mixer where they enjoyed Mexican cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. But the biggest hit was the House of Blues Party on Wednesday night. Attendees rocked out to live music and entertainment while socializing with colleagues and enjoying southern-style cuisine.

Activities concluded this year's conference with an all-new "State of the Industry" panel discussion. Participants enjoyed lunch in the Expo Hall while a panel of industry experts answers their pre-submitted questions. The session was moderated by Hypercom's Heidi Goff and panelists included ETA President Jim Baumgartner, Nick Baxter, Joe Kaplan, Mike Petitti, and Vipul Shah.

## ETA Star Awards

The following individuals, companies, and groups were recognized at the ETA's annual President's Dinner, during the Annual Meeting & Expo.

Joe Kaplan, president and CEO of Innovative Merchant Solutions and former president of ETA, was named the organization's Distinguished Payments Professional for 2008. The award is given each year to an individual who has demonstrated significant leadership within the industry and is an acknowledged trend-setter, role model, and positive contributor to its efficacy and image.

Tom Wimsett, president and CEO of NPC was recognized as Member of the Year, an award given to an individual from a current ETA member company who embodies the true spirit of ETA and has demonstrated exemplary leadership skills while giving extraordinary time, effort and ideas that have resulted in significant and meaningful contributions to the future success of ETA.

Total Merchant Services received the Business Partner of the Year award. This honor goes to a current ETA member company that has demonstrated an overwhelming level of support for the association in the past year through activities such as sponsorship of ETA events, advertising in association publications, speaking at ETA events, serving on committees, and otherwise helping to further the association's goals and objectives.

ETA's Technology Committee won the Committee of the Year award, given to a current ETA Committee that has had the greatest impact on the association over the past year as evidenced by its tremendous effort, unparalleled team spirit, and collective accomplishments resulting in programs, products or services that provided increased value to ETA members and otherwise helped the association move toward its strategic goals.

Victoria Strayer of TSYS Acquiring Solutions took home the Committee Volunteer of the Year award. This is given to a current ETA Committee Volunteer who has exhibited an outstanding dedication of time and effort to his or her committee over the past year, demonstratively contributing to its overall success.

The Technology Innovation Award was given to 4Access Communications for Orion, an all-in-one solution for reading checks, credit cards, debit cards, loyalty cards and gift cards. **TT**



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