

[ FEATURE ]

What Happened in



# Vegas



# Annual ETA meeting draws more than 2,300 for business-fueling discussions and networking

The recession weighed heavy on the minds of electronic payments professionals gathered at the ETA Annual Meeting and Expo in Las Vegas April 21-23. The biggest question: How long will it last? Although several experts weighed in, Visa Advisory Services' Wayne Best perhaps said it best: "Recovery depends on the optimism of consumers and businesses."

Conversations among meeting participants indicated optimism about this business' future. Several ISOs and technology companies talked about expanded forays into international markets, about smaller, more strategic mergers and acquisitions, and about exciting new technologies expected to open new doors.

"The U.S. and global economic condition has been difficult for everyone, and Apriva has seen some of the impact," acknowledged said Les Sutton, chief security officer for Apriva in Scottsdale, Arizona. "Today, we see a heightened urgency among acquirers and merchants to better manage their costs, to find proven and cost-effective solutions that can be implemented crisply, and that will accommodate where they are attempting to take their businesses. Our success comes through helping our customers and partners to be successful, and we are optimistic that will continue."

To a large extent, success is all about determination and pursuing your dreams, particularly in a business like this one where the entrepreneurial spirit is prevalent. Keynote speaker Christopher Gardner inspired attendees with his story of overcoming tremendous hardship to achieve his dream of becoming a Wall Street stockbroker. Gardner inspired the Will Smith film *The Pursuit of Happiness* and hinted about a sequel.

## Expanding knowledge

When they weren't networking with peers and checking out the latest technologies on the trade show floor, attendees had their pick of 14 educational sessions, including

discussions on ACH, PCI compliance, the future of checks, the changing environment of ISO sponsorship, international acquiring opportunities, and more. Additionally, a day of continuing education courses provided critical entry-level and advanced learning opportunities for payments professionals.

Attendees also learned about the PCI Council's newest efforts to help merchants, processors, financial institutions, and other organizations protect cardholder data during Compliance Day events. As PCI SSC leader Bob Russo said, "Security requires vigilance all the time." Russo's presentation included a thorough explanation of the Council, its work, and a detailed discussion of current and coming changes for the industry.

Russo used the session as an opportunity

to gather feedback on the Council's new Prioritized Approach. This new tool will help merchants focus their PCI DSS implementation efforts in a way that expedites the security of cardholder data by helping businesses identify highest risk targets, creating a common language around PCI DSS implementation efforts and enabling merchants to demonstrate progress on compliance process to key stakeholders—banks, acquirers, QSAs, and others.

Compliance Day provided a critical opportunity to not only educate participants about the changing regulatory and legislative landscape, but also to highlight the latest security threats, as representatives from the four major card brands presented information on operating rules and fielded questions from the audience. At



ETA President Nick Baxter (right) and CEO Carla Balakgie present Paul Garcia, CEO, Global Payments, the Distinguished Payments Professional award.

## ETA Star Awards

Bestowed each year at ETA's Annual Meeting, the Star Awards honor and recognize those who have added value to the industry through hard work and dedication.

- **Business Partner of the Year:** Trustwave, Chicago
- **Committee of the Year:** Strategic Leadership and Networking Forum (SLNF) Program Planning Committee
- **Committee Volunteer of the Year:** Chris Lee, senior vice president, product

management, National Processing Company, Louisville, Kentucky

- **Distinguished Payments Professional:** Paul Garcia, CEO, Global Payments
- **ISO of the Year:** Merchant Warehouse, Boston
- **Member of the Year:** Kurt Strawhecker, managing director, The Strawhecker Group, Omaha, Nebraska
- **Technology Innovation Award:** Charge Anywhere, South Plainfield, New Jersey

the same time, Compliance Day served as an important jumping off point to engage ETA members in grassroots efforts to influence public policy. "Meeting people face to face is critical," said ETA's Mary Bennett. "Some electronic payments professionals are learning about political involvement for the first time." ETA is expanding its Web site to incorporate calls to action and details on legislation the organization is tracking.

Expect more e-mails in the coming months as ETA asks you to contact your members of Congress.

Although formalized educational opportunities were abundant, some of the most enlightening takeaways came from peer-to-peer conversations around lunch tables, on a bar stool at the House of Blues party, on the golf course, in the hallway, waiting in line at Starbucks, or on the patio at the ISO mixer.

## Showing what's hot

Out on the busy Expo floor, meeting attendees saw everything from technology demonstrations to new prepaid resources, to business funding strategies. Each year, the ETA Expo showcases the latest innovations in this business, with many businesses introducing new products during the event.

This year, more than 180 businesses covered thousands of square feet of space in the Expo hall.

"We recently launched a partner program specific to banks, payment processors, and ISOs, so we thought that the venue would be a great place to start our marketing initiatives. I am happy to say that the ETA conference was highly successful for SignMeUp.com," said Todd Bellino, co-founder and vice president of business development for the Austin, Texas, company.

Several companies also chose the Expo floor as the platform for announcing new products and services. Wireless solutions provider, Apriva, launched three new services, including AprivaNET, a comprehensive PCI DSS compliance service.

"ETA's Annual Meeting & Expo is the one time each year we are able to meet with our customers, partners and vendors from across the country, all in one place. This made the event the perfect venue for the launch of exciting new products like AprivaNET," said Bill Clark, general manager for Apriva's secure payments division.

Similarly, ExaDigm announced the launch of its SV100 integrated payment system, which enables devices or systems with a serial interface to process a full range of payment options and value-added services over the Internet.

"Having so many key decision makers in one place, at one time allowed us to not only announce the new product, but also provide immediate hands-on interaction with the system creating a significant impact among potential customers," said Scott Holt, senior vice president of sales and marketing.

"The ETA program—from formal classes, to educational sessions, to the foot traffic on the expo floor—is unsurpassed in our industry," said David Schwartz, senior director of marketing for Authorize.Net in Bellevue, Washington.

## Technology Super Session

Perhaps the educational highlight of the entire conference was the Technology Super Session held on the last day. Organized by the ETA Technology Committee, this year's was the second iteration of the session.

"[Last year's] was an on-the-fly sort of an event that we put together just to see if it would take wings and it did," said Tom Tesmer, chief technology officer, Pipeline Data Inc., and Technology Committee chair. This year's presentation included videos and interactive demonstrations, which highlighted security, consumer convenience, mobility, and niche opportunities for the acquiring industry.



Of the more than 100 vendors solicited to participate in the event, these six were chosen by the committee:

- **Dejavoo Systems**, which featured a wireless GPRS device that uses an SSL transaction to accept donations during charitable events. The product also allows for customers to be notified for future events via text message and to accept donations prior to the event.
- **Preferred Health Technologies**, which developed a system that doctor's offices can use to validate patients' insurance information and accept real-time partial or complete payments at the time of service. The system also can establish flexible, automated monthly payment plans for patients who cannot pay the total amount due at the time of service.
- **First Data**, which demonstrated a self-serve kiosk that can be used at coffee shops so consumers can avoid long lines during peak traffic times. The system records customer's preferences, keeps track of reward programs, and offers coupons and up-sale options at the point of sale.
- **MagTek/Magensa**, whose secure, encrypted card reader provides dynamic data that changes with each card swipe. The reader also provides card authentication and device/host authentication for advanced point-of-sale security.
- **VIVOtech**, which offers mobile NFC software that enables secure card data storage in mobile phones. The software also delivers mobile marketing content such as personalized coupons, offers, promotions that consumers can redeem by tapping their NFC mobile phones on contactless NFC readers.
- **First National Technology Solutions**, which demonstrated use of a reloadable prepaid card that children can use to pay for school lunches. Money can be added to the card by using a terminal operated by a school administrator, and the card features a photo ID of the child to ensure security.