GS The Green Sheet
The Financial Services Industry Source for Education, Inspiration and Actionable Advice

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CrossCheck Scores Major Coup with Signing of NPC

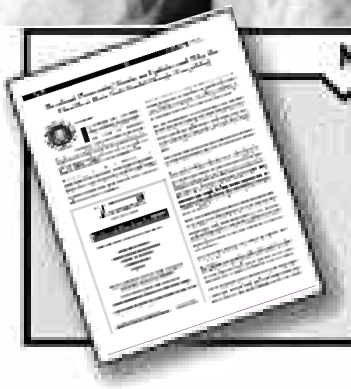
CrossCheck, Inc. is gearing up for substantial growth in 2003 with the signing of an agreement to be the check service provider for National Processing Co. (NPC), the second-largest merchant debit and credit card processor in the U.S. and a wholly owned subsidiary of National Processing, Inc. (NYSE: NAP). CrossCheck's check guarantee and check conversion services are part of the suite of offerings from NPC.

Under the terms of the agreement, NPC will offer CrossCheck's complete suite of check authorization services, including check guarantee and electronic check conversion via an imager, to NPC's regional merchants and prospects nationwide. CrossCheck was chosen by NPC to replace the check program formerly available from International Check Services (ICS). ICS was acquired by TeleCheck Services, Inc., a subsidiary of First Data Corp., a competitor of NPC, in April 2002.

"We are excited about this opportunity to be the check service provider to NPC," said J. David Siembieda, President and Chief Executive Officer of CrossCheck. "NPC has a tremendous amount of experience, knowledge and success in electronic payment processing. We look forward to partnering with them and adding our check services to their already robust regional merchant service offering."

Account implementation and customer service is being handled by CrossCheck, and additional support staff has been added to its Rohnert Park, Calif., headquarters. Agreements with

See COUP on Page 10



Notable Quote:

Attacking when the enemy is looking the other way has been an effective battlefield strategy for millennia. If First Data wins this lawsuit and is allowed to move forward unfettered, it could have the ability to drive all of us out of the acquiring business.

See Story on Page 22

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Opening the Door to Results

I wanted you to know that, as a result of your Company Profile on TurnKey Business Solutions ("Unlocking Payment Processing Solutions," The Green Sheet, Nov. 11, 2002, issue 02:11:01), I had six phone calls on the first business day after the article came out.

Tom Koziol
TurnKey Business Solutions

Understanding Interchange

I have asked four different people (who should know the answer) what is the breakdown on who gets the interchange (1.38% cps retail), and I have gotten four different answers. Is it split between the ISO and the banks or what?

Lee Robertson

Lee:
Interchange is composed of three components – cost of money, risk and a transaction-fee component.

The cost-of-money component and the risk component go to the issuing bank to hold it harmless for both extending the money before it can collect from the consumer and for the risk associated with the consumer not repaying the money. The transaction fee component goes to the card association for putting the transaction through its systems.

Merchant banks add an amount for providing access to the authorization and settlement infrastructures, plus their costs for their transaction processors and settlement processors, plus their profit margins, thus creating and setting their "buy" rate. ISOs then add an amount to that for their cost and profit structures, thus creating a second level "buy" rate for their salespeople and their independent contractors. (Note: These "buy" rates can vary even within the same organization, but the initial interchange rates are established by the card associations.)

The ISO salespeople then add their cost and profit structures, creating and setting the final discount rates for the merchant. Sometimes the ISO can set the discount rates, but the practice varies wildly within the market.

It's easier to frame interchange as the wholesale cost and discount as the retail cost, with the difference reflecting the costs applied by a huge set of middlemen (industry term, no sexism intended).

Remember that merchant banks, acquirers and third-party processors also have internal salespeople who get different "buy" rates than they provide to ISOs, plus ISOs can shave the "buy" rates to give merchants better rates, making up the difference in other fee structures, or pad the "buy" rates to take advantage of small unknowledgeable merchants, etc.

"Buy" rates also vary greatly based upon projected volume, stability and size of the merchant, negotiating ability and a plethora of different conditions and circumstances.

Good Selling!
The Green Sheet Staff

Got a Code?

I have an ISO and subscribe to The Green Street, and I thought you might know the answer to this question: What is the SIC code for an ISO in the credit card industry? Thanks.

Michael Dattoma

Michael:
We were unable to identify a specific SIC code associated with ISOs in the payment-processing industry. We did find 22 matches for "sales" and 8 listings for "credit card" on the Web site for the NAICS Association (North American Industry Classification System), www.naics.com

Good Selling!
The Green Sheet Staff

It's Been Quite a Year

As 2002 draws to an end, I wanted to take a few moments and share with you some of the highlights of the past year and our plans for 2003. Although I have played many roles in the industry since the 1970s, this was the first year in which this publishing company was my sole focus as an entrepeneur. Next year, we will celebrate our 20th anniversary as a publication.

We've grown from a one-sheet mimeograph in 1983 to a 72-page magazine. From an expense-line item on the AMCOR P/L to a profitable publishing company with $3 million in sales revenues projected for 2003. From a one-man show to a rapidly growing organization with a satellite office in Myersville, Md.

The Green Sheet grew out of my desire to communicate regularly with a national sales force of independent agents. Our database now contains approximately 20,000 records; however, only 70% are active at any given time. Because of the constant movement of personnel within the industry, we process address changes on 3% of the database monthly. Our total distribution numbers continue to increase; actual growth in the mail distribution is 3% per month.

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Online readership continues to increase at 13% per month. As of November 2002, we average 1 million hits (43,000 visits) monthly on the Web site. When combined with mail distribution of 7,400 copies, or 22,000 readers when pass-along readership is included, this brings our total monthly distribution to more than 65,000 readers.

It's been exciting and challenging to bring the right stuff to the right people in the right way. I'm grateful that we have been supported by the contributions from freelance writers, such as Lisa Dowling, Eric Thomson, Contributing Editor Patti Murphy, and our active Green Sheet Advisory Board. We've peppered our Advisory Board with e-mail questionnaires in order to develop a number of the articles you've read in The Green Sheet and GSQ publications this year.

The breadth and depth of this group has continued to develop. I'm pleased to announce six new members:

- **Marc Gardner**, President, North American Bancard
- **Javier Ledesma**, Director, Financial Market Support, VeriFone, Inc.
- **Michael McMackin**, AmericaOne Payment Systems
- **Anthony Ogden**, Bank Card Law
- **David Press**, President, Integrity Bankcard Consultants, Inc.
- **Charles Salyer**, President/CEO, GlobalTech Leasing

Marc Gardner is President of North American Bancard, a multifaceted payment solutions provider. As a registered MSP/ISO for more than a decade, he has the expertise needed to perform and excel for his customers. North American Bancard is dedicated to providing the latest technology as well as committing to the highest service levels.

Javier Ledesma is responsible for driving VeriFone's initiative to reconnect with ISOs and merchant sales representatives. The Financial Market Support organization that he leads supplements the efforts of VeriFone's strategic account representatives by providing field-level product training and sales support to processors, acquirers and ISOs. The group showcases new VeriFone products and educates ISOs on how to sell the products to gain a competitive edge in the market.

Javier has successfully held sales and management positions for more than 20 years and has a consistent track record with a blend of experience. He has held positions in a variety of industries, including pharmaceutical sales. He served as an officer in the United States Army. He holds a bachelor's degree in biology, chemistry and education from the University of Arizona, and a master of arts in management from Webster College in Oklahoma.

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Michael McMackin is the President and co-founder of AmericaOne Payment Systems, Inc. a privately held, customer service-focused credit card processing company located in Cupertino, Calif., in the heart of Silicon Valley. David has successfully held executive-level management positions for more than 20 years and has extensive experience in business, banking and the merchant services industry. David has worked with numerous top-tier financial institutions, merchant acquirers and bankcard technology companies in the credit card industry. His bankcard areas of expertise include capital procurement, marketing, product development, and risk management and fraud detection.

Anthony Ogden brings a legal perspective to our Advisory Board. Bank Card Law was first mentioned in The Green Sheet in 1997, and he since has written a number of articles for us. BCL is supervised and directed by Anthony, a duly licensed California attorney. He is a 1991 graduate of the prestigious Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., and has had a practice concentration in the area of business transactions since 1994.

David Press is the President and founder of Integrity Bankcard Consultants, Inc. David has more than 22 years' experience in the credit card business. He has worked with numerous financial institutions and has extensive experience working with local, state and federal law-enforcement agencies. David began his career at Barnett Bank and Southeast Bank in the early 1980s working with a combined Metro-Dade Police Department and the U.S. Secret Service counterfeit credit card task force in South Florida. Their teamwork resulted in more than 120 convictions.

In the 1990s he was a manager with Peach Tree Bancard, Harbridge Merchant Services and First Interstate Bank in the areas of underwriting, compliance, chargebacks, collections, security and investigations. He has attended numerous Visa and MasterCard training seminars. At IBC, his work has concentrated on the minimization of portfolio risk, bin transfers and advising startup ISOs in the development of vendor(s) and member-bank relationships, including proper registration with Visa and MasterCard.

Charles Salyer's professional experience includes more than 26 years in the equipment-leasing industry with a primary focus on developing and managing customer service-based finance organizations for manufacturers. Charles has been directly involved in the planning, creation and management of customer finance/leasing organizations for Digital Equipment Corp., Philip Morris and Steelcase, Inc.

Charles became involved in the credit card equipment leasing industry in 1997 when he was appointed COO of Global Finance & Leasing in Michigan. He took over management of Global as President in 1998, tripling sales revenues over the next two years. In 2001, he organized the sale of Global to CIT, where he became part of the management team as Vice President, Sales and Strategic Initiatives. In August 2001, he left to form GlobalTech Leasing, Inc., a privately held, customer service-focused credit card equipment leasing company based in Ventura County, Calif.

The Green Sheet Advisory Board now has more than 60 members. Each of them contributes as time allows, offering personal insight and experience. I look forward to sharing their wisdom with you as we work together to strengthen the payment-processing industry.

In 2003, you will continue to see a more robust Green Sheet, our in-depth GSQ reports and our continually expanding Web site. I would love to hear from you. Please write and let me know what you would like to see us cover in GS and GSQ. What are we doing well and what could be improved? What information do you need to create wealth as an ISO?

Good Selling!
Paul Green
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COUP from Page 1

several major industry partners, including NPC, have played a large part in the growth of the company in the last year.

The availability of a solid check conversion product was a key element in the agreement. CrossCheck provides a patent-pending check conversion solution with imaging that converts a customer's paper check into an electronic check at the point-of-sale and delivers funds directly to the merchant's account, improving cash flow.

Features unique to the CrossCheck conversion program include the acceptance of business checks and compatibility with a wide range of point-of-sale imagers and scanners.

Merchants are asking for conversion because they benefit from consolidated bank accounts, streamlined operations and reduced paper handling.

"With over 19 billion checks written annually at the point-of-sale, converting paper checks to electronic form represents a huge opportunity to reduce retailers' costs," said Mark D. Pyke, Chief Operating Officer for NPC. "We believe that CrossCheck's experience in check risk management combined with check imaging technology will help check conversion to become more widespread and allow us to deliver on the promise of reducing the costs of accepting checks for payment."

National Processing, Inc., through its wholly owned operating subsidiary National Processing Co. (NPC), is a leading provider of merchant credit card processing. National Processing is 85 percent owned by National City Corp. (NYSE: NCC), one of the nation's largest financial holding companies. NPC supports more than 645,000 merchant locations, representing nearly one out of every five MasterCard and VISA transactions processed nationally. NPC's card processing solutions offer superior levels of service and performance and assist merchants in lowering their total cost of card acceptance.

CrossCheck is the nation's largest privately held guarantee company. The number of merchant outlets serviced by CrossCheck has increased from 43,000 in 1998 to more than 73,000 in 2001. CrossCheck's services are marketed by ISOs, partners and through unique private-label programs.

Additional information regarding National Processing can be obtained at www.npc.net. For more information on CrossCheck, visit www.cross-check.com or phone 800-654-2365.

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Certified Merchant Services Granted Court Order

Certified Merchant Services (CMS) and its receiver, Mary Dees, have been granted protection by a federal court in an order CMS and its receiver sought after learning competitors were engaging in activities harmful to the company.

The court order, filed Nov. 25, 2002, prohibits persons in the merchant processing industry from seeking to acquire or use confidential or proprietary information of CMS; using the existence of the receivership as a reason for trying to solicit CMS merchants for business or solicit CMS employees or CMS sales agents for employment; making any false, misleading or disparaging statements against CMS in an attempt to harm CMS; and doing anything that interferes with the receivership.

Any violations of the court order would constitute contempt of court, and violators could be charged with injunctive relief, restitution, fines and incarceration, a summary of the court order states.

"Some really outrageous things were going on," said Dees, receiver for CMS and President and CEO of Creditranz.com. "For instance, our merchants called to let us know they were being contacted by people saying they were with the FTC and that they needed to take over CMS' accounts."

After the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a complaint in February 2002 alleging CMS participated in "unfair and deceptive practices related to the marketing of credit and debit card merchant accounts to small businesses nationwide" (The Green Sheet, "First Federal Trade Complaint against an ISO," Feb. 28, 2002, issue 02:02:02 and "CMS Appoints Permanent Receiver," May 27, 2002, issue 02:05:02), Judge Paul Brown in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Sherman Division appointed a receiver team for CMS led by Garrett Vogel, a certified public accountant.

A receiver is a court-appointed individual who manages, for the benefit of its owners and creditors, the assets and affairs of a business entangled in a legal dispute until a settlement is made by the court.

The CMS receivership team – which included Dees; Fred Gumbel, former Chairman, President and CEO of

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"The company has improved its customer service stats and streamlined the processing of applications. It's meeting very aggressive targets. They have a less than 1% abandonment rate. Their time to answer is excellent."

– Mary Dees , Receiver, Certified Merchant Services

Vital Processing Services; and Paul Scoggins, former U.S. Attorney – served for more than seven months and implemented a series of initiatives to improve and enhance both merchant and employee relationships, including reviewing the company's fee structures and policies, contractual agreements and operational procedures.

In September 2002, the court named Dees sole receiver for CMS. The remaining members of the team were granted release from duty at the request of CMS and the Federal Trade Commission in order to lower costs associated with a receivership program.

According to Dees, the receivership has been successful so far.

"The company has improved its customer service stats and streamlined the processing of applications," she said. "It's meeting very aggressive targets. They have a less than 1% abandonment rate. Their time to answer is excellent."

Dees said CMS and its receiver have taken the FTC case as an opportunity to analyze its business practices. The company and its management team instituted the position of Ethics and Compliance Director, held by Angela Papas.

Papas joined CMS in January 2002, with 20 years' experience in the merchant business with Paymentech, its predecessor First USA and several other financial institutions.

In the Ethics and Compliance Director role, Papas is responsible for periodic audits of all areas of CMS' business. Audits include sales practices and disclosure, rate confirmation and underwriting, contract documentation, customer service and sales call monitoring, analysis of customer service requests and resolutions, and employee ethics and compliance training.

Since there has been no resolution in the FTC case, the question of how long the receivership will continue is undetermined, Dees said. She predicted that the earliest a trial would take place is June 2003.

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There's Supersize Potential in Cashless Fast Food

The new year will see diners at fast food restaurants getting their burgers, buckets of chicken and french fries more quickly – and earning perks such as frequent flier miles or rewards points in the process. Following successful tests, several chains will offer patrons the option of paying for their meals with credit and debit cards.

McDonald's, the world's largest fast food chain, will implement its new payments system beginning in early 2003; Concord EFS will provide credit and debit card processing services for McDonald's-owned restaurants and franchisees. Jack in the Box will have a system in place at more than 840 locations by May 2003 and plans to have all of its 1,870 restaurants POS equipped by 2004. Burger King, Wendy's, KFC and Long John Silver's also will jump on the plastic bandwagon in 2003; customers at half of Subway's U.S. outlets already can use cards to pay for sandwiches.

Jack in the Box also recently announced that it has signed a merchant processing contract with NPC, which will provide authorization and settlement services for all Visa and MasterCard transactions at the restaurants.

The ultimate goal is double-edged: When the restaurants speed up the time required to take a customer's order, accept payment and serve the food, not only do customers benefit from shorter waits in line, but the chains are able to serve more people in a shorter amount of time. McDonald's strives to get customers in and out in 90 seconds.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the average fast-food consumer eats at those restaurants 16.4 times a month; for frequent eaters it's 27.5 times.

The fast-food industry is one of the last major markets to accept plastic for payment. The chains were afraid that the additional time it took to process credit and debit transactions would end up taking the "fast" out of the equation. But recent advances in payment-processing technology have made those transactions quicker and cheaper to process. Diners will be able to swipe cards at the counter or drive-through window with no signature required – and it will take less than five seconds.

One difference from a few years ago is that restaurants are now able to take advantage of fast connections to processing networks to complete

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plastic transactions. By contrast, cash payments can take eight to 10 seconds.

The fast-food chains began testing plastic payments systems several years ago as part of a general overhaul, including menu selections and upgrading food quality, to improve customers' experiences. They found that not only does accepting plastic make diners happy, they also spend more.

Those increases in purchase volumes offset fees the chains will pay to credit card companies to process the transactions. A recent study released by Visa USA shows customers spend an average of 20-30 % more with plastic than they do when they pay with cash. Subway says the average transaction in its card-enabled outlets has doubled to $9.

Considering consumers' significantly increasing desire to use both credit and debit cards rather than cash, this is a smart move for the fast-food chains. And combined with the marketing push by several card companies to offer miniature and kidney-shaped cards that dangle from key chains, contactless scanning cards and wands that wave beams, fumbling for change or not getting the correct change back might become funny stories you'll tell the grandkids.

Lunch Prompts Lawsuit

A Kennewick, Wash., man recently learned the opposite meaning of "value" meal. Stewart Taylor, who bought a cheeseburger, fries and a drink at Wendy's and paid with a $4.43 check, is now being sued by the restaurant's collection agency for $285.20. His crime: a bounced check.

Three weeks after the meal, Taylor said he received a letter from the Yakima County Credit Service asking him to pay the bounced check and a $35 processing fee within 15 days, Washington's Tri-City Herald reported. Taylor said he asked for an extension on the due date because he was short on money.

Then he received a copy of a lawsuit by the credit service, seeking $285.20 in fees for collection, handling, attorney fees and interest. Hoping to pay the $4.43 and put the matter behind him, Taylor tried talking to the Wendy's store manager and later the corporate headquarters but was told by both that he would have to deal with the collectors directly. He was told that once a check is deposited at the bank, it's out of Wendy's hands.

Taylor estimated he spends well over $285 dollars at Wendy's a year. "This is crazy for a cheeseburger," he said.

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2003 Conference Schedule

While you were busy selling, selling, selling this year, many of the industry's leading sources for education and information have been planning big events for 2003. Watch for details in The Green Sheet throughout the year.

Event	Date	Location	Web site
WesPay 2003 Workshop Series	Jan.- Nov.	Varies	www.wespay.org
National Retail Federation 92nd Annual Convention and Expo	Jan. 12-15	New York City	www.nrf.com
Global Electronic Payments Conference 2003	Jan. 21-22	Barcelona, Spain	www.nacha.org
Northeast Acquirers Association (NEAA) 2003 Winter Meeting	Feb. 5-6	Mt. Snow, VT	www.northeastacquirers.com
Smart Card Alliance Mid-Winter Meeting and Educational Institute	Feb. 11-13	Salt Lake City	www.smartcardalliance.org
Electronic Retailing Association Spring Conference 2003	Feb. 23-25	Key Biscayne, Florida	www.retailing.org
4th Annual ATMIA Conference: ATMs in the Americas	March 4-7	Miami	www.atmianortham.com
12th Annual National Check Services Conference & Expo	April 2-4	Las Vegas	www.collector.com
ETA 2003 Annual Meeting and Expo	April 8-10	Las Vegas	www.electran.org
Global Retail Technology Forum	April 8-10	Paris	www.retailsystems.com
NACHA Payments 2003	April 27-30	Orlando, Fla.	www.nacha.org
NACStech 2003	April 28-30	Dallas	www.nacsonline.com
Retail Systems 2003 Conference and Expo	June 9-12	Chicago	www.retailsystems.com
Northeast Acquirers Association (NEAA) 2003	June 10-12	Atlantic City, NJ	www.northeastacquirers.com
The Payments Institute West	June 22-26	San Diego	www.nacha.org
ACA International's 64th Annual Convention and Exposition	July 8-11	Las Vegas	www.collector.com
The Payments Institute East	July 27-31	Atlanta	www.nacha.org
Financial Women International 81st Annual Conference	Sept. 6-9	Honolulu	www.fwi.org
Electronic Retailing Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show 2003	Sept. 13-16	Las Vegas	www.retailing.org
ETA Mid Year Meeting and Expo 2003	TBA	TBA	www.electran.org
NACHA 2003 Electronic Check Conference	Sept. 17-18	New Orleans	www.nacha.org
NACS Show 2003	Oct. 11-14	Chicago	www.nacsonline.com
NACHA Accredited ACH Professional (AAP) Exam	Oct. 21	Varies	www.nacha.org
Payments Symposium 2003	Oct. 29-31	San Francisco	www.wespay.org
Smart Card Alliance Annual Meeting 2003	October (TBA)	TBA	www.smartcardalliance.org
CSI 30th Annual Computer Security Conference and Exhibition	Nov. 2-5	Washington, D.C.	www.gocsi.com
COMDEX Fall 2003 Exhibition	Nov. 17-20	Las Vegas	www.comdex.com
ATMIA ATM Futures and Industry Summit and Awards	November (TBA)	TBA	www.atmia.com
Southeast Acquirers Association (SEAA) 2003 Conference	TBA	TBA	

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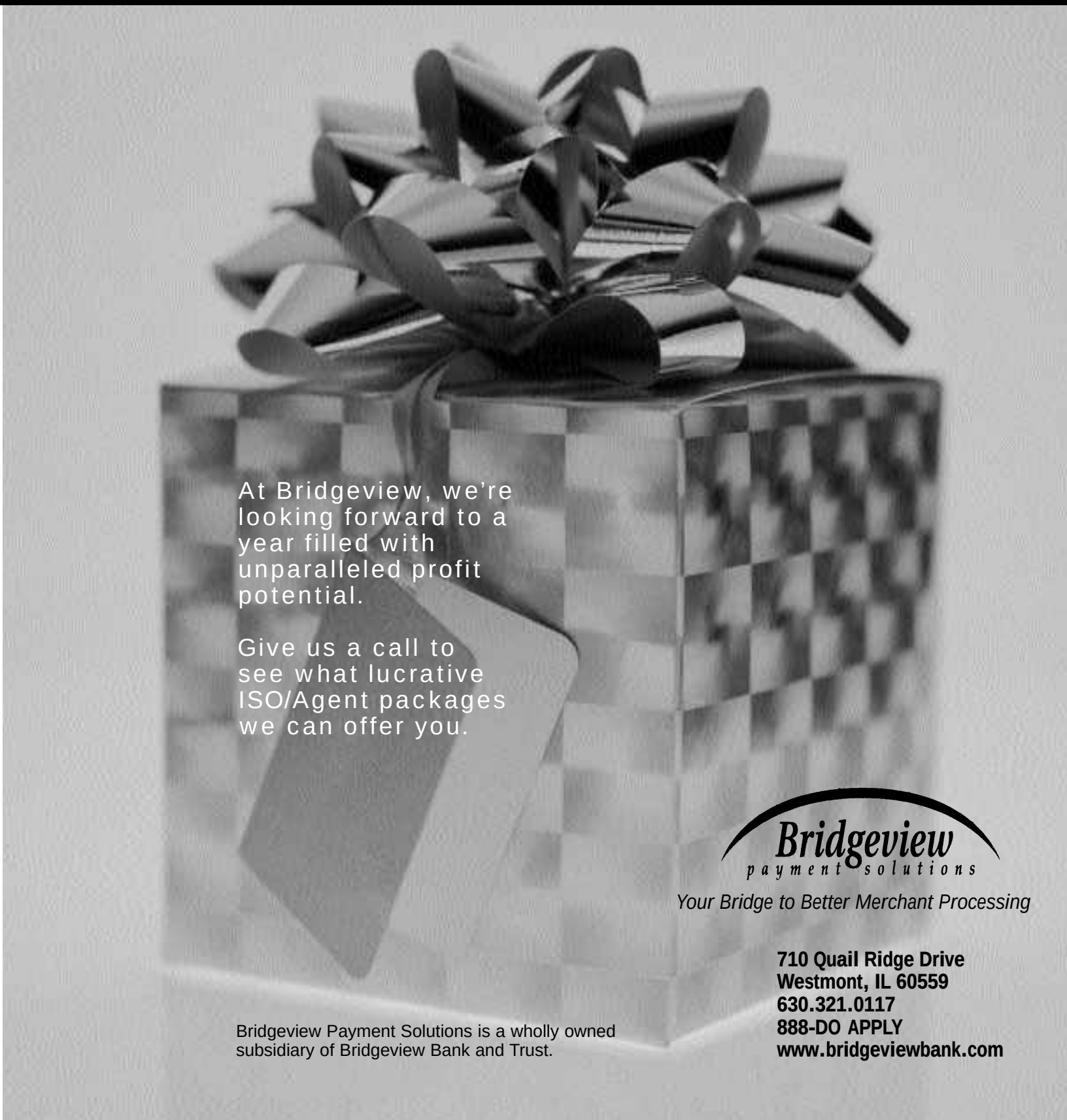

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Merchant Processing Costs, an Update, and Why the Visa-First Data Suit Could Change Everything

First of two parts

In December 1997, The Green Sheet published the first article in this series, titled, "What Are The Costs of Merchant Processing?" This is an update of that article. It is also a warning bell to the players in our industry who might not be focusing enough on the potential impact of the Visa lawsuit against First Data Corp. (FDC) over First Data Net (FDN) and FDC's countersuit against Visa.

Much has happened since December 1997. Telecom costs have continued to come down. Technology has improved, driving down costs of processing equipment and storage hardware as well as software development. New CRM software packages have helped reduce costs of providing call center service to merchants.

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The Internet has been used by all of the major acquirers to deliver information to merchants in efficient and useful ways. Real-time processing now allows merchants to view transactions as they occur and to implement changes in downloads from any PC in the world at any time.

But the fundamentals of our industry's cost structure remain the same. There are still three categories of costs for merchant processing: those based upon the dollar volume of processing (interchange), those based upon processing transactions (transaction fees) and those based upon delivering information to the customer (monthly fees).

Part I of this article discusses the current and future status of dollar-volume-based fees. Part II will discuss transaction and customer-service fees.

Fortunately for all of us, the major costs – those driven by dollar volume – continue to be the same and apply equally to all acquirers (except for giant merchants such as Wal-Mart). Interchange, dues and assessments continue to be charged to all acquirers in an even-handed manner across the board by Visa and MasterCard. **It is Visa's and MasterCard's level playing field of dollar-volume cost structure that allows for free market pricing that, in turn, gives the small players the opportunity to compete with the big players.** (I will give more specifics on this point in Part II.)

Basic Visa interchange for a vanilla credit card transaction is 1.37% and for a Visa Check card is 1.25%. Visa dues add another 8.4 basis points to the dollar-volume-based costs. MasterCard's basic interchange rate is 1.38% for both credit and Master Money transactions with assessments at 9.5 basis points. Of course, Visa and MasterCard each has added an additional 10 cents per transaction to the costs of interchange.

Two significant lawsuits may change the stability and level playing field of dollar-volume-based costs.

The Wal-Mart case regarding offline debit cards (note that Wal-Mart previously negotiated a favorable fee structure for giant merchants with Visa in the late '90s for credit transactions) is on track to be heard in court next spring.

This is the case in which Wal-Mart and other large retailers sued Visa to stop requiring acceptance of the Visa Check card. Since its filing, the courts have allowed this case to become class-action litigation, and every single

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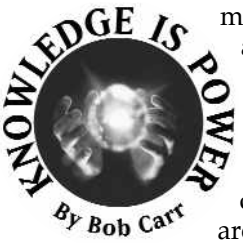

merchant in America is likely to be affected by the eventual outcome in some way.

Many expect an out-of-court settlement. Others anticipate a lengthy courtroom face-off. Billions of dollars are at stake. We should get a better feel for the outcome of this case sometime in mid-2003. The outcome may result in a fundamental change in the way interchange is assessed to merchants for non-credit transactions.

In my view, however, it is not likely that this outcome will change the nature of our level playing field. I believe that the result of this litigation will be reduced interchange costs for offline debit transactions. That will keep pricing neutral with respect to acquirers.

The other lawsuit, however, may have a draconian impact on all of the non-FDC owned acquirers. Visa has sued First Data over First Data Net. FDN is the new name attached to the system developed by FDC designed to work around (and eliminate the fees charged for use of?) the VisaNet processing system. Among other things, the associations' systems collect funds minus interchange from issuing banks and pay them to acquiring banks that then pay their merchants.

FDC processes for banks that issue cards as well as for banks that acquire transactions from merchants. A portion of cards (currently 15%) accepted by FDC merchants is issued by FDC banks. So why does First Data need Visa to "get in the middle" of the settlement of these transactions? First Data has the ability to work with its issuers and acquirers to clear and settle all of these "on-FDC" transactions.

This "on-us" idea isn't exactly a new opportunity for someone in FDC's position. It has little, if anything, to do with improved technology. Every processor who ever processed BankAmericard or Interbank transactions for both issuers and acquirers had the same opportunity to clear and settle "on-them" traffic, even back in the days of paper tickets.

For goodness' sake, local bankers still meet over coffee in the morning in small towns to exchange paper checks that are "on local community banks." The idea of "on-us" systems is not a new or original construct within the financial community.

But is Visa really the enemy of FDC? All certified association third-party processors sign contracts that prevent them from taking advantage of all of the association systems with one hand while they cut the association out of the action with the other.

Of course, FDC signed on to the same rules of engagement that every single processing entity has agreed to from day one of our industry. But it seems FDC may have created First Data Net in a bold attempt to change the level playing field heretofore preserved by the associations' rules.

Is First Data's position nothing more than a brazen but straightforward power play? The associations are currently challenged to use their talent and resources to defend themselves against the U.S. Department of Justice, the class consisting of all the merchants in the U.S., and foreign governments around the world who are challenging their fee structures. Attacking when the enemy is looking the other way has been an effective battlefield strategy for millennia.

If First Data wins this lawsuit and is allowed to move forward unfettered, it could have the ability to drive all of us out of the acquiring business. First Data processes almost 1 billion transactions each month and, according to The Nilson Report, Issue No. 758, owns all or a portion of 42% of the merchant contracts in the U.S. through its direct business, alliances, ownership in Paymentech and recent acquisition of British Petroleum's (formerly ARCO's) PayPoint unit.

Fifteen percent of Visa's volume could be processed as

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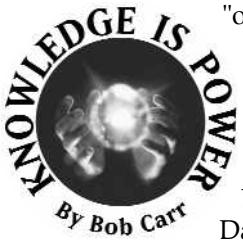

"on-FDC" traffic today. Winning this lawsuit likely would increase FDC's percentage of "on-FDC" traffic dramatically because FDC would use its pricing advantage to maintain and grow its merchant and issuing businesses. This would allow First Data to actually attempt to accomplish its well-publicized goal of dominance.

Remember First Data's slogan of not long ago? ***"To process every electronic payment transaction worldwide from the point of occurrence to the point of settlement."*** Was this slogan a precursor to a sweeping goal to alter the competitive landscape by significantly changing the rules?

Visa and MasterCard charge fees to acquirers and sponsor banks for using their authorization and settlement systems. These extra fees are above and beyond interchange, dues and assessments and are not generally known to small acquirers and ISOs because they are normally buried in the sponsor bank fees or the back-end processing fees. Nevertheless, these extra fees in fact exceed all other variable transaction costs combined! (I will address transaction costs in Part II of this article.)

If First Data is able to avoid these transaction-based costs of settling and authorizing through VisaNet, its variable costs of transaction processing will be cut by more than 50%. How do other acquirers compete against that? Do you think large merchants will leave other acquirers to save a half-cent or more on each transaction? Who do you think will own the entire petroleum, QSR and other low-ticket markets in a very short time?

Of course, as more transactions move to First Data, its 15% "on-FDC" share will grow, and more and more issuer/acquirers will be motivated to use First Data to benefit from its advantageous cost structure. Because the concept of "on-FDC" will be expanded to include all merchants and issuers on the FDN platform, the advantage may become overwhelming. Will our federal regulators allow a victory by First Data in this lawsuit to stand once they truly understand its impact on the entire acquiring industry?

As if this isn't enough to get our attention, what happens if First Data decides to either (1) fight payment of dues and assessments for "on-FDC" transactions or (2) create its own brand altogether and set its own interchange rates and ISO compensation parameters, just as American Express and Discover do in their closed-loop systems?

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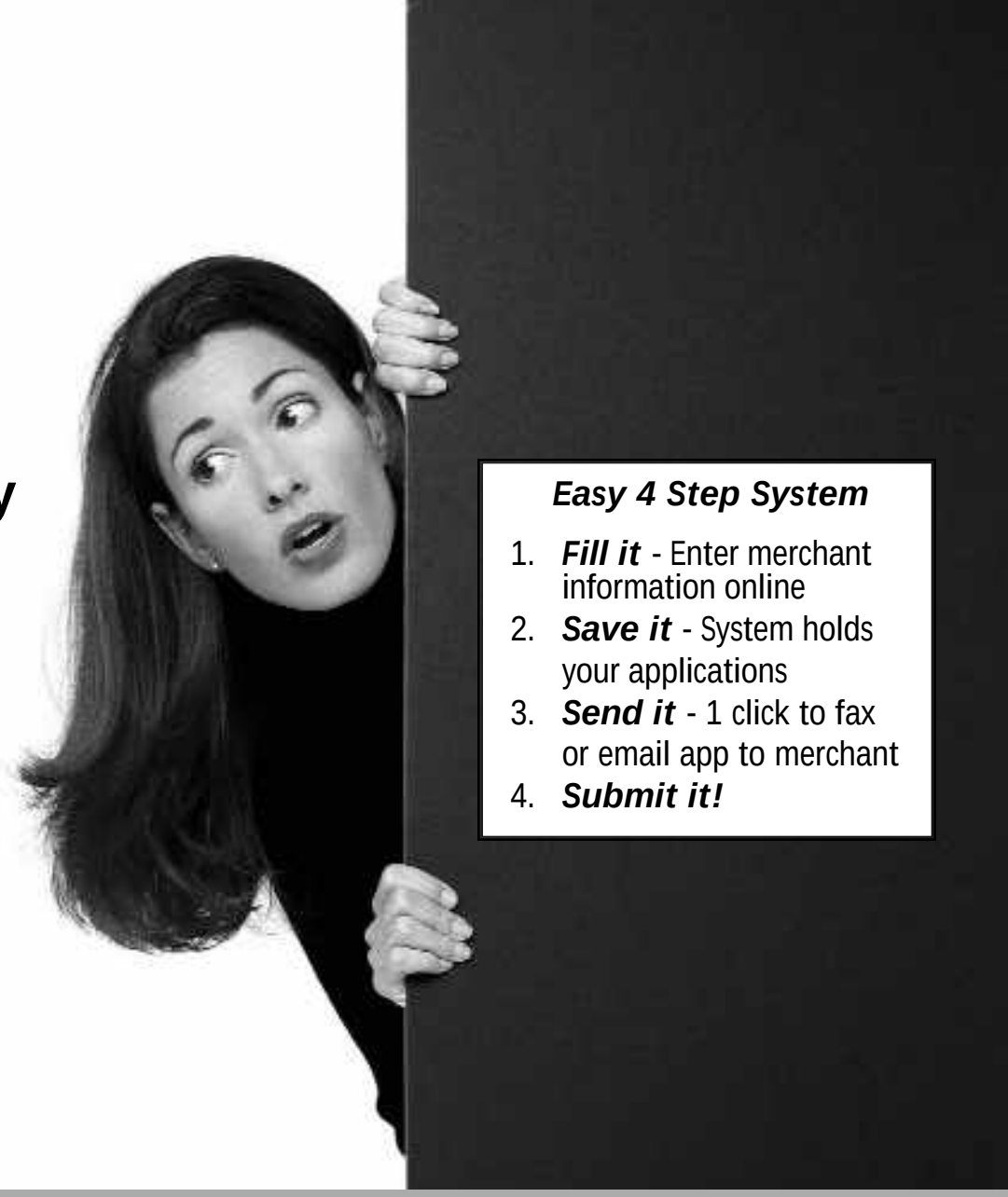

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In the late '80s, Citibank fought a battle to stop paying dues and assessments to the associations for "on-us" traffic. In the environment of the '80s, when the associations were at the height of their strength, Citibank lost this struggle and eventually sold its large acquiring business to First Data. If First Data is able to implement FDN, what are its chances of winning the battle to kill dues and assessments for "on-FDC" transactions as well?

If victorious, not only would First Data have the benefit of eliminating the transaction fees imposed by Visa and MasterCard on the rest of us. It also would be able to eliminate the 9.5 basis points of MasterCard assessments and 8.4 basis points of Visa dues as well.

This potential one-two punch could be the end of the competitive game. First, FDC could reduce its variable transaction costs by more than 50%. Second, it could possibly save another 4 to 6 cents per average transaction by avoiding dues and assessments. If FDC decides to pass a portion of this cost savings on to its merchants, it then will be able to re-evaluate the need to pay significant portions of its revenues to ISOs.

When discussing dollar-volume-based costs in 1997, I stated, "Except for Visa's new discount to a few gigantic merchants, Visa and MasterCard have one interchange structure that applies to all acquirers. **As long as this fundamental pricing structure remains constant, our industry has many great years ahead of it."**

Now our future is in the hands of the courts, and our businesses may be at risk. Will First Data prevail? Will the playing field remain level with respect to dollar-volume-based costs?

And if FDC does prevail, will it be a result of its superior products, technology or service to the nation's merchants? Or will it be because an industry player is expert at leveraging its size to outbid everyone else when it comes to acquisitions? Or will it be because that same player is able to extract necessary concessions from its "business partners" if they are to stay in business?

According to some Wall Street analysts, Total Systems (TSYS) has been taking market share away from First Data in processing for issuing banks. Some industry observers think that were it not for acquisitions, FDC's market share would be eroding in the acquiring business as well. Western Union Funds Transfer income looks to be the jewel in the FDC profit crown, not card processing.

Will First Data Net provide the platform for victory that FDC has not been able to achieve in a competitive marketplace? Stay tuned. It might get interesting.

Bob Carr is the Founder, CEO and Chairman of Heartland Payment Systems, the nation's largest privately owned merchant acquirer and ninth largest overall, with annual revenues exceeding $300,000,000. Heartland was recognized by INC Magazine as the 57th fastest-growing private company in America and is one of the 10 largest INC 500 companies. Bob was a Founder and Vice President from 1988 to '90 of the Bankcard Services Association, which has since become the ETA.

Before entering the bankcard industry in 1986, he developed computer software systems for unattended fuel pumps and created the first integrated accounting applications for PCs. He also started the computer department at the Bank of Illinois and served as the Director of the Computer Center and as a mathematics instructor for Parkland College. He earned degrees in mathematics and computer science from the University of Illinois in 1996 and 1967.

To learn more about Heartland, visit www.hpsteammates.com or www.heartlandpaymentsystems.com. You can e-mail Bob at Bob.Carr@e-hps.com.

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First Summit Pays Off for Attendees

It takes planning and participation for any business conference to be successful – especially when it's the first major gathering of a new group. In both categories, the first ATM Industry Association (ATMIA) Summit & Awards, which took place Nov. 13-15 in San Diego, got a thumbs-up. The schedule was flawless and flowed smoothly. The attendance figures: 260 attendees and 25 exhibitors.

"We didn't expect as many to come as did," said Mike Lee, Executive Director of ATMIA. "It has exceeded our expectations. We have seen new and old faces from around the globe."

Lee has served as Executive Director for two years. He has been based in London but soon will relocate to South America, where he will oversee all four global chapters of ATMIA.

"I love the cross-pollination between countries and cultures," Lee said. "Our industry is a life cycle representing different areas."

When ATMIA was formed in 1998, its members set out to form an alliance committed to "the global advancement and proliferation of automated teller machines," according to its mission statement. Today, there are international chapters in the United Kingdom, Canada, South America, Australia, South Africa and Russia. It is the only international ATM trade organization exclusively devoted to everything ATM.

Two highlights of the ATMIA 2002 Summit were the keynote address, "Industry Update – ATM Fraud," and the well-attended seminar, "ATM Integrity."

Susan A. Zawodniak, Vice President of NYCE Corp. and Executive

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Director of the NYCE Network, delivered a sharp, well-documented presentation on what the ATM marketplace is facing. In a nutshell, fraud is on the rise, crooks are getting more sophisticated, and the detection of, protection from and cure for fraud will require all industry professionals to work together to maintain consumer confidence.

Zawodniak effectively presented a summary history of ATM fraud in the U.S. followed by a series of different approaches to fraud; recommended actions to take by acquirers, issuers and processors; future targets; industry initiatives being discussed; and the likely outcome of all of this activity.

Of particular interest were the extraordinary slides of fraud devices found throughout the country and their level of sophistication. It included everything from the early Lebanese Loop to ATM overlays, from false front attachments to cash traps, and from entry door skimmers to internal skimmers. Even the new, highly sophisticated Ghost Skimmer was depicted in graphic detail. It was a wakeup call for many attendees.

Along similar lines, Mike Hudson, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Tidel, presented an informative and interesting lecture on how the Electronic Funds Transaction Association is fighting for ATM integrity through the industry. Hudson is well-qualified to comment; he is leading the ATM Task Force that EFTA has formed to take on the fight.

With 36 leading ATM industry companies working in conjunction with the U.S. Secret Service, the structure and goal of the Task Force is admirable.

"We are enlisting all segments of the ATM industry to review and recommend proactive procedures and policies," Hudson said. "We all need to protect our nation's ATM infrastructure from criminal activity and fraud. We must maintain integrity and credibility."

Maintaining that integrity and credibility means the Task Force has the daunting task of researching issues, making educated observations and recommendations and ultimately presenting suggested best practices to the industry – all with the strong support and interaction of the Secret Service and the U.S. Attorney General's office. The alternative is to have the government take over the reins of regulating the industry. That's why self-policing was the buzzword heard around the room.

"Every system can be beat," Hudson said. "The Task Force is designed to combat those odds. Our goal is to provide doable best practices through constant evaluation and recommendations rather than wait until the government comes in and tells us what to do. It's all about taking the initiative to find our own internal ways to successfully combat fraud."

Suppose the Task Force can't meet that objective? Hudson said that is not even a consideration: "We're seeing a great response to critical issues. Like my company, Tidel, many other companies are recognizing their responsibility to protect the businesses we serve and the country we live in. We can create a stronger industry and a stronger market for our product. It doesn't take much of a clarion call to respond."

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Answering the call is one thing. Winning the war is another, however. Could combating fraud be a losing battle? Hudson doesn't think so.

"We're definitely not fighting a losing battle. We've already won the battle," he said. "Awareness is the battle won. A lot of people are now thinking in terms of a domino effect to others in the industry. We're putting our competitive issues aside for the greater good of the industry."

Another interesting seminar was "New Opportunities and Challenges for ATM Deployers," presented by Dove Consulting. Tony Hayes, representing the company, shared details of a recent survey conducted by Dove that provided a comprehensive analysis of the state of the ATM industry, exploring both financial institution and ISO participation. It covered terminal deployment, ATM transactions, ATM functionality, surcharging trends, deployment economics and cost structures as well as opportunities to be embraced.

An unusual opportunity discussed at this seminar was the idea that ATMs need to generate alternative sources of revenue in order for the industry to stay profitable. Hayes' message: "Take the challenge. Find solutions to make your ATM a cash cow." For complete access to the survey, visit www.consultdove.com.

A sampling of responses to the convention:

• "It's been real good. We're here to build vendor relationships, establish new customer relationships and cultivate existing ones."

• "We're here to showcase our products in an intimate setting, which is much more productive."

• "We're here to see what's new, chat with colleagues and, of course, put together deals with vendors ... and we're doing it all."

Another positive comment came from Campbell Burgess, President of Core Data Resources, now a subsidiary of Concord EFS. He says his company is happy to be part of ATMIA. That happiness was especially evident after Concord received two awards.

"We are here to support ATMIA, an organization we've been affiliated with for four years," he said. "They provide better info to our industry. They proactively address issues, continue to present those issues to members and push for best practices.

"I highly recommend participating in ATMIA, especially ISOs. Our industry has issues that materially affect ISO businesses. It is important for ISOs to become aware of them

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and act on them. ATMIA is a very good forum for education and also to have ISOs heard by vendors."

Then there were the awards. Why do an awards banquet? "Because we all like to have our goodness acknowledged," Lee said.

While this event was the first ATMIA summit, it was the second ATMIA award ceremony. The first one, staged in early 2002 in Great Britain, focused on security-centric achievements. The formats for both were similar but not identical. In England, the ATMIA created six awards, two in each category: Best Practice, Best Technology, Best Contribution. A panel of three independent judges from three different countries then selected the winners.

In the U.S., the selection process was a bit more democratic. Nominations were open to the industry, submitted by hundreds of different companies. The Board of Directors of ATMIA short-listed the nominations. The names were sent out to the membership, and all 500-plus members were invited to vote.

The 2002 winners:

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Ernest Burdette, President and Founder of Triton (upon acceptance, Burdette laughingly referred to it as the "Old Face Award")

Best ATM Technology

- Through The Wall: 1. FleetBoston Financial, 2. NCR
- Stand Alone: 1. NCR's 7-Eleven Vcom, 2. De La Rue Cash Systems

Best Contributions to Promoting the Interest and Growth of the ATM Industry:

- Individual: 1. Alan Townsend, Scotland Yard, UK, 2. Ron Congemi, Star Systems/Concord EFS
- Organization: 1. NCR, 2. Concord Retail ATM Services

Best Practice/ATM Deployment

- ISO: 1. Capture Systems, 2. Welsh Systems
- Financial Institution: 1. First National Bank of South Africa, 2. Palm Desert National Bank

ATMIA already is planning its 2003 events. Its East Coast "mother" conference is scheduled for March 4-7 in Miami. "ATMs in the Americas" is being designed to have mass appeal for ATM professionals in the U.S., Canada and Latin America.

London will be the site of ATMIA's "Optimizing European ATMs: Back to the Future" on April 14 and 15, and the "ATM Sec 03" conference is scheduled for Oct. 13-14 in London.

The 2003 ATMIA Summit and Awards is scheduled for November at a yet undecided West Coast location. For more information, visit www.atmia.com.

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COMPANY PROFILE

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Creditel Corp.

ISO contact:
Gary Walker, VP Sales/Marketing
Phone: 480-460-3686
E-mail: gwalker@creditelcorp.com

Company address:
1990 South Bundy Drive, Suite 650
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Phone: 310-820-1429
Fax: 310-820-1439
Web site: www.creditelcorp.com

ISO benefits:
- Provides secure transactions via cell phones.
- PowerSwipe is operating on Nextel and soon will be added to other major networks.
- Offers products at wholesale prices to resellers.
- Promises ease of deployment and implementation.
- PowerSwipe can help mobile businesses whose payment options were limited in the past.

A small device generated a big buzz at the ETA 2002 Midyear Meeting & Expo in Seattle. Creditel bills itself as a designer, developer and deployer of secure, easy-to-use and fast wireless solutions – on the surface, it doesn't sound like anything to get giddy about. But if you look at what the company has designed and developed and is about to nationally deploy, you'll understand why that buzz was so loud.

Imagine a device that clips almost effortlessly onto a cell phone and instantly converts it into a POS terminal. Now imagine it being secure at the read. Got your attention yet?

"When other companies talk security, they refer to transmission between the wireless network and the gateway," says Georges F. Elias, CEO of Creditel. "We go one step further. We do it at the read. Before the information ever goes into the phone, it gets secured against fraudulent use (such as identity theft). One of our strengths is secure transmission at the read, and no one else is doing it."

In August 2000, four entrepreneurs joined forces in Los Angeles. They posed the idea that a merchant could do a full swipe transaction with a cell phone. They recognized it had to be secure to be successful and spent the last two years perfecting and patenting a secure, at-the-read environment for merchants and consumers. The result: products that provide immediate encryption.

Creditel's PowerSwipe is a small, lightweight card-reading device that affixes to a merchant's mobile phone and instantly adds credit card terminal capabilities. Combined with the Creditel PowerPay application in the mobile phone, it acknowledges transactions in six to eight seconds, incorporating a magnetic stripe reader, infrared data/printing port and a pass-through connector for charging the cell phone battery.

Currently operating on the Nextel network, PowerSwipe soon will be operable on any of the major national wireless networks, according to company officials. It's all about partnerships.

"We really didn't have backgrounds in payments," says Elias. "That's a blade that cuts both ways. We didn't have baggage from the business, but we didn't have the experience. The technology was there, but we needed to develop partnerships with processors and service providers. We had a good business strategy and solid technology. What we needed was industry expertise."

Creditel got just that in May 2001 when it hired Gary Walker to be Vice President of Sales and Marketing. Walker has 30 years of payment-processing experience with such organizations as VeriFone, Vital Processing, Trintech and Bank of America.

"When we first started looking at target markets, we focused on the small to midsize merchants, the market that really doesn't have an

option," says Elias. "They had solutions that weren't secure and were expensive. Our product is very affordable, very competitive. It's ideal for merchants who have had a hard time achieving this level of wireless access in the standard channel."

Creditel has just launched its suite of products, having field-tested it across the country since the summer with positive results. One community in particular that appears excited about Creditel is the ISO channel.

"ISOs are essential," says Elias. "This whole business is based on relationships. Now we can marry the strength of those relationships with cutting-edge and leading technology that's well tested and proven. It is the best of both worlds."

Creditel will offer its products at competitive wholesale prices to resellers. Creditel sees this as a two-fold strategy – allowing ISOs to make their margins with their end users while allowing merchants a cost-effective entry into wireless transactions. Volume will be a price variable as well.

"We are very careful not to change the business," says Elias. "We do what people expect today. We don't want to drastically change what ISOs do. We are careful to seamlessly blend our system and do the same thing on the back end with processors as well."

The 2000 Census reported there are more than 40 million mobile workers in the U.S., most of whom require some sort of financial-transaction or information-exchange capability. To address that market, Creditel introduced MTS in conjunction with wireless carriers, transaction processors and financial institutions so mobile workers such as salespeople, service personnel, taxi/limo drivers and couriers can conduct secure transactions at the point-of-sale.

Of special interest to back-end processors is the Mobile Transaction System (MTS), Creditel's unique gateway that incorporates the convergence and seamless integration of familiar and widely accepted technologies and the back-end systems that support them.

In addition to seamless integration and legacy support, another benefit Creditel promises is ease of deployment and implementation of its products. Depending on the boarding process, turnaround time can be three to five days.

"Activation is the shortest pole in the tent," says Elias. "Based on signup and approval, basic application to activation can be done in a matter of days. And if there's ever any problem with the device, we will exchange out immediately. You won't have to wait for repair."

A number of companies already are taking advantage of Creditel's offerings. For instance, U.S. Wireless Data established an agreement with Creditel, and uses its Synapse service to provide Creditel's payment gateway services and also will provide for distribution of the Creditel products and services in the ISO/acquirer channel.

"The ability to process transactions through mobile phones is a tremendous opportunity for U.S. Wireless Data," said Chairman and CEO Dean Leavitt. "PowerSwipe is especially well-suited to mobile businesses where payment options have been limited in the past. This solution provides a multipurpose payment device, secure transactions and the lowest transaction-processing costs."

First Data is another major player to embrace Creditel. Since First Data annually processes and settles more than 9 billion transactions for more than $490 billion in sales volume from 2.8 million merchant locations, this relationship could help put Creditel on the payment-processing map in a big way.

"Given the increasing need for secure transmission of payment-related information, Creditel's ability to encrypt payment transactions, as well as other sensitive information, will be ever more important," said Steven Van Fleet,

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"I have seen others, and they have Velcro attaching the swiper. Creditel's device looks like it was made professionally. It looks like a product designed with attention not just to functionality but also structure and form."

– Bruce Ferguson,
Senior Vice President, Business Development,
United Merchant Services

Senior Vice President of Product Management for First Data Merchant Services, a subsidiary of First Data Corp.

Glendale, Calif.-based United Merchant Services is an ISO that recognizes the appeal of wireless and is accessing it through Creditel.

"We don't have a lot of field use yet with Creditel, but we are excited in that we service a lot of merchants in the mobile industry," says Bruce Ferguson, Senior Vice President of Business Development for United Merchant Services. "The biggest objection to overcome is high cost of equipment and even more than that, a key factor is accessibility to service.

"With Motient and other forms of wireless, they are all dependent upon data network towers. We're excited with Creditel in that it offers solutions on a voice line and offers a universally acceptable availability. That was the biggest thing, the appeal of the product. They've taken a business phone like a Nextel with mobile-to-mobile accessibility, added on an attachment, and you've got a POS terminal. It is bleeding-edge technology."

Ferguson also likes the design of Creditel products.

"I have seen others, and they have Velcro attaching the swiper," he said. "Creditel's device looks like it was made professionally. It looks like a product designed with attention not just to functionality but also structure and form. When you are reselling to merchants, you want something that not only delivers what it is supposed to deliver but looks professional. Then there is always the personal aspect. I like the people they're involved with. We already work with a lot of them, like U.S. Wireless Data."

Other partnerships that have added to Creditel's credibility include Motorola, SafeNet, BankServ, InPhonic and Chase Merchant Services. The common denominator

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"When we consider a partner, we look for their ability to support the type of service level we want to offer. That's number one," says Elias. "They don't have to be the leader. A lot of so-called leaders are there because they were first. We want leaders with vision who continually service the customer base. By allying with them, we have the ability to generate product to their customers. We can help them accelerate programs to market. ... Creditel is not only the best partner, it is the natural partner."

Elias says Creditel looks for "the same characteristics in our ISO partners. We look for good relationships with their customers and the desire to increase their level of customer service. Our product is a service, something by which they can hold on to their customers and help generate revenue. The opportunity is too great for any ISO to ignore. The market for wireless POS is vast. At our price point, we allow them to leverage into those channels – especially the smaller ISOs who want to grow. [They] can grow quickly."

"When we consider a partner, we look for their ability to support the type of service level we want to offer. That's number one. They don't have to be the leader. A lot of so-called leaders are there because they were first."

– Georges F. Elias
CEO, Creditel

Hand in hand with that vast market is the obvious obstacle facing Creditel: keeping the wireless shelves stocked with merchandise.

"It sounds coy, but meeting the demand is our biggest challenge," says Elias. "When presented with this opportunity, the merchant's immediate reaction is, 'Why aren't we doing it today?' That is the key, to possess the ability to maintain proper supply and support as well as deploy quickly. Our infrastructure is definitely in place to satisfy the demand."

Asecondary concern of Elias is communication – specifically, communicating the basic premise that what people are doing today might not be secure.

"It's all about education," says Elias. "We start with our support, and through our team we go out to our distribution channel and talk to people about what exists today and that we offer something different. Security is what rings to their core. Wireless rings that bell.

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"A skimmer has the ability to store info from a terminal and broadcast to multiple Web sites or to a gateway. That is a big fear. Our product can destroy that fear. Even before transmission, if someone gains the ability to skim that call, we have that data encrypted. No one can break it. That goes to our partner SafeNet's strength in the market and our technology."

Elias says getting the word out there comes down to straight talk and less hype.

"This industry runs so hot and cold," he says. "Services always seem to be based on price. Getting over that hurdle may take education, but it's also going to take service providers giving more service to their clients and weaving that into the basic fabric of their merchants. We can help them weave a stronger business with the flexibility of our offering. We can provide the ISOs with an invaluable strategy in their competitive marketplace."

Elias describes the future of the marketplace in one word: wireless.

"You are going to find more and more dedicated-phone-line POS terminals turning toward wireless," says Elias. "As merchants need to become more flexible to address the consumer market, they'll have to relay out their stores and put staff in parking lots. It becomes harder to do that with landlines. It's all about the ability to take the POS functionality to the true point-of-sale. That means going to the consumer as opposed to having the consumer come to you. It is a fantastic way to enhance revenue."

Creditel envisions enhancing the revenue of not just merchants but the ISO community, too.

"I want ISOs to think of customer service and think of themselves as a partner to the merchant, helping them grow their business," Elias says. "If they start with that thought, they will see that Creditel provides unmatched services in terms of flexibility and generating new revenue streams. That will help ISOs get where they want to go."

Where does Creditel want to go? To the head of the wireless line.

"I see us as the wireless POS leader in this market, not only because of point-of-sale technology but also the enhanced business we can offer merchants," Elias says. "The ability to capture information and secure it at the read is essential. That is the core of our model. We aren't capturing credit card info, we are capturing identification info. Because of that, I see ourselves surpassing our goals."

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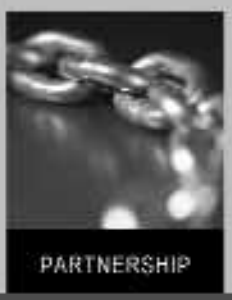
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The LinkPoint AIO terminal sports color-coded, screen-addressable keys, a two-line, 20-character backlit display, clearly labeled dedicated-function keys and ATM-style prompts. The device contains Track 1 and Track 2 bidirectional card readers (Track 1,2 and 3 can be added by special order) and peripheral ports for PIN pads, smart card readers, bar-code wands and check readers.

The built-in printer of the LinkPoint AIO was designed with a fixed thermal printer head and an easy drop-in paper-loading system, which is capable of printing at least 14 lines per second. LinkPoint says merchants using this device should be able to print about 15 million lines of text throughout the life of the printer.

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Over the last year, Cynergy designed and beta-tested the Virtual Merchant Application System, or VIMAS. Released to its sales offices and reps in October 2002, VIMAS is a fully automated back-office system hosted and maintained entirely by Cynergy. ISOs can access VIMAS online anytime through Cynergy's Web site with a user name and a password that changes every 60 days.

VIMAS stores and tracks everything an ISO would want to know about its new and existing merchant accounts and their transactions and then allows them to run reports from the information. Transaction data, even disputed transactions, can be sorted and viewed by volume, sales rep or merchant.

Cynergy's VIMAS offers both basic and advanced levels of features. The basic level, which is free to Cynergy sales offices, includes basic merchant account and equipment-deployment information as well as access to real-time status reports.

Advanced features are generally available with a subscription fee ranging from $19 to $99, depending on length of subscription. Some advanced features are more robust reporting, such as growth by office and/or sales rep and performance history, and access to detailed merchant account information, including call-log history.

A feature of VIMAS that really stands out is the ability to create and run automated residual reports, calculating revenue, for buy rates and sell rates. Before, this was done manually or using a desktop application such as Microsoft Excel. Now, office managers can create these reports in a matter of seconds.

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NEWS

NACHA Project on Hold

The next phase of **NACHA**'s Project ACTION ("NACHA's Project is a Dubious Action Plan," The Green Sheet, Dec. 9, 2002, issue 02:12:01) is on hold. A statement released by NACHA declared that, although many financial institutions and their customers support the ACTION concept, the NACHA Board believes that because of the current business investment climate, "ACTION will not receive the investment necessary to proceed at this time."

Although the ACTION concept and business plan remain available to the banking industry, NACHA's Board instructed the Proof of Concept plan to be placed on hold and says it looks forward to continuing the project "when market conditions warrant moving forward."

Q3 Preliminary GDP Estimates Higher

According to preliminary estimates released by the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis**, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded at an annual rate of 4% in the third quarter 2002, revised from a 3.1% growth rate originally reported in advance estimates in October. The preliminary GDP number is based on more complete data available for the advance estimates. The major contributors to the increase in GDP in Q3 were personal-consumption expenditures, government spending, equipment and software, private inventory investment and exports.

NPC, Kentucky Bank Sued

Victoria's Secret Stores Inc., Express LLC, Limited Stores Inc. and several other retailers affiliated with Columbus-based **Limited Brands Inc.** are suing **National Processing Co. (NPC)** and **National City Bank of Kentucky**, Columbus Business First reported. The retailers allege NPC and National City Bank have been withholding $1.6 million in October sales receipts and that the two companies also had withheld $15.5 million in September credit card proceeds because some of Limited Brands' divisions had begun using processing services of NPC's competitors.

Limited Brands said the withholdings caused it to overdraft accounts and issue bad checks. Although the $15.5 million has been returned to Limited Brands, the lawsuit claims $1.6 million in October receipts still have not been released. The lawsuit seeks to retrieve the $1.6 million, compensatory damages in excess of $25,000, punitive damages, indemnification for any liability or expenses, interest and attorney fees.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CheckFree Executive Leaving

CheckFree Corp., an electronic bill payment company, announced that President and Chief Operating Officer Peter Sinisgalli is leaving the company on Jan. 31, 2003. The Atlanta-based company does not plan to replace Sinisgalli, who joined CheckFree in 1996. "I needed a new challenge," Sinisgalli told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, adding that he is in the market for a job in the Atlanta area. CheckFree said it plans to adopt a new management structure in which heads of each of its divisions report directly to the Chairman and Chief Executive, Pete Kight.

WesPay Warns of False Claims

The **Western Payments Alliance (WesPay)** announced in a statement that it has "no connection whatsoever" with an entity, allegedly based in London, calling itself the Financial Clearing House (www.financialhouse.org) and claiming to be a founder of WesPay. WesPay says it is not a member of Financial Clearing House and has not been involved in any transactions with the organization. In addition, information about WesPay was posted on the entity's Web site without WesPay's permission.

WesPay says it has notified U.S. and U.K. authorities about the fraudulent claim and is asking its 1,000 members to proceed with extreme caution if approached by Financial Clearing House, which has been linked to financial crimes in Africa and Australia. Anyone with knowledge about Financial Clearing House should contact WesPay at 415-433-1230.

ALLIANCES

Heartland Expands with Triumph

Heartland Payment Systems, Inc. announced it has expanded its processing partnership with **Triumph Hospitality**, prestigious hotel properties in New York City resulting from a four-hotel merger in April 2002. Heartland will provide credit card processing and value-added services for all four of Triumph's hotel properties and two of its restaurants. Previously, Heartland provided processing services to three of Triumph's hotels.

Certegy Wins e-Commerce Network

Certegy Inc. will provide electronic check and ACH warranty services through its PayNet platform to **Ritz Interactive, Inc.,** an e-commerce network that includes

sites such as RitzCamera.com, Boatersworld.com and RitzPIX.com. Certegy has been providing check authorization and risk management services for more than 1,200 "brick and mortar" Ritz Camera Centers and Wolf Camera locations nationwide since 1997.

First Data Expands in Canada

Beginning in the first quarter 2003, **First Data Corp.** will expand its relationship with **Home Trust Co.**, a wholly owned subsidiary of Home Capital Group Inc., providing processing, risk management, and sales and marketing expertise through its Canadian subsidiary, CardSolve International Inc. Home Trust is a federally regulated trust company offering deposit, mortgage lending, retail credit and credit card services. First Data and Home First originally partnered in 2000, when First Data began providing processing services for Home Trust's Visa credit card issuing business.

ACQUISITION

Certegy Acquiring Netzee

Certegy Inc. announced an agreement to acquire Atlanta-based **Netzee, Inc.** and all of its assets, including Internet- and telephone-based products, for $10.4 million in cash. Netzee provides financial institutions with full-service Internet banking, bill payment, cash management and Internet commerce services. The public company was founded in 1999 as a subsidiary of The InterCept Group, Inc. The transaction requires Netzee shareholder approval and is expected to close by mid-January 2003. The transaction will liquidate and dissolve Netzee.

APPOINTMENTS

Humboldt Appoints Board Member

Humboldt Bancorp has appointed **Steven R. Mills** to the company's Board of Directors. Mills is a Senior Partner with Douglas Curtis & Allyn LLP, a mergers and acquisitions firm in Sacramento, Calif. He also serves on the St. Ignatius School Board and previously has been on the Boards of the Leland Stanford Mansion Foundation, the Access Capital/Sacramento Valley Forum, and the American Red Cross. Mills joined Humboldt's Board on Nov. 23, 2002.

Global Payments Elects Wilkins to Board

Global Payments Inc. announced the election of **Gerald J. Wilkins** to its Board of Directors. Wilkins is Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of AFC Enterprises, Inc., which owns, operates, and franchises nearly 4,000 restaurants, bakeries and cafes in more than 30 countries worldwide. AFC's brands include Popeyes Chicken & Biscuits, Church's Chicken, Cinnabon, Seattle's Best Coffee, and Torrefazione Italian Coffee.

Wilkins also serves on the Board of Directors of AFC Enterprises. Before joining AFC Enterprises in 1995, Wilkins was Vice President of International Business Planning at KFC International.

From 1985 to 1993, he served in various financial management positions with General Electric. He also was employed by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell as a Certified Public Accountant.

Concord Promotes 2 to President

Concord EFS, Inc. promoted **Bond R. Isaacson** to President, Financial Services and **Christopher S. Reckert** to President, Payment Services. Isaacson joined Concord as Executive Vice President in September 2002. Reckert joined Concord in 1995 and previously served as Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer at Concord.

Concord also announced that **Dan M. Palmer**, Chairman and outgoing Chief Executive Officer, will assume the role of Chief Strategic and Financial Planning Officer in May 2003 when Concord President **Edward A. Labry III** succeeds Palmer as CEO.

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Don't Sell Yourself Short

Ever wonder how Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston get on the cover of People Magazine? Do you know what it takes to get The Rolling Stones on the cover of Rolling Stone? It takes a press agent. While sales professionals don't have the luxury of engaging a publicist to promote their products and services, there's no reason why you can't incorporate similar promotional strategies to market yourself and maximize sales.

Promotion is all about positioning and packaging. Analyzing the current market is the first step because knowing where to position your solutions is key. How well would the next issue of Fortune Magazine sell if, say, Richard Simmons were on the cover? Effective positioning means putting yourself in the best possible place for the most appropriate exposure.

In today's competitive climate, merchants have a myriad of problems, needs and desires. Your package needs to showcase solutions that not only solve those problems and satisfy those needs but also add value. Show your uniqueness. Highlight your differentiators, whether they are products that do it better, faster or cheaper. However, the biggest differentiator must be you. Integrity, dependability, knowledge and expertise are as important in your packaging as product descriptions.

The first impression your package makes is paramount to what transpires next. Do you have an attractive business logo? Have you considered using unusual colors or fonts for your business cards? Does your brochure incorporate dynamic graphics as well as an easy-to-read format? Remember, you want to not only generate interest but also a positive response.

Another consideration might be to create a catch phrase. Nike does it with "Just Do It." Burger King lets you "Have It Your Way." With all of the vendors a merchant comes into contact with, you'll be the one he or she remembers with a phrase that pays.

A well-designed and developed package establishes an identity for you and your solutions. It goes beyond the basic company name, address, contact numbers, e-mail and Web site info. Does your material provide an overview of the problems your services address? Do you list customer benefits? Do you provide a roster of current clients? Have you included testimonials?

Promotion doesn't end with the presentation. It's all about maintaining contact. It means following up with your standard marketing letter or e-mail highlighting your solutions as well as expressing your thanks for their time and consideration.

Promotion also means updating your Web site regularly. Savvy self-promoters also maintain a mailing list and periodically send out a newsletter of not just their company's recent activities but industry-related news items as well.

Promotion means networking on an ongoing basis. Have you offered your services for speaking engagements or writing assignments for local newspapers and/or trade

WesPay's 2003 Seminar Series

January Workshops: ACH Rules Implementation

Highlights: Change is becoming more frequent in the ACH environment, and the Western Payments Alliance will make sure you are ready by taking an in-depth look at both new and recent amendments. For this class, WesPay requires a "basic" level of ACH knowledge and recommends the completion of WesPay's "Fundamentals of ACH Receiving" workshop.

When and Where: 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. for all sessions – Jan. 8, Salt Lake City; Jan. 9, Las Vegas; Jan.14, Pasadena, Calif.; Jan. 15, Los Angeles; Jan. 16, San Diego; Jan. 21, Portland; Jan. 22, Sacramento; Jan. 23, San Francisco.

Registration Fees: $155 per person for members of WesPay, $135 per person for companies with two or more members attending, $270 per person for non-members.

How to Sign Up: Members can register online at www.wespay.org. Non-members should call 415-433-1230 or e-mail education@wespay.org for more information about registering for a workshop.

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publications? Do you regularly attend meetings of rotary clubs and similar community organizations? How much volunteer work do you do?

Promotion is all about not letting people forget who you are and, more important, how you can help them improve their business. If you want to become a sales star, you've got to sell yourself. You are the ultimate solution. Stay visible.

On to the New Year

As each year comes to a close, we look back at what we have accomplished as well as what we haven't. For the sales professional, it's an ideal time to review and evaluate how successful their selling strategies have been.

How did you fare this year? Whether you closed the deal or not, see if you hit these important points during your presentations:

- Did you talk less than a quarter of the time?
- Did you focus on results?
- Did you find out what your prospect wanted from you?
- Did you find out how your prospect could benefit from your services?
- Did you ask the most important question – did you ask for the sale?

While it may be difficult to ask these questions and relive the trauma of lost sales, it is invaluable in what it teaches you for the next pitch. Remember, no matter how many times this past year you heard "No," it pushed you toward that one "Yes" that made all the difference.

And what about those sales that got away this year? Don't discount them. As 2003 rolls around, check in with those merchants. Find out if they are happy. Ask them if they made the right decision. Congratulate them if they did. Offer them an alternative if they didn't.

Opportunity only dances with those already out on the floor. Make it your New Year's resolution to get out there ... and stay out there. As Irving Berlin once said, "The toughest thing about success is that you've got to keep on being a success."

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