



Members of the ETA Hall of Fame are recognized at the 2019 Induction Ceremony at ETA's Strategic Leadership Forum. From left to right: Paul Garcia (2018), Diane Vogt Faro (2018), Donna Embry (2019), Tom Wimsett (2019), Linda Perry (2019), and ETA CEO Jodie Kelley.



eta

HALL of FAME

Stalwart leaders and technology trendsetters
honored as the 2019 inductees

In September, five renowned leaders in the electronic payments industry were welcomed into the ETA Hall of Fame. ETA established the honor to recognize the achievements of professionals from all corners of the industry who have made significant and lasting contributions to the payments world.

“The five impressive inductees to the ETA Hall of Fame embody the spirit of bold leadership and innovation that defines the payments industry,” said Jodie L. Kelley, CEO, when they were announced. The honorees were feted at the ETA Hall of Fame Breakfast, presented by Visa, during the 2019 Strategic Leadership Forum in Boca Raton, Florida.

Donna Embry



With more than 50 years of experience in the payments industry, Donna Embry has a perspective that few others can rival. She currently serves as senior vice president of global payments strategy for Evolve Bank & Trust and as president of Embry Consulting LLC.

Across her long and distinguished career, Embry has held multiple executive positions in the payments industry, including chief payments officer for Payment Alliance International, executive vice president of product and marketing for Vital

Processing, and senior vice president of electronic banking for PNC Bank. While at Vital in the 1990s, Embry led the team that developed and launched VirtualNet, the first network capable of processing e-commerce gateway transactions.

A foreign languages major in college, Embry was introduced to computer programming at BankAmericard, where she was trained by IBM and gained deep understanding of computer languages and IT—a precursor to product development and management. “It changed my life. It changed my career. It actually took me to the heart of payments and to the heart of understanding and learning about technology,” she said during her acceptance speech.

As a member of ETA, Embry’s contributions have been numerous and significant, particularly in the early days of ETA’s professional development programs. She literally wrote the book on the industry, having authored ETA’s first publication, *The Encyclopedia of Terminology for the Acquiring Industry*, and developed and taught the inaugural introduction series of classes for ETA University. She’s also received many industry accolades for her accomplishments, including the ETA Distinguished Payments Professional award in 2016.



But success didn’t always come easily for Embry. She describes herself as “extremely shy” in her early career—so much so that it could have stunted her accomplishments. “I was told it would be a career breaker if I couldn’t learn to get up [and speak] in front of people,” she explains, “because I would just stay pigeonholed in building technology and being in the background.”

She persevered with the help of a patient boss and mentor who coached her daily until she was able to present her vast knowledge to hundreds of people. “For me, the biggest obstacle I ever faced was getting past that shyness,” she says.

Embry reflects on the evolution of technology, automation, and interconnectivity during her five decades in the business. These days, she says social media and “social mobility” are likely to be the biggest catalysts for changing the future of payments. “Now instead of merchants, issuers, and financial institutions being in the lead, which it was for years, now you’ve got the consumer in the lead. And the consumer is directing how things happen and how things change.”

She advises younger professionals to home in on their passions. “Don’t necessarily be thinking about payments,” Embry says. “Because passion fuels a lot of how you move forward. Capitalize on your strengths.”

Mary Gerdt

Mary Gerdt didn’t set out to become a leader in the payments industry nearly three decades ago; she just needed to pay her bills, so she took a job at a small ISO in Chicago.

Fast-forward more than 28 years. During that time, Gerdt not only mastered the industry, she created a cutting-edge payments architecture and became founder, CEO, and president of two leading payments industry firms. POST Integrations, founded in 1991, provides credit card processing services ex-



clusively to the hospitality industry, representing a pioneering force in the way hotels are served by the merchant acquiring industry. Gerdt then founded EboCom in 2000 as a technology company providing full service back-office transaction processing, another innovative venture that brought sophisticated automation and efficiency to back-office processes in the industry.

An active member of ETA since 1991, Gerdt served on the Board of Directors for 10 years and was ETA's president from 2002-2003. In 2004, she was named ETA Member of the Year. Gerdt also co-founded the Women's Network in Electronic Transactions (Wnet) in 2005, served as its executive director from 2005-2008, and assumed the role of president in 2008.

Hailing from a mid-western farming community, Gerdt got into payments "quite by accident," and with "no intention of doing it for a business." But she made a connection with a director of finance at a local hotel who eventually encouraged her to branch out on her own. "I just fell in love with the hotel industry...and that never changed," she says.

Despite her tremendous success over the years, Gerdt says she is "most proud of is the beautiful people that we've put together as the staff. These are really phenomenal people with great hearts, extraordinarily talented, extraordinarily intelligent," she explains. "Everybody does their job 110 percent every day. There are no slackers."

Looking ahead to the future of payments, Gerdt expects blockchain to become a larger factor. "Blockchain is sitting around the edges and I think, fundamentally, it has a lot of applications in a wide swath of industry," she says. "I think you'll see a lot of technology play off of that."

But an even bigger potential change confronting the payments industry, Gerdt says, is that major tech are players such as Apple and Amazon are milling around. The ramifications could be profound.

"It wouldn't take much for them to dominate and take over," she says. "It would not take much for any one of those players... to, for example, buy a back-office process like me and put all the pieces together in a heartbeat—and literally take it from end to end."

Gertz calls it "an honor and a privilege" to be inducted into the 2019 ETA Hall of Fame.

"My induction came as quite a surprise to me," she says. "It has been more than 15 years since I served as the ETA's president, and I look back with great pride and appreciation for everyone who paved the way before me."

Pam Joseph

A "well-known, well-respected, and well-liked" trailblazer in the payment space, Pam Joseph is an industry executive with

decades of leadership experience.

Currently, Joseph is operating partner with Advent International, a global private equity firm, and was recently named CEO of Clearent. Prior to working with Advent, she was president and chief operating officer (COO) of TSYS, and she served for 14 years as vice chairman of U.S. Bancorp's payment services division. At U.S. Bancorp, she had executive responsibility for all electronic payment products—a business worth \$5 billion—and for 30 percent of the corporation's revenue. She joined U.S. Bancorp in 2001 through the acquisition of Elavon, where she was president and COO.

"Despite the power and the status that she had in the industry, she was really an everyday person," said John Barrett, president, North America, at NXGEN Payment Services, who was a member of the ETA Hall of Fame Nominating Committee and who introduced Joseph at the ETA Hall of Fame Breakfast. "She was a friend of the ISO, even though she worked for a bank."

Joseph currently serves as a board director for Paychex, TransUnion, and Adyen. She also is a member of the Board of Trustees for Spelman College and chairman of Women Leaders in Action, a nonprofit organization that helps educate young women in Africa.

"[Joseph is] very much about empowering women leaders in the space," said Barrett. "She would go out and help anybody that asked to participate in events and organizations that promoted the industry, promoted women leadership, and promoted success across every aspect of payments."

In 2019, Joseph also was awarded the Pay It Forward Award from ETA in recognition of her impressive legacy of leadership and community service.

"Through her efforts in the industry, she helped pave the way for a lot of the ISOs and MSPs in this business to be a viable distribution channel for payments," said Barrett.

Linda Perry

From her beginnings as a teller at a Michigan bank during the Vietnam War to her ascent to senior vice president and head of U.S. acquirer and processor sales for Visa in later years, Linda Perry learned the payments industry inside-out.

At Visa, Perry established and developed a department to manage the credit card giant's relationships with its member-bank acquirers, third-party issuing and acquiring processors, software vendors, and ISOs. After leaving Visa, she created and managed two global acquiring conferences, both in



London. She also ran a payments consulting practice, advising merchants, processors, and acquirers.

Perry is currently a consultant for Digits, a company that provides merchant processing for software platforms. Always willing to share her industry savvy, Perry served for 13 years on the ETA Board of Directors, providing insight into Visa's views of the acquiring world and, most importantly, promoting the acquiring perspective inside of Visa. Much of Visa's appreciation of acquirers and ISOs during that time was due to Perry's perspective and advocacy of the ISO and processing world.

"It's absolutely no exaggeration to say that in those early days of ETA trying to gain a foothold and the eyes of the card brands, it was Linda that gave the ETA legitimacy," said Holli Targan, partner, Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss, and the ETA Nominating Committee member who introduced Perry at the breakfast. "The industry has recognized her significant contributions by awarding her the Mover and Shaker Award, MWA, a Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Most Influential Women in Payments Award, not once, not twice, but three times. Linda has the unique talent of hatching an idea, motivating the people around her, and putting in the hard work necessary to bring it to successful fruition."

A co-founder of Wnet, Perry says she was lucky to have supervisors early in her career—mostly young men, she notes—who gave her opportunities to spread her wings and develop her skills. "I had really good bosses," she recalls. "[They] said, 'Yeah, go try that.' They didn't think, 'Oh, women can't do this.'"

Perry says staying positive, educating herself, and taking calculated risks served her well over the years. She also advises early and mid-career payments professionals to build strong relationships, respect each other, and "have big dreams and plans."

"Don't be afraid to apply for jobs that you're not quite qualified for, but you know you can do," Perry says. "Say, 'Okay.' Say you can do things. Just go, change paths when you see an opportunity, and take that road."

Tom Wimsett

Tom Wimsett was just 19 years old when he started out in the payments space. He began doing data entry work with National Processing Company (NPC) in 1983, eventually rising to president and CEO, a position he held from 1998 to 2002. Under his leadership, NPC pioneered industry practices like value-added services, interchange plus pricing, and chargeback automation.

In 2003, Wimsett struck out on his own, forming Iron Triangle Payment Systems. He served as chairman and CEO

until 2010 when he sold the company to Vantiv for \$620 million. Wimsett has actively served as a director or advisory board member of numerous payments industry organizations, including MasterCard, ETA, Visa, Discover Card, and NACHA. He also served as a member of the ETA Board of Directors, and in 2008, he was honored as the ETA Member of the Year.

The diversity of scale of the organizations he's worked with over the years afforded Wimsett "great learning opportunities" that he's applied to the various positions he's held during his career. He currently serves as chairman of ControlScan, and as a board director of Revenue Management Solutions. In addition, Wimsett is an independent board director for Jack Henry & Associates.

At his induction ceremony, Wimsett said he had the "good fortune" to meet legendary Southwest Airlines CEO Herb Kelleher, who was renowned for his management style.

"His corporate culture and operating mantra was simple, and it was one that I quickly adopted and tried to employ throughout my career," Wimsett explains. "Now that mantra is well known today, but it involves putting your employees first, creating a challenging but rewarding and enjoyable environment for your employees, and they'll take care of your customers."

Asked what he is most proud of during his career, Wimsett cites his role in bringing more transparency to pricing within the payments industry during his tenure at NPC. "Initially that was a troubling idea to certain folks. And then of course competitors I think felt like that we were opening up a kimono in the industry, but [they] quickly followed suit."

The industry pioneer also predicts that payments, despite the recent technological disruptions, will continue to be a profitable industry with myriad opportunities.

"For the past three decades, payment card acceptance has generally grown at seven to 10 percentage points greater than GDP," he explains. "Think about that. If GDP is growing at 3 percent a year, and payment cards are growing at 9-12 percent a year, you're working in an industry that's growing at three to four times the growth rate of the general economy. And that's going to create opportunities for people. I think there's going to continue to be just tremendous opportunities in the payments industry."

He also encourages the industry's ambitious professionals to make use of the ETA.

"If your company is not involved in a committee within the ETA, I would strongly encourage you to do so," Wimsett says. "It's good for the industry, it's good for your business as well." **TT**

