

Networking WOMEN

W.net is a positive force in the industry

Its mission is “to provide a forum to inspire and empower women in the electronic transactions industry to maximize their potential and position themselves for greater success through networking opportunities, mentoring programs and the overall promotion of women in the industry.” It is Women Networking in Electronic Transactions, or W.net.

W.net is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 2005 by industry leaders Diane Vogt, Linda Perry, Holli Targan and Mary Gerdts. With nearly 100 years of combined commitment and achievement in the payment processing industry, they have set the standard for supporting women in the bankcard business. They dreamed of an organization that not only would offer women unprecedented networking, education and inspiration, but also would have a positive impact on the industry.

“As evidenced by the incredible corporate sponsorship and donations we have received, the industry has truly embraced us and recognized there is definitely a place for our kind of

out past acquiring and ISO-centric professionals and going deeper into other areas of electronic payment business such as card issuing, electronic banking, ATM, automated



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organization,” says Targan, president of W.net. “It is so gratifying that these companies realize that our goals will further their goals. Industry support is critical for us to provide leadership and career development growth for all women in the acquiring and electronic transaction marketplace.”

Toward that end, W.net is reaching

clearing house, third-party vendors and equipment manufacturers. The organization recognizes the need to reach women who are not attending ETA functions, and regional chapters of W.net are on the drawing board.

One of the most beneficial new programs implemented this past year is W.net’s mentoring program.

“Very early on, we recognized that one of the things that women believe hinder them in career development is a lack of role models that they can look up to and learn from,” says Targan. “To address that issue, we quickly put this program into place. We launched it in April and are now in the process of obtaining names and matching up the right mentor with the right protégé. Through the mentoring program, we will provide full training before the mentoring relationship is launched, together with multiple mentorship materials for both the mentor and the protégé so they know what is expected.”

What has not changed at W.net are the organization’s primary goals of empowerment, career support and championing diversity. A year and a half ago, W.net was a start-up. Now it is a more mature organization with the same vision.

“What has been the most significant achievement so far—and we may have more lofty goals in the future—is the contact and networking that women are making with each other,” says Targan. “Every time I talk with a W.net member, she tells me what a significant difference the organization has made in her professional life.

“That kind of contact and networking enhances their jobs and helps carry their careers forward,” she adds. “How gratifying it is for me when I’m sitting in on a W.net conference call and hear so many women expressing their thanks for someone seeing the need and making it happen. It means so much to me to be in contact with other like-minded women interested in their careers. We truly benefit from each.”

W.net’s structure has also solidified over the past year with the institution of a board of trustees. The trustees reflect the diversity and talent of female professionals in all areas of electronic payment.

“We started out with not even having members because W.net was not a membership organization,” says

Targan. “We wanted to see how it would be received before taking the next step. Now we are a formal membership organization of over 100 members, an executive committee and board of trustees as well a strong membership campaign in the works to achieve our goal of over 200 members in 2007. We are confident it will be accomplished. Our members include CEOs, presidents, senior managers, emerging leaders and women from all levels in the electronic transactions industry.”

W.net is also actively looking for an executive director—a full-time employee to helm the day-to-day activities of the organization. In addition, W.net has plans to introduce its awards program in recognition of achievement and excellence in companies that value women and contribute to the advancement of women in the industry.

Other additions to the W.net network are a discussion board and chat room on its Web site, www.w-net.biz, that will encourage active exchanges between members on various topics.

As for its agenda for the rest of the year, W.net is planning an interactive two-day Career Development and Leadership Summit in Florida in September. According to Targan, attendees will have ample opportunity to learn from each other, engage in extensive networking and enjoy dynamic discussion on career strategies. Women across the industry are encouraged to attend.

“There are so many reasons, aside from the obvious networking and mentoring and access to our Web site, why every woman in the industry should join W.net,” says Targan. “You cannot get better access to the top women in our business than through our organization. W.net will provide you not only with invaluable peer contact but also executive contacts that you otherwise would never get.” **TT**

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