



SigALERT

Q4, 2016



2016

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Before 2016 nears its end, we decided to sit down with our SVP of Sales, Aaron Slominski, SVP of Operations, Anthony Urquidez, as well as Arin Yarian, the head of our Deployment Team, and Arturo Andaluz, our Customer Service manager, to recap the exciting things that took place at Signature this year.

The takeaway, as you'll see below, is that while 2016 presented its share of challenges, Signature was able to tackle them head on and use those experiences to grow and evolve as a company in order to ensure that we continue to remain at the forefront of the bankcard industry.

Question: From your perspective, what was the most significant milestone of 2016?

Aaron: Definitely the growth of the company. Not only did our application count increase by 65% and our annual processing by 35%, but we also decreased attrition by 3%. This affirmed to me, and the company as a whole, that in an era of ever changing technology, there is no question that Signature can adapt to the evolving needs of our agents and merchants and deliver exceptional service.

Signature's move from West Hollywood to Burbank was also a huge accomplishment for the company. While as with any big move and construction project there are always unexpected hiccups along the way, once we were given the green light to move into our new 11,000 square foot space, we seamlessly completed the move over a weekend without ever terminating or compromising our merchant services. This new space will allow us to take Signature to the next level as we expand our team and the resources we offer to our agents and merchants.

Another great highlight of the year was our induction into INC5000's fastest growing companies in America. The fact that we've shown so much constant and continuous growth and progress after 20 years is remarkable and speaks volumes about the quality of our services and the Signature team!

Anthony: From the operations perspective, the terminal conversion program with TSYS was the operations department's biggest undertaking of the year. This project was truly historic as we had never before had a company-wide conversion. Despite the complexity of the task at hand, the operations department really rose to the challenge. As a result of careful planning and attentive execution, we were able to solve any challenges that came our way, which made the transition as seamless as possible.

Another big undertaking this year-- which was very exciting-- was the expansion of the Operations Department. This growth has not only addressed increased application count and processing volume, but it has also provided us with the opportunity to meet the needs of our merchants faster than ever before!

Arin: I agree with Anthony, the EMV migration and the TSYS conversion were the biggest challenges for the Deployment Team. It was truly uncharted territory that required my team to constantly adapt to changing issues and system updates. But now, having almost finished the conversion, I can honestly say I'm proud of the quality work my team has done and their uncanny ability to quickly come up with innovative solutions to the most unexpected and toughest of challenges. The amount we have all learned from this experience has undoubtedly made our department one of the strongest in the industry, and I know I can speak for my entire department when I say we're looking forward to putting this new knowledge to good use in 2017.

Arturo: Moving our portfolio to TSYS was also a monumental project for our Customer Service team. Even though we knew that the conversion to TSYS was in the best interest of our merchants so that we could continue to provide them with the superior services we've become known for, change can still be hard. To try and make the change as painless as possible, our department worked tirelessly to educate ourselves about the conversion and TSYS so that we would be prepared to answer even the most complex of questions. As a result of my team's hard work, I'm happy to report that we successfully maneuvered through what would likely have been too big a feat for so many others. Not only was I impressed with the customer service skills employed by my team, but I was amazed by their resourcefulness and unrelenting desire to solve any issue that came their way.

2017: A BIG YEAR FOR SIGNATURE

2017 will be a very special year for us. We are turning 20! In light of this anniversary, we sat down with our CEO Cliff Teston to talk about how he started in payments and to reminisce about Signature's early years.

Question: How was Signature Card Services born? How did you decide on the company's name?

Cliff: Signature was founded in 1997 in an attempt to solve some of the problems that were prevalent in the bankcard industry at the time. As for the company name, we wanted it to sound distinct and professional. We picked the name Signature because signing off on something signifies a promise to uphold an agreement. Signature represents our commitment to integrity, transparency, and reliability.

Question: What initially drew you to the payments industry?

Cliff: Forces of nature, really. During the 1994 Northridge earthquake, my entire office was destroyed and I found myself out of a job. Luckily for me, one of my clients asked me to join his bankcard sales organization, so I took the job on the spot and went to work for him the following Monday. This new gig was a turning point for me in more ways than one.

My new job paid my bills, but this experience gave me clarity on how I wanted to run my own business one day. Many years later, I understood the importance of essential shared values in the workplace, and this realization played a huge role when I co-founded Signature with Christine Bednar and Kirk Allen.

Question: Was your first position a sales position? If so, did you have prior sales experience that helped prepare you for merchant services?

Cliff: Yes, my first job in bankcard was in sales. My experience in the business has always included management, sales, or both. This definitely set me up for a better understanding of merchant services.

Question: What stands out as being the most notable difference between the industry when you joined and the industry now?

Cliff: The importance of technology, really. Twenty years ago, "high tech" was a Zon Jr XL. Now, ISO's must find a way to set themselves apart from the competition and the most obvious choice is technology. Whether it's a proprietary reporting tool, an integrated point of sale, or a Big Data solution that can help drive more sales-offering technology solutions to merchants is where successful ISO's have been winning and will continue to win. You can just look at recent acquisitions in the marketplace and the majority of them have been around technology-centric ISO/MSP's.

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