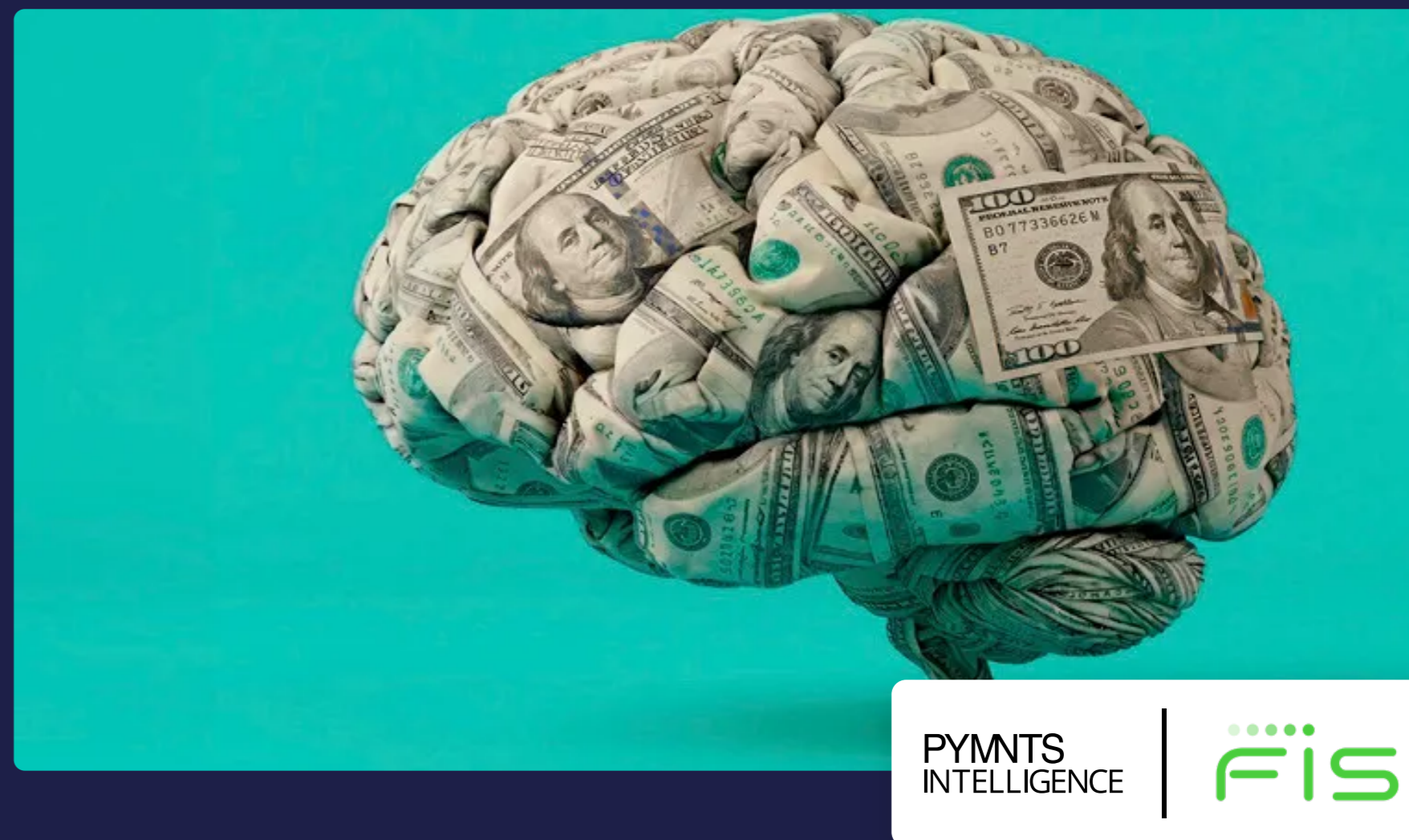


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# Where Payment Decisions Happen: How Issuer Data Is Powering the Next Era of Commerce



PYMNTS INTELLIGENCE | FIS

As commerce becomes more digital, more intelligent and more automated, the center of gravity in payments is shifting toward the issuer. Once a back-end utility, issuer processing is evolving into a data-led, AI-enabled capability that supports better decisions, stronger fraud controls and more seamless customer experiences in real time.

**01** What was once a transactional function is becoming a decisioning layer. As commerce becomes more complex and dynamic, issuer processing is playing an increasingly central role in how payments are authorized, secured and optimized.

**02** As AI and automation reshape commerce, the value of payments is increasingly defined by access to and use of data.

**03** To support the shift from execution to intelligence, issuer processing platforms are evolving to unify data, scale and connectivity across the payments ecosystem.

Payments have long been treated as a back-end utility: systems designed simply to authorize transactions and move funds efficiently. Today, that role is expanding. As digital commerce becomes more complex, personalized and driven by artificial intelligence (AI), the value of payments is no longer defined solely by execution but increasingly by the decisions that surround each transaction.

At the center of this shift is the issuer. From credit terms and risk profiles to rewards structures and behavioral data, issuers hold the information that determines how transactions are approved, optimized and experienced. As a result, issuer processing is evolving from a system of record into a system of **intelligence**: one that plays a growing role in shaping payment outcomes and orchestrating how those outcomes are achieved.

This evolution is already underway. Emerging use cases, including **agentic commerce**, are beginning to depend on access to issuer-level data and decisioning capabilities. In this environment, the capacity to aggregate, interpret and activate data is becoming a strategic lever, elevating the issuer to a new role in modern payments infrastructure. This Tracker examines how issuer processing is being redefined by the growing importance of data, effectively turning passive transaction records into the intelligence that financial institutions (FIs) need to improve fraud outcomes, approval rates and customer experiences.

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## Issuer Processing Is Moving From Execution to Intelligence

*What was once a transactional function is becoming a decisioning layer. As commerce becomes more complex and dynamic, issuer processing is playing an increasingly central role in how payments are authorized, secured and optimized.*

### Traditional processing models were built for execution, not decisioning.

Legacy issuer processing systems were designed to ensure reliability, speed and accuracy in transaction execution. While effective for core authorization and settlement, these systems were not built to support dynamic, data-driven **decisioning** across the payments life cycle. As digital commerce expands, transactions are increasingly shaped by **contextual signals**, user behavior and personalized experiences. Rule-based transaction execution often struggles to operate effectively in these environments.

This gap is particularly visible in card-not-present transactions. In these settings, issuers must make authorization decisions without the physical signals that once helped verify transactions. These signals might have included a chip insert, contactless tap or personal identification number (PIN) entry confirming the cardholder's presence. Operating without these signals can lead to overly conservative decisioning and **unnecessary declines**. In fact, issuers falsely decline roughly 15% of legitimate eCommerce transactions, contributing to an estimated \$430 billion in lost sales globally each year.

For a consumer, this can mean a legitimate purchase declined at checkout despite sufficient funds, creating friction at a critical moment. For merchants, repeated declines can translate into lost revenue and diminished customer trust. Instead, the growing digital shift requires systems that can evaluate and respond to data in real time rather than simply follow predefined rules.

### The stakes are growing in fraud management.

The stakes are particularly high in **fraud prevention**. Issuers report losses averaging approximately \$239 million across the payment journey due to fraud, even as 42% say AI has helped them save more than \$5 million from fraud attempts in recent years. These challenges are exacerbated by legacy infrastructures that, by design, operate in isolation rather than utilizing a unified, real-time intelligence layer to flag suspicious activity.

As use cases such as **agentic commerce** take shape, this concern becomes even more pronounced. Payments are no longer simply triggered by users but increasingly by systems acting on their behalf, shifting the importance of decisioning to the infrastructure that evaluates and authorizes those transactions. As the primary custodians of this transaction and behavioral data, issuers are uniquely positioned to transform these legacy friction points into competitive advantages, shifting the focus from mere execution to intelligent orchestration.

# \$430B

Estimated annual global sales losses due to issuer **false declines**

## Data Is Becoming the Core Asset in Payments

*As AI and automation reshape commerce, the value of payments is increasingly defined by access to and use of data.*

### Intelligent payment systems depend on high-quality data.

**47%** of organizations still struggle with **poor-quality data** that limits its effectiveness in AI-driven decisioning.

Machine learning-based systems rely on **rich, accurate data** to make decisions. In payments, this includes transaction histories, risk signals, credit profiles and behavioral insights, much of which resides at the issuer level. Use cases such as agentic commerce highlight this dependency. As payment decisions become more automated and context-driven, they will increasingly rely on access to **issuer-level data** to function effectively. A declined transaction at checkout, for example, may reflect not merely a risk decision but a lack of contextual information, such as prior purchase history, device recognition or updated credentials, that could have enabled approval in a more connected system.

More broadly, payments data is emerging as a real-time signal of customer behavior and operational performance. Organizations that can interpret and act on **transaction-level data** as it is generated are better positioned to improve approval rates, reduce friction and adapt to changing market conditions.

### Data aggregation is emerging as a key competitive differentiator.

As the repository of critical data, issuers are ideally placed to influence transaction outcomes, making **issuer processing** a central component of modern payments intelligence.

When it comes to holding this data, more is better—but only if that data is actionable. While 55% of organizations report unifying more than half of their data, nearly half (47%) still struggle with **poor-quality data** that limits its effectiveness in AI-driven decisioning. When paired with high-quality data and implemented at scale, aggregation enables what FIS describes as a **"data intelligence engine,"** where issuer data can be leveraged to drive more advanced analytics, model training and real-time decisioning.

The ability to aggregate and activate data across **large portfolios** is emerging as a critical differentiator, widening the gap between organizations that simply collect data and those that operationalize it into actionable insight.

## Issuers' Emerging Role: Orchestrators of Real-Time Payments

*To support the shift from execution to intelligence, issuer processing platforms are evolving to unify data, scale and connectivity across the payments ecosystem.*

### Platform-based architectures are unifying data, processing and ecosystem connectivity.

Modern issuer platforms are designed to integrate data, processing and decisioning capabilities within a **unified environment**, reducing fragmentation and enabling more coordinated outcomes. These systems increasingly act as intermediaries between banks, FinTechs, networks and emerging AI systems, enabling seamless interaction across the ecosystem. As payments become more embedded and automated, this connectivity is becoming essential to delivering consistent, **real-time experiences**.

# 73B

Number of transactions FIS processes annually across more than 75 countries following its **TSYS acquisition**

### Scale and data integration are enabling more advanced, real-time decisioning.

**Scale** further accelerates this transformation. As issuer processors expand their footprint, they gain access to larger volumes of transaction and credential data, enabling more effective model training, risk analysis and performance optimization.

FIS is a prime example. Following its **TSYS acquisition** under the new umbrella of FIS Total Issuing Solutions, the company now processes more than 73 billion transactions annually across more than 75 countries, creating one of the largest issuer data sets in the industry. This scale provides the foundation for more advanced analytics, improved fraud outcomes and more intelligent authorization decisions.

### Issuer processors are becoming orchestrators of intelligent, real-time payments.

As commerce becomes more automated and interconnected, issuer processors are taking on a more active role in coordinating how transactions are executed, evaluated and optimized. Rather than acting solely as processing engines, they are emerging as orchestration layers that connect data, decisioning and ecosystem participants in real time.

This shift is particularly relevant in **emerging models** such as agentic commerce, where transactions are initiated and executed by AI systems. In these environments, issuer processors provide the infrastructure, governance and data needed to ensure that automated transactions are secure, compliant and aligned with user preferences. For example, an autonomous agent initiating a purchase may rely on issuer systems to validate credentials, apply spending controls and authorize the transaction in real time, all without direct user intervention.

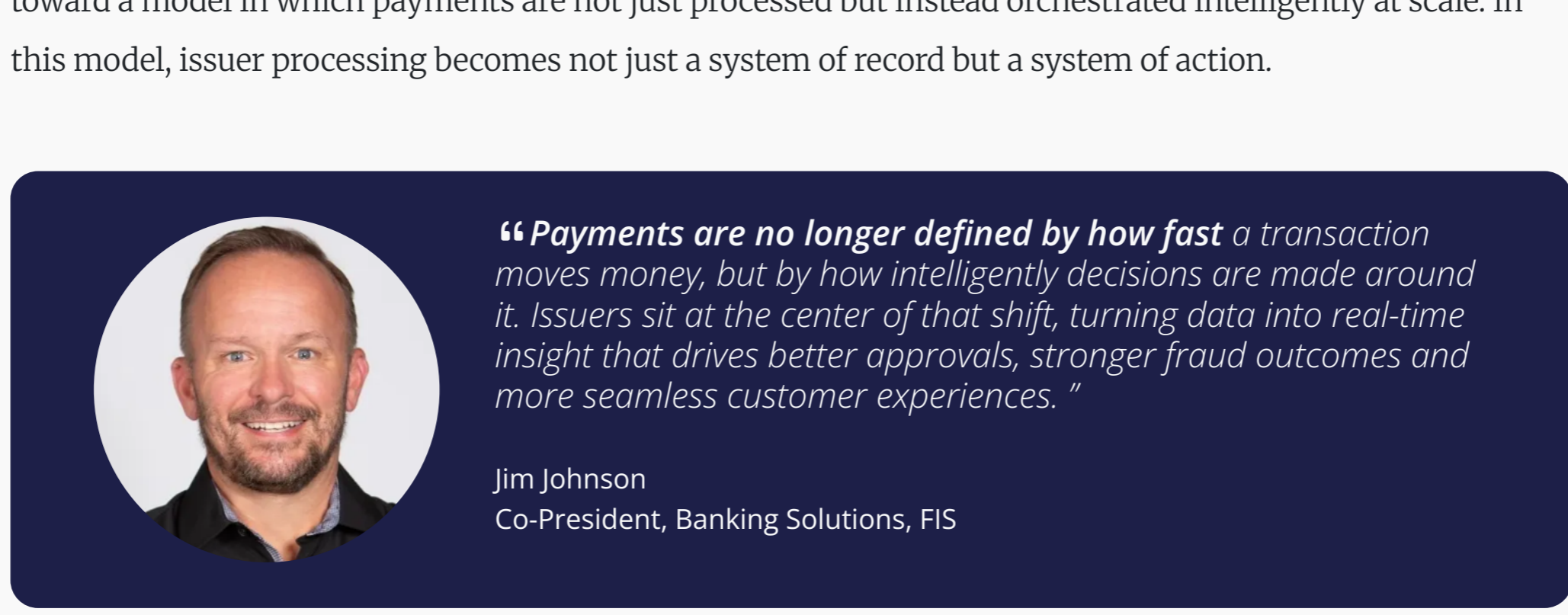
In this role, issuer processors are not just enabling payments; they are shaping how payments happen. Platforms such as that of FIS exemplify this shift, combining unified processing, end-to-end capabilities and data-driven insights at scale to enable more intelligent, real-time payment outcomes. As AI, automation and programmable finance continue to evolve, this orchestration capability is likely to become a defining feature of the next generation of payments infrastructure.

## Building the Next Generation of Issuer Processing

In the future of issuer processing, success will depend on the ability to turn data into decisions, and decisions into better outcomes. PYMNTS Intelligence offers the following actionable roadmap on how FIs can compete in an increasingly data-driven payments landscape and turn processing into a strategic engine. To begin this transition, organizations should:

- **Evaluate how issuer data is captured, integrated and activated.**
- **Invest in platforms that support real-time decisioning.**
- **Strengthen connections across ecosystem partners.**
- **Leverage AI and analytics to improve authorization and fraud outcomes.**
- **Align issuer strategy with emerging commerce models such as agentic AI.**

Institutions that make this shift successfully will be better positioned to move beyond transaction execution toward a model in which payments are not just processed but instead orchestrated intelligently at scale. In this model, issuer processing becomes not just a system of record but a system of action.



**Jim Johnson**  
Co-President, Banking Solutions, FIS

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