

# Louise Garratt

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*Senior Manager International  
Consumer Payments,  
The Walt Disney Company*

# Introduction



**Ten years on from her first role in payments, Louise Garratt is getting to grips with a fresh set of challenges and opportunities as The Walt Disney Company's new Senior Payments Manager for International Markets. For all the technological transformation she's witnessed, one thing remains unchanged; the most important part of the profession is the people who work in it.**

Louise Garratt remembers the moment she fell in love with payments. She had worked within the customer refunds team at an airline for eight years when the opportunity to move into chargebacks came about. Back then, she had never heard the term, but wanting a change of scene, she decided to find out more.

**“I was hooked from the moment our acquirer explained to me how payments work and that there is this whole ecosystem sitting in the background,” she says. “As a consumer, you pay without thinking about the how or the why. When you think about all the different players and how it all happens in the blink of an eye, it's fascinating.**

## Exploring payments across industries



Her instinct has proved right. Fast forward ten years, and Garratt finds herself as the Senior Manager for International Consumer Payments, within the broader Enterprise Consumer Payments team, at Disney. She's relatively new to the role, having joined in October 2020 as COVID-19 took its toll on the airline sector. But her remit reads like a company veteran. Under her watch are payments from right across Disney's empire, including its international resorts, retail outlets, theatrical sales, streaming services and online stores.

Such a long list of responsibilities might be daunting if it weren't for Garratt's blue-chip experience. Before Disney, her career was bookended at two iconic airlines — Virgin Atlantic and easyJet. She's also worked for LV=, a leading UK insurance brand, and WEX, a US fintech specializing in B2B payments.

This multi-sector career has given Garratt some unique insights into the world of payments, not least the absence of a benchmark. "We talk about 'payments,' but actually there's often a large delta in sophistication from industry to industry and even company to company." She explains how payment operations in the travel sector tend to be limited by the use of legacy systems, while many insurers still rely on paper checks to payout claims.


There's a similar, and perhaps more surprising, disparity between countries. "Take America, it's such an advanced market in many areas, but when it comes to payments, they're not always at the forefront. For example, they have only recently adopted the use of a chip, but rather than the chip and pin solution we typically see in Europe, they've chosen to enable chip and signature. Shift then to a developing market like Kenya where mobile payments are the norm and have been for years."

Different levels of maturity give rise to other challenges, and Garratt has faced many during her career. But one truth that applies to every sector is the value of a holistic approach, she says.

**“Payments are one of those things that are done in bits and pieces across the business until a centralized team is put in place.”**

With dedicated focus, key third-party relationships become more than just a supplier arrangement. They become deeper partnerships essential in such a complex space.

## Staying at the forefront of payments innovation



Garratt says there's no better time to make their mark. Consumers are more aware of payments...and remember, all the key stakeholders in a business are also consumers. If I think back, it was a case of me going to the business and saying we should look at this payment provider or this payment method. Today people in the business are bringing ideas to me.

One now firmly on her radar is Open Banking: "Bank transfers aren't something we have embraced at all in the UK whilst they have been the norm in other

European countries for a number of years. There are obvious benefits from a cost-saving perspective, but what really excites me is that it's something new in the UK market for the first time in decades".

Garratt explains that, though the technology for Open Banking has been in place for some time, the step change came when regulators got behind it about 18 months ago. It's one more example of the crucial interplay between payments and regulations. Hence her current reading list includes SCA, PSD2 and Digital ID.

## Asking the right questions



Her other priority is getting to know her team. Into her third quarter at Disney, that may sound overdue; until you understand how Garratt defines her 'team'. "It's made up of all the third-party providers that we have," she says. "My job is to connect with them and start building that relationship so that we're working together closely." It's a view that has put her in the middle of payment providers and organizations she has worked at, which can be an uncomfortable spot. She continues, "There have been times I've had to challenge our payment providers when they haven't been delivering on what we needed them to do. Then there are times that I have defended them internally because the problem was on our side."

Experience has taught her the art of asking her colleagues questions. "It's important to learn from other departments. You need to know what they do and what their payment concerns are. You can't be shy."

That principle extends beyond her 'team'. Garratt says that research papers and reports are an important means of learning, but not enough. First-hand access to experts is also crucial. "If you're looking into the prevalence of payment methods in a specific market, a report might say one method is only accountable for 5%, but if you speak with somebody that lives in the country, they might provide a counterpoint." She refers to this as 'glocalization' — and for a global company like Disney, which prides itself on creating personal experiences, it's a fundamental concept.

## People are at the heart of payments



The opportunities for new markets and new payment concepts are in stark contrast to the COVID-sparked survival mode that marked Garratt's final year at easyJet. "Our focus suddenly switched to refunding customers as quickly and seamlessly as possible. I was talking to our payment providers daily and reporting to senior leadership weekly. Payments really came to the fore." Garratt suggests it could act as a watershed moment for her profession. "It has made consumers more aware of what their rights are. This can be a competitive advantage for a business. In turn, companies are now looking at other ways that payments can change the way business is done."

Garratt points to cost as an example of what she means. "Merchants aren't just looking for the cheapest price anymore. Instead, they're looking for the deeper elements of the relationship — the advice and consulting while [they are] knee-deep in operational issues. This isn't a KPI you can measure, but it's something I'm always very aware of."

Getting that advice is just one side of the coin, explains Garratt. You also need to be able to communicate it back to the business. "You have to judge the knowledge and maturity of your audience. Some people will just want things to work.

Others will want to see all the metrics and have deeper discussions." For example, her team continues to be focused on monitoring the impact of SCA rollout on authorization rates and customer adoption of APMs. "It's about giving them information that is useful and resonates."

Garratt doesn't use the word empathy, but that's what she means. It's a qualification she believes is as relevant now as it was when she first started ten years ago. "Since I first began working in payments, there's been lots of change," she concludes.

**"We have new technologies, new regulations, new everything it seems. But what's always remained consistent is the need to build strong relationships with your external vendors and internal stakeholders. That's what brings everything together and what makes the job so diverse and so enjoyable."**

**My path  
in payments**