2026 White Paper

The Orchestration Imperative

Turning Payment Complexity into Strategic Advantage

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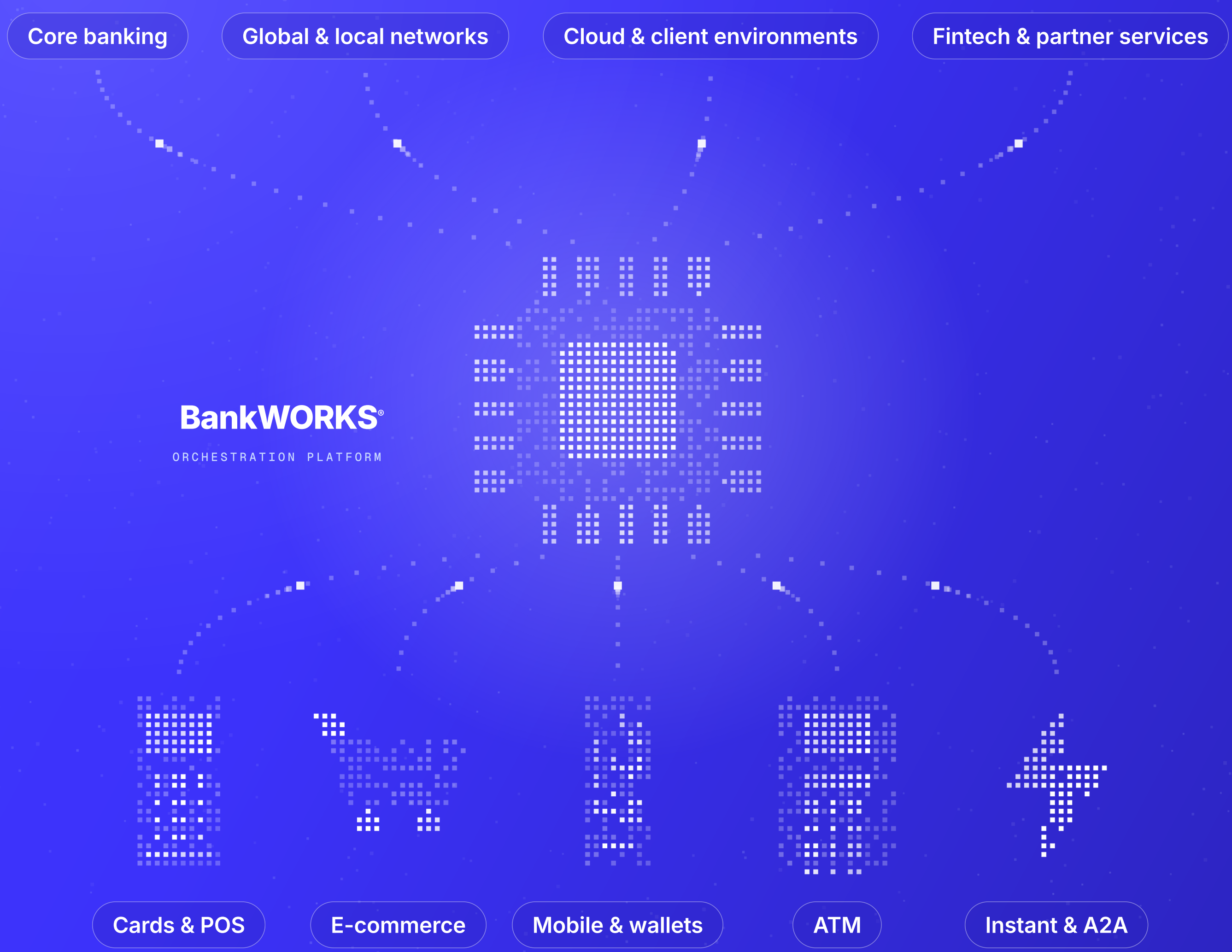

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Executive Summary

While payments have become frictionless for consumers, they have grown exponentially more complex for the organizations responsible for delivering them across multiple providers, markets, payment methods, and regulatory environments.

A single checkout may involve cards, wallets, account-to-account (A2A) transfers, alternative payment methods (APMs), fraud tools, token services, gateways, acquirers and multiple regulatory requirements.

Beneath a simple “Pay now” button sits an increasingly fragmented network of commercial and technical relationships.

Payments orchestration has emerged as the management layer for this complexity. At its most basic, it connects multiple payment services through a unified integration. At its most valuable, it provides the intelligence, control and agility required to determine how each transaction should be processed, protected, retried, reconciled and optimised.

The distinction matters.

Connecting more providers does not automatically improve performance. Effective orchestration requires connectivity, dynamic decisioning, automated resilience, control of payment credentials and the ability to introduce new providers and rails without repeated infrastructure projects.

The strategic case is therefore broader than routing. Orchestration can help merchants improve conversion, allow PSPs and PayFacs to develop richer propositions, enable banks and acquirers to modernise, and give fintechs a faster route into new markets.

> **Properly implemented, it turns payments from a collection of integrations into an adaptable business capability.**

THE PLATFORM • ONE INTEGRATION ACROSS THE PAYMENT VALUE CHAIN

One control layer connects every payment flow

PAYMENT JOURNEYS

- Cards & POS
- E-commerce
- Mobile & wallets
- ATM
- Instant & A2A

BankWORKS®

ORCHESTRATION INFRASTRUCTURE PLATFORM

- API-first integration
- Issuing + acquiring
- Clearing + settlement
- Routing + processing
- Risk + fraud connectivity
- Reconciliation + insights

- Core banking
- Global & local networks
- Cloud & client environments
- Fintech & partner services

CONNECTED ECOSYSTEM

LAUNCH FASTER • SCALE GLOBALLY • OPERATE EFFICIENTLY • CONTROL WITH INSIGHT

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A market defined by fragmentation

The global payments industry now supports 3.6 trillion transactions and approximately $2 quadrillion in value flows, generating $2.5 trillion in revenue. Yet scale is only part of the story.

The industry is diverging across cards, real-time account-to-account systems, wallets, digital assets, private networks and regionally specific payment methods. Standards, regulations and customer preferences vary by market, while commerce is becoming embedded within software platforms, devices and AI-led experiences.

Organisations therefore need to offer more payment choices and maintain higher availability, but each additional provider can introduce another contract, API, data model, reporting tool and operational process. What begins as flexibility can quickly become technical debt.

Market estimates differ according to whether they measure platform revenues, technical addressability or the wider service opportunity. Datos Insights estimated a technical addressable market of $15.2 billion in 2026, while Mordor Intelligence values the platform market at $3.13 billion in 2026 and forecasts $7.27 billion by 2031.

The figures are not directly comparable, but the direction is clear: managing payment complexity has become a significant and fast-growing technology category.

A MARKET DEFINED BY FRAGMENTATION

Multi-provider strategies are also becoming mainstream. Research cited by Forbes published in 451 Research / S&P Global found that 64% of US-headquartered merchants with at least half of their sales online preferred to work with multiple processors.

No single provider is necessarily optimal across every geography, payment method or transaction type. The challenge is making those relationships work as one system.

Global payments at a glance

Scale is increasing. The routes through which money moves are becoming more fragmented.

$2.5 TRILLION	$2 QUADRILLION	3.6 TRILLION
in global payments revenue	in annual value flows	transactions worldwide

Consumers expect choice and seamless experiences. **Businesses need flexibility, resilience and control.**

Source: The 2025 McKinsey Global Payments Report.

A MARKET DEFINED BY FRAGMENTATION

What payments orchestration really means

A gateway transports payment information. A processor executes transactions. Payments optimisation seeks to improve the outcome of a transaction. Orchestration sits above and across these functions, coordinating multiple services and applying business logic to the payment journey.

A mature model can be understood through five connected capabilities:

01
Connect
Access multiple acquirers, PSPs, gateways, payment methods and fraud services through a consistent integration layer.

02
Control
Define payment rules, retain visibility over transaction flows and avoid unnecessary dependency on a single provider.

03
Optimise
Route and retry transactions according to factors such as issuer, geography, cost, currency, acceptance performance and risk.

04
Protect
Coordinate tokenisation, authentication, fraud controls, compliance and operational resilience.

05
Adapt
Introduce new providers, markets and rails without rebuilding the core environment each time the business changes.

Together, these capabilities create optionality: the ability to select, change and optimise payment services without surrendering control of the wider architecture.

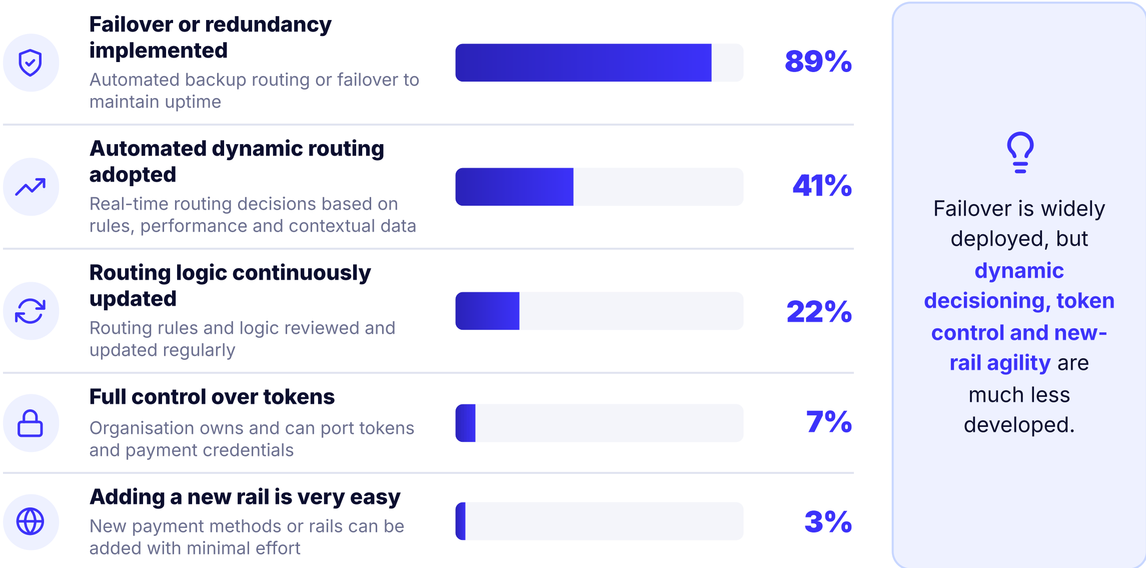
ORCHESTRATION ADOPTION IS BROAD, BUT MATURITY REMAINS UNEVEN

The orchestration capability gap

Most organisations have implemented basic resilience, but far fewer have the control and flexibility needed for high-performance orchestration.

SHARE OF COMPANIES THAT HAVE ADOPTED EACH CAPABILITY

% of respondents (N = 110 U.S. companies)



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence, The Orchestration Advantage, 2026.

Beyond connectivity: architecture determines performance

The temptation is to measure orchestration maturity by the number of available connections. Connectivity is important, but insufficient.

A 2026 PYMNTS Intelligence study based on 110 companies with annual revenues above $10 million, illustrates the gap between adoption and performance. Although 89% of respondents had implemented failover or backup routing, only 47% achieved transaction approval rates above 97% in a typical month. Fifty-five percent still made routing decisions manually, and 68% relied on manual intervention to switch providers during outages.

BEYOND CONNECTIVITY: ARCHITECTURE DETERMINES PERFORMANCE

The study identified five capabilities associated with stronger performance: automated dynamic routing, frequent updating of routing logic, automated failover, token control and ease of adding new rails. Among companies with all five, 78% reported transaction-completion gains of at least 2%. Among those with only three or four of the criteria, only 10% reported similar completion gains.

The research is directional rather than universal: it covers a relatively small US sample and was supported by an orchestration provider. Nevertheless, its conclusion is persuasive. Partial implementations can add complexity without delivering the control required to manage it. Orchestration creates value when its components function together as an operating model.

> **Success should therefore be measured through first-attempt approval, recovered declines, completion, cost per successful transaction, latency, outage performance, fraud losses and the time required to activate a new provider or rail.**

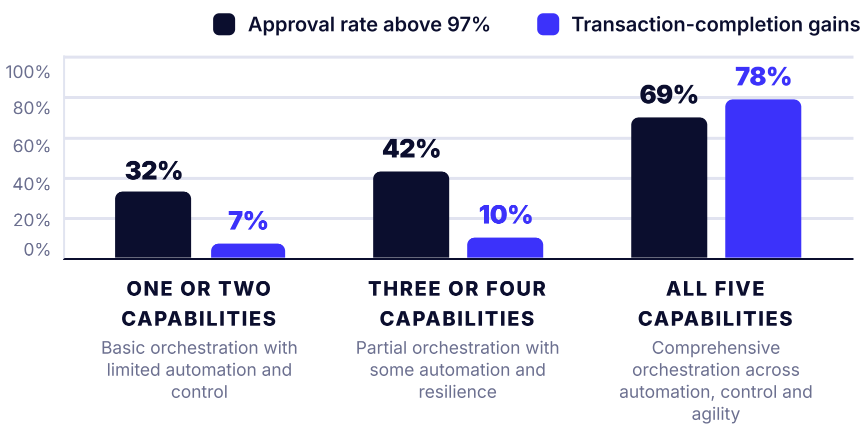
CAPABILITY DEPTH DRIVES PERFORMANCE

The performance benefit appears when capabilities work together

Companies with all five orchestration capabilities significantly outperform those with fewer capabilities.

PAYMENT PERFORMANCE BY ORCHESTRATION CAPABILITY MATURITY

% of respondents (N = 110 U.S. companies)



78%

of companies with all five capabilities reported transaction-completion gains of **at least 2%**.

Integrated capabilities deliver outcomes. Approval rates and completion gains improve meaningfully only when all five orchestration capabilities are in place.

7.8x more likely to achieve completion gains of 2%+ with **all five** capabilities

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence, The Orchestration Advantage, 2026.

A MARKET DEFINED BY FRAGMENTATION

Token control: the overlooked test of independence

Routing flexibility has limited value when payment credentials remain locked inside a provider's environment.

Tokens replace sensitive card or account data with digital credentials used for subsequent transactions. When those credentials are controlled by an incumbent provider, changing processors may require data migration, new compliance work or technical redevelopment.

In the PYMNTS study, 93% of respondents lacked full control over their payment tokens. The same proportion took at least a month to onboard a new provider, while none could do so in under two weeks.

93%	1mo+	0
Lacked full control over their payment tokens	Taken by 93% to onboard a new provider	Could onboard a new provider in under two weeks

Slow onboarding weakens negotiating leverage, delays market expansion and makes it harder to respond to outages or deteriorating performance.

True orchestration therefore requires portability as well as connectivity. An organisation should be able to change the path of a transaction without losing access to the credentials, rules and data needed to serve the customer.

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Different stakeholders, different advantages

Merchants: conversion, resilience and reach

For merchants, the case begins with revenue. Intelligent routing and retry logic can reduce avoidable declines; automated failover can preserve sales during disruption; and local acquiring and payment methods can improve performance in new markets. A central layer also reduces the need to operate multiple dashboards and reporting processes.

Merchants can select providers by market and use case rather than forcing every transaction through one relationship. This can improve acceptance, create cost competition and prevent the payment stack from constraining growth.

PSPs and PayFacs: a platform for differentiation

PSPs and PayFacs serve merchants with different geographies, risk profiles and payment requirements. Orchestration can reduce the development effort required to connect them to relevant services while supporting a broader catalogue of payment methods, fraud tools and value-added capabilities.

This creates a route from commoditised processing towards a configurable proposition differentiated by onboarding speed, merchant-level routing, analytics, resilience and token services.

DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS, DIFFERENT ADVANTAGES

Banks and financial institutions: modernisation without paralysis

Banks frequently operate across legacy platforms, regional systems and product silos. An orchestration layer can help unify access to these environments while new capabilities are introduced progressively. It does not remove the need for core modernisation, but can reduce dependence on a single high-risk replacement programme.

It also enables banks to respond more quickly to real-time payments, Open Banking, wallets and embedded finance by separating product innovation from the pace of underlying infrastructure change.

Acquirers: stronger economics and merchant relationships

For acquirers, orchestration supports intelligent transaction management, consolidated data and the integration of additional services around processing. It can improve resilience, accelerate new propositions and provide merchants with greater performance visibility.

As large merchants adopt multi-acquirer strategies, acquirers that provide flexibility and transparent insight are better positioned to remain central to the relationship rather than becoming a replaceable endpoint.

Fintechs: speed without infrastructure sprawl

Fintechs need to scale across markets with different regulatory and payment requirements. Building direct integrations to every provider consumes engineering resources and creates a growing maintenance burden.

Orchestration provides a reusable foundation for adding services and expanding geographically, allowing fintechs to focus development resources on customer experience while retaining the freedom to change providers.

DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS, DIFFERENT ADVANTAGES

One architecture. Multiple sources of value.

Payments orchestration delivers measurable benefits across the ecosystem, improving performance, resilience, agility and control for every stakeholder.

KEY BENEFITS	MERCHANTS Drive conversion and growth	PSPS & PAYFACS Scale services and differentiate	BANKS Modernise and expand propositions	ACQUIRERS Strengthen relationships and performance	FINTECHS Innovate faster and scale globally
PERFORMANCE	✓ Higher authorisation and approval rates ✓ Reduced cart abandonment ✓ Lower cost per successful transaction	✓ Better merchant outcomes ✓ Increased approval and completion ✓ Fewer declines and chargebacks	✓ Improved customer experience ✓ Better transaction success rates ✓ Optimised payment performance	✓ Enhanced routing intelligence ✓ Better auth rates and economics ✓ Improved settlement performance	✓ Optimised payments outcomes ✓ Access to best providers by market ✓ Higher conversion across regions
RESILIENCE	✓ Automated failover minimises outages ✓ Business continuity protected ✓ Uptime during provider disruptions	✓ Multi-provider redundancy ✓ Reduced single points of failure ✓ Service continuity at scale	✓ Infrastructure redundancy ✓ Operational continuity across channels ✓ Lower outage impact	✓ Resilient processing at scale ✓ Faster recovery from disruptions ✓ Stronger SLA delivery	✓ Reduced concentration risk ✓ Reliable operations in all markets ✓ Stronger customer trust
AGILITY	✓ Add new payment methods quickly ✓ Expand to new markets faster ✓ Adapt to local preferences	✓ Faster onboarding of merchants ✓ Quick integration of new services ✓ Launch differentiated offerings	✓ Introduce new rails and schemes ✓ Support open banking, RTPs and wallets ✓ Accelerate product innovation	✓ Rapidly onboard new merchants ✓ Add new payment methods and rails ✓ Speed time-to-market for services	✓ Enter new markets with confidence ✓ Integrate new rails with minimal effort ✓ Scale without infrastructure sprawl
STRATEGIC CONTROL	✓ Freedom to choose best providers ✓ Visibility and control over payments ✓ Avoid vendor lock-in	✓ Configurable routing and rules ✓ Centralised data and reporting ✓ Stronger commercial leverage	✓ Control tokens and data assets ✓ Unified view across payment flows ✓ Reduced legacy dependency	✓ Deeper insight into transaction data ✓ Control over routing strategy ✓ Stronger merchant retention	✓ Own tokens and data ✓ Flexibility to change partners ✓ Build sustainable competitive advantage

Payments orchestration turns complexity into capability, **unlocking performance, resilience, agility and control across the entire payments value chain.**

Source: RS2, 2026.

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Build, buy or combine?

Large organisations may build elements internally where payment strategy creates competitive advantage. This offers control, but also creates a permanent obligation to maintain integrations, certifications, routing rules and security controls.

Buying a platform can shorten implementation and provide pre-existing connectivity, but platforms differ in neutrality, token portability and operational depth. In many cases, the answer is hybrid: retain control of strategy, data and critical decisioning while using a specialist partner for infrastructure that does not create meaningful differentiation.

> **The decision is less about whether an organisation can build orchestration than whether maintaining it is the best use of capital and engineering capacity.**

From orchestration to payment intelligence

The next phase will be increasingly data-led. Routing will move beyond fixed cost and availability rules towards real-time decisions informed by issuer behaviour, historical acceptance, fraud indicators, network conditions and customer context.

AI can accelerate this shift by identifying patterns, simulating routing changes and recommending or executing decisions within defined controls. Agentic commerce adds another requirement: systems must apply permissions and route transactions initiated by software agents across an expanding range of instruments.

The objective is not automation for its own sake, but controlled intelligence that improves outcomes while preserving explainability, security and accountability.

BUILD, BUY OR COMBINE?

RS2: orchestration across the payments value chain

RS2 approaches orchestration as part of a broader infrastructure strategy. Its cloud-native BankWORKS® platform supports issuing and acquiring within a unified environment, with an orchestration layer designed to consolidate payment operations, data, reporting and reconciliation through a single integration model.

This is relevant for banks, acquirers, PSPs, PayFacs and fintechs whose complexity extends beyond merchant checkout. Their requirements may span authorisation, switching, clearing, settlement, risk, tokenisation, merchant and cardholder services, and the introduction of new markets or payment types.

> **The goal is not to add another layer to the stack, but to create a coherent operating environment across it.**

By combining orchestration with end-to-end processing, RS2 enables organisations to simplify fragmented architectures while configuring services around their own commercial model.

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Conclusion: control without constraint

Payments orchestration is no longer simply a means of connecting multiple PSPs or redirecting transactions when a provider becomes unavailable. It is becoming the strategic control layer through which organisations manage payment performance, resilience, cost, risk and expansion across an increasingly fragmented ecosystem.

The value lies not in accumulating more connections, but in making the entire environment work intelligently as one. That requires dynamic routing, automated failover, effective decline recovery, real-time performance insight and the ability to introduce new providers, markets and payment rails without rebuilding the underlying infrastructure. It also requires control over the data, credentials and commercial relationships that determine long-term flexibility.

RS2 brings these capabilities together within a broader end-to-end payments infrastructure. Its cloud-native BankWORKS® platform unifies issuing and acquiring, while its AI-enabled orchestration layer links card management, customer experience, ledgers, scheme connectivity and external services through a central intelligence hub. This supports smarter routing decisions, improved authorisation performance, lower processing costs and greater operational resilience across markets.

Clients can combine the cloud-native BankWORKS® platform with enterprise-grade processing through RS2 SmartProcessing® and, where required, licensing and regulatory enablement through Beyond by RS2®. This modular model lets banks, acquirers, PSPs, PayFacs and fintechs keep exactly the independence and control their strategy calls for, while gaining a practical route to faster innovation and international scale.

The organisations best positioned for the next phase of payments will be those able to adapt without disruption, optimise without fragmentation and grow without surrendering control.

The first step is understanding whether their current architecture is ready.

CONCLUSION: CONTROL WITHOUT CONSTRAINT

The orchestration readiness test

Organisations should ask:

01	Can transactions be routed automatically using real-time performance and business rules?
02	Can the platform switch providers without manual intervention during an outage?
03	Who controls the tokens and payment credentials?
04	How long does it take to activate and test a new provider or rail?
05	Can performance be measured at first-attempt, retry, provider, issuer and market level?
06	Can fraud, authentication and payment decisions be coordinated rather than managed in silos?
07	Does the architecture support issuing, acquiring and alternative rails where required?
08	Can providers be changed without a major migration programme?

> The answers reveal whether the business has genuine orchestration or merely a collection of connections.

RS2

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Background sources

Datos Insights — Overview of the Payments Orchestration Market
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ABOUT

About RS2

RS2 is a global, cloud-native payments technology provider, delivering end-to-end issuing and acquiring on a single platform, BankWORKS®.

RS2 TODAY

Top 20 Global Acquirers choose RS2

2.4Bn RS2 Smart Processing transactions per year	**31Bn** Global transactions per year	**80M** Transactions per hour	**8.6K** Authorisations per second
>99.99% Platform uptime	**4.1M** Merchants boarded in 3 days through our APIs	**60+** Countries served by RS2	**200+** Payment methods
71 Markets Interchange Services	**38** Years experience	**7** Offices	**400+** Employees

A listed company with 38 years of expertise, RS2 combines proven processing capabilities with a modern, cloud-native, modular architecture, enabling banks, financial institutions and payments companies to simplify complexity, scale internationally and operate with full control across the payments value chain.

www.rs2.com