

Trailblazer (Lifetime achievement) award (vendor)

Maureen Downs

co-founder and chair
**Connamara
Technologies**



Q What is your position within your firm?

Maureen Downs: I am co-founder and chair of Connamara Technologies.

Q How long have you worked in the financial services industry?

Downs: I have worked in the industry for over 30 years.

Q How did you get into the industry? Was it a conscious decision, or did you “fall” into it?

Downs: Although I initially pursued careers in accounting, law, and finance, I was always inspired by my grandfather, who, in the early 1900s, at age 14, took a job as a runner on the Chicago Board of Trade and later became a floor trader and member. My father and other family members followed him. As the industry evolved from floor trading to electronic trading, I saw endless opportunities for growth and innovation, particularly in technology.

Q What does your day-to-day role entail?

Downs: Connamara Technologies’ EP3 exchange platform is a new breed of technology for a new generation of exchanges. It is my job to ensure that it consistently meets the high-performance standards of our customers and keeps pace with the ever-changing landscape of global markets. Day to day, I’m actively engaged

in all key operational areas of the business. No two days are the same, from calls with our global client base to media interviews to attending conferences worldwide.

“
Never confuse efforts with results. As a young professional, I was on the receiving end of those harsh words from the CEO of a Fortune 100 company—and they weren’t meant as career advice. What I learned is that while hard work is important and admirable, hard work must ultimately translate to tangible, measurable bottom-line results.”

Q What single project/piece of work are you most proud of during your career in the industry to date?

Downs: After more than 30 years as a derivatives industry leader, I co-founded Connamara Technologies in 2022. Just like any startup, the hours are long and the stakes are high. But this is all part of offering next-generation technology that is changing the face of the capital markets. I am particularly proud that our EP3 exchange platform is the tech behind ForecastEx, a US regulated predictions exchange that offered first-of-its-kind event contracts for the 2024 US elections.

Q What are you currently working on, and what makes it significant in the context of your position?

Downs: EP3 is purpose-built to promote the growth of exchanges and new marketplaces. Until recently, there were substantial barriers to entry for new exchanges due to significant capital costs for trading floors and datacenters. But with new technologies (like EP3) and the growing acceptance of cloud deployment for exchange operations, the cost of entry is rapidly declining, and the benefits of exchange trading are now available to new asset classes and emerging markets.

Q To what extent were you helped during your career by a mentor/role model within the business?

Downs: When I began my career, “mentoring” was not yet part of the business lexicon. And, any mentorship that was offered was generally not for women. So, I never had a mentor. Though this taught me to be resilient and self-reliant, I am glad that the industry has changed for the better. Now, mentorship is commonplace, and I find sharing my wisdom with up-and-coming business leaders to be highly fulfilling.

Q To what extent does your firm have a formalized framework that seeks to identify and promote talented women and ensure they have every opportunity to realize their ambitions and contribute to the business?

Downs: As a small, three-year-old startup, we have no formalized professional development program for women at this time.

Q What was the greatest obstacle you had to overcome during your career in the industry to date?

Downs: The capital markets industry is a rough-and-tumble place for anyone—perhaps more so for women because, even now, there are so few of us. Throughout my career, I have had to constantly silence the little voice in the back of my head that said, “you’re not as good as the men.”

Q What is the most valuable lesson you’ve learned so far during your career?

Downs: Never confuse efforts with results. As a young professional, I was on the receiving end of those harsh words from the

CEO of a Fortune 100 company—and they weren’t meant as career advice. What I learned is that while hard work is important and admirable, hard work must ultimately translate to tangible, measurable bottom-line results.

Q What would you advise women just entering the industry?

Downs: Work yourself into a position that allows you to add clear value to your organization. That could be in sales, product innovation, tech, data, finance, etc. Keep your own scorecard of your contributions, take full credit for them, and talk about them often and loudly.

Q What does this award mean to you?

Downs: Receiving this prestigious award is not just a recognition for me but a recognition for all women who are innovating in technology and data. I am thrilled to be among this dynamic group of women honorees who are changing the game in capital markets. [wt](#)

“
After more than 30 years as a derivatives industry leader, I co-founded Connamara Technologies in 2022. Just like any startup, the hours are long and the stakes are high. But this is all part of offering next-generation technology that is changing the face of the capital markets.



Recognizing exceptionally talented women across the capital markets

WatersTechnology has always felt strongly about recognizing and promoting women who occupy technology and data roles across the capital markets. However, it has invariably proven a struggle for us when looking to invite women speakers to participate in our events or for candidates for *Waters’* cover profiles. Time and again, we have been disappointed by the poor levels of female representation in both technology and data disciplines, and we want to change that. It goes without saying that women are the most undervalued human resource in our industry, an issue that we want to remedy by way of creating the Women in Technology and Data Awards, a launch pad for capital markets firms to recognize and foster their female talent.