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A History of L3Harris

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Introduction

In the annals of American enterprise, certain companies stand as titans, their trajectories reflecting the broader currents of innovation, economic evolution, and geopolitical shifts. L3Harris Technologies is undeniably one such entity. This book, "A History of L3Harris: The Story of an S&P 500 Company," embarks on a comprehensive journey through the intricate past of a corporation that has not only achieved the prestigious distinction of inclusion in the S&P 500 but has also profoundly shaped critical sectors of technology, defense, and communication. It is a narrative of ambition, strategic foresight, and the relentless pursuit of technological advancement that has propelled L3Harris to its current standing as a global leader.

The story of L3Harris is not a simple linear progression but a rich tapestry woven from the individual histories of its precursor companies—Harris Corporation and L3 Technologies. These entities, each with their own distinct legacies of innovation and market impact, eventually converged in one of the most significant mergers in recent defense and aerospace history. From the early days of radio communication and printing technology to the sophisticated systems that define modern warfare and space exploration, the roots of L3Harris stretch deep into the bedrock of 20th and 21st-century technological development. This book will explore the pivotal moments, the groundbreaking inventions, and the visionary leaders who laid the groundwork for the colossus that is L3Harris today.

Tracing the evolution of L3Harris offers a unique lens through which to examine broader historical trends. The company's journey is intrinsically linked to major global events, from the technological arms race of the Cold War, which spurred unprecedented advancements in defense capabilities, to the digital revolution that transformed commercial communication and information sharing. We will delve into how L3Harris and its predecessors adapted to shifting geopolitical landscapes, embraced emerging technologies, and navigated complex market dynamics to remain at the forefront of their industries. Their contributions have not only advanced national security interests but have also facilitated critical advancements in areas ranging from air traffic control to satellite communications.

Beyond the technological marvels and strategic maneuvers, this book also explores the human element behind L3Harris's success. It is a story of countless engineers, scientists, business leaders, and dedicated employees whose collective efforts have driven innovation and sustained growth. We will examine the corporate cultures that flourished within Harris and L3, the challenges of integration following their monumental merger, and the ongoing commitment to fostering a workforce that can meet the demands of an ever-changing world. Understanding the people and the

principles that have guided L3Harris is essential to grasping the full scope of its impact.

Ultimately, "A History of L3Harris" is more than just a corporate biography; it is a testament to the enduring power of innovation, strategic growth, and adaptability in the face of continuous change. For anyone interested in the history of technology, the defense industry, corporate strategy, or the very fabric of the S&P 500, this book offers an unparalleled look into the making of a modern industrial giant. It promises to illuminate the complex forces that have shaped L3Harris, providing insights into how a company can not only survive but thrive for decades, leaving an indelible mark on industry and society alike.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Roots of Innovation: Precursors to L3Harris

Every colossal oak begins as an acorn, and the mighty L3Harris Technologies is no exception. Its impressive stature in the modern aerospace and defense landscape owes much to the deep, intertwined roots of its predecessor companies: Harris Corporation and L3 Technologies. These were not mere components assembled haphazardly; rather, they were distinct entities, each with a rich history of innovation, strategic foresight, and a tenacious drive to shape the future of technology and communication. To truly understand L3Harris, one must journey back to the very beginnings of these foundational enterprises, tracing their often-unlikely paths from nascent ideas to industry powerhouses.

The narrative of Harris Corporation, in particular, stretches back to the waning years of the 19th century, a time of immense industrial growth and burgeoning technological possibility. It was in 1895, in the unassuming town of Niles, Ohio, that the Harris Automatic Press Company first opened its doors. The founders, brothers Alfred S. and Charles G. Harris, were jewelers and tinkerers by trade, but their inventive spirit led them down a different path. Their initial breakthrough was an automatic sheet feeder for printing presses, a revolutionary invention that significantly reduced the laborious nature of hand-fed printing. This ingenious device was so advanced that the brothers soon developed an entirely new printing press to complement it, one that could deliver ten times the output of a hand-fed machine. This marked the birth of a company that would, for many decades, be synonymous with advancements in the printing industry.

From its humble beginnings, the Harris Automatic Press Company quickly established itself as a leader in commercial printing press technology, pioneering innovations such as the first commercially successful offset lithographic press and the first two-color offset press in the early 1900s. Their commitment to pushing the boundaries of printing technology was unwavering. As the company grew, it also underwent several name changes, reflecting its evolving structure and expanding reach within the graphic arts market. In 1917, the company moved its operations to Cleveland, Ohio. A significant consolidation occurred in 1926 when Harris Automatic Press merged with the Seybold Machine Company of Dayton, Ohio, and the Premier & Potter Printing Press Company, Inc. of New York. This union resulted in the formation of the Harris-Seybold-Potter Company.

The newly christened Harris-Seybold-Potter Company continued its innovative streak, introducing a new four-color press in 1931. The company's name was further streamlined to Harris Seybold in 1946. A pivotal moment arrived in 1947 when George

S. Dively gained control of the company, setting the stage for a period of significant expansion and diversification. Under Dively's leadership, Harris-Seybold began to strategically broaden its horizons beyond purely mechanical printing presses, venturing into heavy and light industry subdivisions and strengthening its presence in the burgeoning electronics field.

This strategic shift towards electronics gained considerable momentum in the 1950s. Recognizing the changing technological landscape, Harris-Seybold made a crucial acquisition in 1957 by merging with the Intertype Corporation, a prominent manufacturer of hot metal typesetting machines based in Brooklyn, New York. This merger led to another name change, and the company became the Harris-Intertype Corporation. While printing and broadcasting machinery remained a core business, producing items like offset lithographic presses, paper cutting machines, and bindery equipment, the company was clearly signaling its intent to move into new, more electronically focused areas.

The true genesis of Harris Corporation's transformation into an electronics and defense powerhouse can be directly linked to its pivotal merger in 1967 with Radiation, Inc. Founded in Melbourne, Florida, in 1950 by electronics engineers Homer Denius and George Shaw, Radiation, Inc. was a company born out of the burgeoning aerospace industry. Its location, just miles south of Cape Canaveral, was no accident, providing a strategic advantage in the developing space race.

Radiation, Inc. quickly became a premier developer of miniaturized electronics, tracking, and pulse-code-modulation technologies, all vital components for America's nascent space programs. Their contributions were instrumental in the nation's first communication and weather satellites, such as Telstar, Courier, Nimbus, and Tiros, as well as critical military missile systems like Atlas, Polaris, and Minuteman. The company's success was also attributable to its highly skilled staff, many of whom held advanced engineering degrees. By 1967, a mere seventeen years after its founding, Radiation, Inc. had grown to employ 5,000 people and boasted annual sales exceeding \$50 million.

The merger of Harris-Intertype and Radiation, Inc. in 1967 was a strategic stroke of genius. Harris-Intertype sought to expand its operations into the rapidly growing electronics field, while Radiation, Inc. aimed to diversify its government contractor business into the commercial sector. The combined entity, still operating under the Harris-Intertype name, saw annual sales surpass \$250 million and its workforce swell to over 12,000 employees. This union brought Radiation's cutting-edge electronic control technology, crucial for refining typesetting equipment, and provided Harris-Intertype with its initial entry into the semiconductor and communication systems business. This was a clear turning point, marking the beginning of Harris Corporation's true transition from a company rooted in mechanical printing to a formidable force in advanced electronics.

The 1960s also saw other strategic acquisitions that bolstered Harris-Intertype's move into electronics. In 1959, they acquired PRD Electronics, a Brooklyn, New York-based manufacturer of microwave test equipment. PRD, established in 1944, had made a name for itself in precision electronic instruments and defense electronics, further enhancing Harris's capabilities in the burgeoning microwave technology sector. Later, in 1969, Harris Corporation acquired RF Communications and Farinon Electric Corporation, further expanding its microwave assets.

By 1970, electronics accounted for 50% of Harris-Intertype's \$380 million in sales, a clear indication of the success of its diversification strategy. The company opened a new plant in Melbourne, Florida, that same year, solidifying its commitment to the region that had become a hub for aerospace and electronics innovation. In 1974, the company officially changed its name to Harris Corporation, dropping "Intertype" to reflect its broadened scope. Four years later, in 1978, Harris Corporation relocated its headquarters from Cleveland, Ohio, to Melbourne, Florida, planting deep roots in the Space Coast region that would remain its home. The printing operations, the original foundation of the company, were eventually sold off in 1983. This marked the completion of Harris's remarkable transformation from a printing press manufacturer into a dedicated electronics company, a journey that would lay the groundwork for its future as a global technology giant.

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