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CA, Inc.

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Introduction

The story of CA, Inc., also known as Computer Associates International and later CA Technologies, is a sweeping narrative of ambition, innovation, controversy, and transformation within the American technology sector. Founded in 1976, CA grew from humble origins—a modest startup with roots in both Switzerland and New York—into one of the world’s largest and most influential enterprise software companies. Its journey parallels the evolution of the software industry itself, from the dominance of mainframe computers to the rise of distributed and cloud computing, and ultimately, the software-driven modern enterprise.

CA, Inc.'s trajectory was shaped by bold leadership and a relentless pursuit of growth. Co-founder Charles B. Wang, an immigrant with a keen sense for technology and opportunity, embodied the can-do spirit of American entrepreneurship. Alongside Russell Artzt and others, Wang initially sought to capitalize on gaps in IBM’s software offerings, using ingenuity and borrowed funds to launch their first product, CA SORT. Early on, CA pioneered strategies that would become hallmarks of its business—aggressive acquisitions, rapid innovation, and the cultivation of a robust ecosystem for mainframe users.

The decades that followed saw CA ascend rapidly through the ranks of American business. By the late 1980s, it was a billion-dollar powerhouse, celebrated for its technical solutions and feared for its acquisition-driven expansion. The company’s ability to adapt and scale was remarkable. It rode industry waves: from mainframe dominance, through the challenges of the PC and client-server eras, and into the transformations wrought by digital networks and the internet. Alongside landmark deals for firms like Legent, Cheyenne, and Platinum, CA’s corporate culture and management decisions sometimes drew criticism, reflecting the intense competitive and financial pressures of the software sector.

Yet CA’s story is not only one of growth and technological achievement. The early 2000s brought unprecedented scrutiny and a major reckoning. Revelations about accounting irregularities and corporate governance issues reshaped public and investor perceptions, forcing the company to confront its internal practices and public responsibilities. With new leadership and a refreshed identity as CA, Inc., the company sought to restore its reputation and reorient its business for a new technological era.

In the years leading to its acquisition by Broadcom in 2018, CA reinvented itself once more, this time as a champion of the cloud, agile development, and cybersecurity. Under the CA Technologies brand, the company expanded its portfolio to meet the needs of modern enterprises, investing heavily in products and capabilities that

anticipated the digital transformation of the early 21st century. The \$18.9 billion buyout by Broadcom marked the end of CA's independence but also signified the value and endurance of its core technologies.

This book chronicles the multifaceted history of CA, Inc.—from its entrepreneurial beginnings through decades of growth, adversity, and renewal. It examines not only the products and deals that shaped the company, but also the people, strategies, controversies, and innovations that defined its path. More than a corporate chronicle, it is the story of an American company navigating the shifting tides of technology, business, and global enterprise—and what its evolving legacy signals for the future.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Genesis of a Software Giant

The year 1976 was a vibrant pivot point in American history, nestled between the counter-cultural shifts of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the dawn of the personal computer revolution that would fully blossom in the 1980s. Economically, the nation was finding its footing after a period of uncertainty, while technologically, the mainframe computer still reigned supreme in the corporate world. It was within this specific milieu that Computer Associates International, Inc., later to be known as CA, Inc. and then CA Technologies, began its remarkable journey.

The roots of what would become a multinational software powerhouse stretched across continents, finding initial grounding in both Zurich, Switzerland, and New York City. This dual origin story speaks to the burgeoning global nature of technology even in its nascent stages. In Switzerland, a company known as Computer Associates A.G. had been established in 1970 by Samuel W. Goodner, with Walter Haefner providing crucial financial backing. Goodner, an American working for University Computing Company (UCC), had been sent to Europe to oversee a Swiss computer services acquisition.

The pivotal moment that opened the door for independent software ventures like Computer Associates was IBM's decision in 1969 to "unbundle" its hardware from its software and support services. Prior to this, software was essentially given away with the expensive mainframe computers, limiting opportunities for specialized software development outside of IBM itself. This regulatory shift created a fertile new market, allowing entrepreneurs to develop and sell programs independently. Goodner aimed to exploit this burgeoning demand by creating software products specifically for the IBM mainframe market.

Meanwhile, in New York City, a driven and visionary individual named Charles B. Wang was observing these shifts with a keen eye. Born in Shanghai, China, in 1944, Wang had immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of eight, settling in Queens. His father, a former supreme court justice in Shanghai, had to restart his career in the U.S., becoming a law professor. Charles, after studying mathematics and physics at Queens College, entered the world of computer programming in 1967. His early career included a programming trainee position at Columbia University's Riverside Research Institute and later a role at Standard Data Corporation in New York, where he launched a software division.

It was at Standard Data Corporation that Wang encountered the Swiss firm Computer Associates International Ltd., which had been selling its CA-SORT package in Europe since 1971. This software was designed to optimize IBM mainframes by providing

efficient sort, merge, and copy capabilities, a direct plug-in replacement for IBM's own sort utility. The concept of specialized, third-party software that enhanced existing mainframe operations resonated deeply with Wang. His boss at Standard Data was offered a franchise for this Swiss company, but when the offer was declined, Wang seized the opportunity himself.

Thus, at the age of 31, Charles Wang co-founded Computer Associates in 1976, initially as a joint venture with the Swiss entity. He started the venture with limited capital, famously using credit cards for initial funding. Wang partnered with Russell Artzt, a fellow Queens College graduate whom he had met in the 1960s and worked alongside at Standard Data Corporation. Artzt, a Bronx-born software engineer, was instrumental in developing the company's early programs for mainframe computers and would lead its research and development operations for decades.

The newly formed American entity, Computer Associates, Inc., with Wang as its president, began by marketing CA-SORT in the United States and the Western Hemisphere. The original Swiss firm continued to operate, marketing some of Standard Data's products in Europe. This initial setup, born from a blend of international collaboration and entrepreneurial drive, laid the foundation for what would become one of the most significant independent software companies in the world. The unbundling of IBM's software had created the playing field, and Charles Wang, with Russell Artzt and their initial team, stepped onto it, ready to play.

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