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DeVry, Inc.

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Introduction

DeVry, Inc.: The Story of An American Company chronicles the remarkable evolution of an institution that has left an indelible mark on higher education in the United States and beyond. From its modest origins as a small technical training school in Chicago to its current role as Adtalem Global Education, a major provider in the global healthcare education sector, the company's journey mirrors the larger shifts and controversies shaping American education, business, and society.

Founded by inventor Herman A. DeVry in 1931, the company began as a hands-on school specializing in the repair of contemporary technology—first movie equipment, then radios, and eventually, televisions. Over the decades, a relentless focus on practical skills and workforce development propelled DeVry to national prominence, attracting the attention of major corporations like Bell & Howell and eventually transforming it into a degree-granting institution with significant influence in the technical and engineering fields. The narrative of DeVry is inherently one of adaptation, as it responded to waves of technological change, shifting employer needs, and the aspirations of generations of students.

But the DeVry story is not solely one of growth and expansion. Alongside its impressive achievements, the company has faced formidable obstacles: regulatory scrutiny, allegations of deceptive marketing, and public skepticism about the value of for-profit education. Its settlement with the Federal Trade Commission and ongoing dialogue with the U.S. Department of Education highlight both the challenges of scale and the difficulties of accountability in modern higher education. These controversies have, at times, threatened to overshadow the genuine opportunities DeVry has provided to its diverse student body.

The twenty-five chapters that follow provide a detailed, nuanced account of DeVry's institutional milestones, the pivotal figures driving its progress, and the key decisions—strategic and ethical—that have shaped its legacy. We trace the early days of technical instruction; the transition through mergers, acquisitions, and public listings; and the dawn of the digital age, when DeVry pioneered online and hybrid learning. We also examine the fortunes of its offshoots, such as the Keller Graduate School of Management, and the company's bold forays into accounting, business, and especially healthcare education.

Today, DeVry's story is inseparable from that of Adtalem Global Education, an enterprise that has embraced a mission "to empower" future professionals, particularly in urgently needed health fields. Meanwhile, DeVry University continues independently, melding its for-profit roots with a focus on online innovation and

diversity in its student body. As higher education faces increasing scrutiny over value, equity, and accountability, DeVry's ongoing efforts to adapt—embracing AI, refining curricula, and serving nontraditional students—offer both inspiration and cautionary lessons.

This book is intended for students, educators, business leaders, policymakers, and anyone interested in how a single American company both shaped and was shaped by the ambitions, uncertainties, and transformations of twentieth- and twenty-first-century education. Through triumphs and turmoil, the DeVry story stands as a testament to the complexity and importance of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Origins: Herman A. DeVry and the DeForest Training School

In the bustling landscape of Chicago in 1931, a visionary named Herman A. DeVry, an inventor and engineer, laid the cornerstone for what would become a significant force in American education. At a time when the nation was grappling with the Great Depression, DeVry embarked on an ambitious endeavor: founding the DeForest Training School. This institution, initially focused on the practical skills required to repair emerging technologies like movie and radio equipment, marked the humble beginnings of DeVry, Inc., now known as Adtalem Global Education.

Herman A. DeVry was no stranger to innovation. Born in Germany in 1876 and immigrating to the United States at the age of ten, DeVry developed a lifelong fascination with photography and film. His early career saw him working in penny arcades and movie theaters across the American West, where he honed his craft and observed the burgeoning demand for reliable projection technology. This firsthand experience fueled his desire to make motion pictures more accessible.

DeVry's inventive spirit truly shone through in 1912 when he developed the "Theatre in a Suitcase," the first portable motion picture projector. This groundbreaking invention, capable of being carried in a small suitcase, revolutionized how films could be shown, making them accessible to schools, churches, and even homes. This innovation cemented his reputation and earned him the moniker "The Father of Visual Education," selling over 50,000 "Type E" projectors to educational institutions.

His entrepreneurial ventures led him to establish the DeVry Corporation in 1913, initially focused on manufacturing his projectors. By 1919, he had gained control of the Industrial Film Company, rebranding it as the DeVry Company. He also ventured into producing educational and training films, further demonstrating his commitment to practical learning. In 1925, he founded the DeVry Summer School of Visual Instruction, drawing teachers from across the country.

The establishment of the DeForest Training School in 1931 was a logical extension of DeVry's belief in hands-on, career-oriented education. He partnered with his friend, the renowned inventor Lee de Forest, a pioneer in sound-on-film recording, lending the school a degree of legitimacy and a recognizable name in the world of electronics. Chicago, a city with a growing industrial base and a need for skilled technicians, proved to be an ideal location for such an institution.

The school's initial curriculum was highly specialized, focusing on the technical skills

needed to maintain and repair the era's cutting-edge technologies. Students learned the intricacies of movie equipment, a direct nod to Herman DeVry's own pioneering work in the film industry. Radio repair was another core offering, catering to the widespread popularity and increasing complexity of home radio sets. As technology advanced, the school quickly adapted, expanding its offerings to include training in television repair, a foresight that positioned it at the forefront of the electronics revolution.

The DeForest Training School quickly gained a reputation for its practical, career-focused approach. During World War II, its expertise was so highly regarded that the United States military enlisted the institution to train troops in electronics, highlighting the critical nature of the skills it imparted. This wartime contribution further solidified the school's standing as a vital educational resource, preparing individuals for immediate and impactful roles in the workforce. The school was also one of the first approved under the G.I. Bill, providing opportunities for returning service members to gain valuable technical skills.

In 1941, Herman A. DeVry passed away, but his legacy and vision for practical education continued to shape the institution. The school he founded, born out of a passion for innovation and a commitment to accessible, skills-based training, had already established itself as a dynamic force in the educational landscape. The groundwork was laid for its future transformations, even as it navigated the post-war era and the rapid technological advancements that lay ahead.

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