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Jabil Circuit

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Introduction

Jabil Circuit, known simply as Jabil, is a name that resonates far beyond the electronics manufacturing services industry. Established in the industrial heartland of Detroit in 1966, the company has evolved from a small circuit board assembler for mainframe computers into one of the world's leading providers of manufacturing solutions for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) across the globe. This transformation did not happen overnight; it is a testament to decades of innovation, resilience, and strategic vision.

This book, "Jabil Circuit: The Story of An American Company," traces the remarkable history and growth of Jabil. We begin by examining its modest founding by James Golden and Bill Morean—two visionaries who blended their names to form "Jabil"—and follow its journey through key milestones, from savvy deals with automotive giants like General Motors to bold steps into automation and global expansion. The company's ability to reinvent itself amidst shifting technological tides and volatile markets reveals much about the qualities that underpin enduring American businesses.

Jabil's evolution is also a story of adaptation to industry disruption. As personal computing, the internet, and telecommunications transformed the world, Jabil expanded its services and acquired facilities and businesses spanning Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Strategic decisions—such as ramping up its engineering prowess, acquiring complementary businesses, and investing in advanced manufacturing capabilities—propelled Jabil from a niche supplier to a multinational powerhouse listed on the S&P 500.

Yet, the Jabil story is about more than financial statements and corporate strategy. At its heart is a distinctive culture defined by a commitment to customer partnership, inclusivity, and innovation. This book delves into the principles and leadership philosophies that have shaped Jabil, from its focus on continuous improvement and operational excellence to its embrace of diversity and sustainability initiatives.

Finally, we look ahead. Jabil today operates hundreds of global sites, employs a vast team, and delivers services across industries as diverse as healthcare, automotive, defense, and consumer products. It is a leader in deploying new technologies like 3D printing and artificial intelligence in manufacturing, and a partner helping the world's most recognized brands bring ideas to market faster and more efficiently. As we explore Jabil's present and future, we consider the challenges and opportunities facing advanced manufacturing enterprises in a rapidly digitizing, interconnected world.

Whether you are a business leader, student of industry, or simply curious about how a company can grow from a Detroit startup to a global icon, this book serves as both a historical chronicle and a forward-looking assessment. Welcome to the story of Jabil Circuit—an American company constantly remaking itself, and in so doing, helping to shape the future of manufacturing.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Genesis of Jabil Circuit

Every colossal enterprise has a starting point, a moment when an idea, a few individuals, and a fledgling operation converge to plant the seeds of what will one day become much larger. For Jabil Circuit, this moment arrived in January 1966, not in a gleaming corporate campus, but in the unassuming suburban landscape of Detroit, Michigan. It was here that two men, James Golden and Bill Morean, decided to pool their talents and ambitions to create a company that would, in time, leave an indelible mark on the global manufacturing services industry.

The name itself, "Jabil," is a straightforward yet enduring testament to this initial partnership, simply combining the first syllables of their respective first names: James and Bill. This choice, devoid of grandiosity, hinted at the practical, no-nonsense approach that would often characterize the company's operations in its early years. They began with a clear, albeit specialized, focus: the repair and production of circuit board assemblies.

In the mid-1960s, the electronic landscape was vastly different from what it is today. Mainframe computers were the titans of technology, hulking machines that occupied entire rooms and represented the cutting edge of processing power. It was for manufacturers of these formidable machines that Jabil found its initial niche. Early clients included Control Data Systems and Burroughs Business Systems, both prominent names in the burgeoning computer industry.

The work was meticulous. Circuit boards, the very backbone of electronic devices, required precise assembly and, often, careful repair. In those nascent days, much of this work was a manual art, a testament to skilled hands and keen eyes rather than the high-speed automated lines that would come to define Jabil's future. The company's ability to deliver on these critical tasks for such significant clients, even on a small scale, spoke to the foundational expertise and reliability that Golden and Morean instilled from the outset.

While James Golden played a crucial role in the company's inception, his journey with Jabil was relatively brief. He eventually sold his share to Bill Morean, who then became the sole driving force behind the young company. This transition, though early in Jabil's history, marked a pivotal moment, placing the company's destiny firmly in the hands of the Morean family, a lineage that would guide Jabil through decades of transformative growth.

Following this shift, in 1967, Jabil's operations moved from Morean's garage to a small facility in Royal Oak, Michigan. This physical expansion, while modest, signaled a

move towards more structured operations as the company continued to secure its footing in the circuit board manufacturing industry. The entrepreneurial spirit, however, remained at its core, as the founders were known to run the business conservatively, focusing on internally generated capital and nurturing close customer relationships. This approach laid the groundwork for a robust and adaptive enterprise.

By 1969, Jabil Circuit was formally incorporated, a significant legal step that cemented its status as a growing business entity. This incorporation provided the necessary framework for future expansion and formalized the operations that had begun as a collaborative effort between two individuals. The company's journey from a humble garage to an incorporated entity in just a few years underscored the early demand for their specialized services and the nascent electronics manufacturing services industry itself.

The early years saw Jabil diligently serving its customers, refining its processes, and quietly building a reputation for quality and reliability in the critical area of circuit board assembly. These formative experiences in Detroit, focused on the precise needs of mainframe computer manufacturers, provided the essential foundation upon which all subsequent growth and diversification would be built. The stage was set for the next chapter in Jabil's story, one that would see it transcend its initial scope and embrace new opportunities.

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