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Lexmark Int'l Inc

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Introduction

Lexmark International, Inc. stands as a testament to the enduring strength and adaptability of American enterprise. Founded in 1991 as a spin-off from IBM's Information Products Corporation, Lexmark inherited not only legacy technology and a global customer base, but also a culture of innovation that would sustain the company for decades to come. Headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, Lexmark journeyed from humble beginnings to emerge as one of the world's leading brands in imaging and printing solutions.

The story of Lexmark is, in many ways, a reflection of the broader shifts within the American technology sector across the last three decades. From its birth during the upheavals of the late 20th century, through the rapid advances that shaped the hardware, software, and services landscape, Lexmark demonstrates how a company can survive—and thrive—amid fierce competition, technological disruption, and changing consumer expectations. Its evolution from a hardware manufacturer to a global solutions provider is a model of strategic reinvention.

Throughout its history, Lexmark navigated myriad challenges: the decline of typewriters, the rise of affordable inkjet and laser printers, the globalization of manufacturing, intense intellectual property battles, and aggressive moves into new market segments such as software and managed print services. Yet, the company's commitment to quality, innovation, and customer service enabled it to weather downturns and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Acquisitions, such as those of Perceptive Software and Brainware, signaled a conscious pivot toward enterprise solutions and value-added services, reflecting Lexmark's ongoing pursuit of relevance in a rapidly digitizing world.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability have also become defining elements of the Lexmark ethos. The company has committed itself to environmental stewardship, ethical practices, and employee well-being, working to lower emissions, conserve energy, reduce waste, and champion diversity. Community outreach and STEM initiatives further highlight Lexmark's effort to not only operate profitably, but also to make a positive impact on society. These initiatives reveal an organization determined to be a force for good in every region in which it operates.

Transformative events such as the 2016 acquisition by a consortium led by Apex Technology and, most recently, the 2025 merger with Xerox have propelled Lexmark into new realms of possibility. Each chapter in the company's evolution has brought new resources, expanded capabilities, and renewed ambition, ensuring that Lexmark—now part of an industry powerhouse—continues to shape the world of

printing, imaging, and enterprise IT solutions.

This book explores Lexmark's full arc: its origins as an IBM division, its rise as an independent innovator, its expansion beyond hardware, and its present and future as part of a larger vision. The story of Lexmark International, Inc. is ultimately about adaptation, leadership, and the relentless pursuit of progress—qualities that are as vital today as they were at the company's founding.

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CHAPTER ONE: The IBM Legacy: A Foundation of Innovation

Before Lexmark International, Inc. carved out its own destiny as a leader in printing and imaging solutions, it existed as a vital, albeit somewhat specialized, arm of one of the 20th century's most iconic technology giants: International Business Machines, or IBM. To understand Lexmark's genesis, one must first appreciate the sprawling empire and strategic shifts that characterized "Big Blue" in the late 1980s and early 1990s. IBM, a company with roots stretching back to 1911 as the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company, had, by the mid-20th century, become synonymous with computing itself, particularly with its dominance in mainframe systems.

For decades, IBM's mainframes, epitomized by the System/360 and System/370, were the undisputed workhorses of industry and government, processing vast amounts of data at speeds that seemed almost magical at the time. This era forged IBM's reputation for engineering excellence and a deep commitment to enterprise-level solutions. Yet, even giants must adapt, and the landscape of computing was undergoing a seismic shift. The advent of personal computers in the 1980s, a market IBM itself had entered with its groundbreaking IBM Personal Computer in 1981, began to democratize computing power. This proliferation of smaller, more affordable machines posed a unique challenge to IBM's long-standing business model, which had largely centered on high-cost, high-margin mainframe systems.

Within this changing environment, IBM's Information Products Corporation played a crucial role, encompassing the development and manufacturing of typewriters, keyboards, and printers. While these products might seem less glamorous than mainframe computers, they were essential components of the burgeoning office automation landscape. IBM's typewriters, particularly the revolutionary Selectric series introduced in 1961, were ubiquitous in offices around the world. The Selectric, with its distinctive "golf ball" typing element that could be easily swapped to change fonts, redefined efficiency and aesthetics in typing, paving the way for word processing systems. By 1978, IBM held an astounding 94% of the electric typewriter market, a testament to the Selectric's success.

As the 1980s progressed, IBM continued to innovate in this space, introducing electronic typewriters with features like automatic right-margin justification and electronic keyboards. The company's Displaywriter System, launched in 1980, functioned primarily as a word processor, integrating a monitor, keyboard, floppy disk drives, and a printer. These products, though not always at the cutting edge of personal computing, represented IBM's significant presence in the broader office

equipment market. The manufacturing prowess behind these products was substantial, with facilities in locations such as Lexington, Kentucky, and Boulder, Colorado, producing millions of units over the years.

However, the late 1980s proved to be a challenging period for IBM. The company, accustomed to its dominance, found itself grappling with intense competition in the rapidly expanding personal computer market. Clone manufacturers emerged, offering more cost-effective alternatives, while companies like Microsoft and Intel began to capture significant market share in software and components. This shift led to financial difficulties for IBM, including substantial losses. In response, IBM began a strategic process of streamlining its operations and focusing on its core computer and software businesses.

This strategic re-evaluation led to the concept of spinning off various divisions into autonomous subsidiaries, sometimes referred to as "Baby Blues." The idea was to make the company more manageable, allow these new entities to attract their own investors, and generally streamline IBM. It was a recognition that some businesses, while valuable, were becoming peripheral to IBM's main strategic direction. Among these divisions slated for independence was the Information Products Corporation, encompassing the typewriter, keyboard, and printer operations.

The decision to divest these operations was not a reflection of their lack of value, but rather a move to allow IBM to sharpen its focus. The printer business, in particular, was seen as a segment with significant growth potential, but one that could flourish more effectively outside of the sprawling IBM corporate structure. The stage was set for the birth of a new entity, one that would inherit a legacy of engineering excellence, a global distribution network, and a skilled workforce, but would embark on its journey with a fresh identity and renewed focus. This was the environment in which Lexmark was conceived, a bold move by IBM to adapt to a changing technological world and empower a part of its legacy to thrive independently. Marvin Mann, an IBM Vice President who had a significant role in the development of the Universal Product Code and had led IBM's typewriter and Information Products divisions, was slated to become the chief executive of this new company.

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