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Republic Services Inc

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Introduction

Republic Services Inc. stands as a pillar of modern American industry, a testament to adaptability, innovation, and a relentless drive to serve communities nationwide. As the nation's second-largest provider of waste and environmental services, Republic Services has shaped not only how waste is managed and recycled but also how companies can aspire to grow responsibly—safeguarding both the environment and the people they serve. This book charts the remarkable ascent of Republic Services from its regional beginnings to its role today as a leader on the S&P 500, exploring not just its history, but also the values, ambitions, and challenges that continue to define its journey.

Born out of a series of bold decisions and strategic mergers, Republic Services' evolution is one of vision and calculated risk-taking. The company's incorporation in the mid-1990s and subsequent public listing signaled a period of rapid transformation for both the business and the waste management industry at large. The pivotal merger with Allied Waste in 2008 cemented Republic's status as a powerhouse, vaulting it to a new echelon in terms of operational scale, geographic reach, and financial capability. Yet, even as Republic Services grew in size, the company remained deeply committed to its core mission: to provide reliable, responsible, and resourceful environmental solutions.

At the heart of Republic's business are its comprehensive environmental services—ranging from non-hazardous solid waste collection and disposal to advanced recycling programs and renewable energy initiatives. With over 13 million customers in more than 2,000 communities, the company's impact is felt across the American landscape. As it expanded, Republic Services invested heavily in infrastructure and innovation, operating hundreds of landfills, transfer stations, and recycling centers and pioneering industry-leading projects such as landfill gas-to-energy conversion. These investments not only improved efficiency and profitability but also laid the foundation for new environmental stewardship.

Republic Services' success owes much to the people who guide and embody its values. Leadership has provided vision and continuity while company culture has fostered a sense of pride, safety, and inclusivity among its workforce. The company's five core values—respectful, responsible, reliable, resourceful, and relentless—are more than words; they are daily touchstones guiding interactions with customers, communities, and each other. This positive internal culture has garnered Republic a longstanding reputation as a "Great Place to Work," with a workforce that feels empowered, trusted, and motivated to make a difference.

Yet, Republic Services' trajectory has not been without obstacles. The company operates in an industry marked by intense competition, shifting regulations, market volatility, and an ever-present push for greater sustainability. Adapting to these changing conditions has required continuous innovation: from embracing new technologies and digital transformation to making ambitious sustainability commitments and investing in fleet electrification and plastics circularity. As environmental concerns move to the forefront of public consciousness, Republic's response—through climate leadership, community giving, and environmental solutions—highlights its readiness not just to meet challenges but to lead.

This book invites readers to explore the dynamic story of Republic Services Inc.—its past, present, and future. Through tales of strategic growth, cultural evolution, financial resilience, and environmental responsibility, we glimpse the forces that have shaped this extraordinary company and the broader industry it serves. In the process, we discover what it takes not only to manage America's waste but to help build a sustainable tomorrow.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Origins of Republic Services: Roots in American Waste Management

To understand Republic Services, it's essential to first appreciate the evolution of waste management in the United States. For much of American history, dealing with refuse was a simple, often haphazard affair. In colonial times and through the 19th century, households largely handled their own waste, burying it, burning it, or simply dumping it into rivers or onto undeveloped land. As urban centers swelled, so did the mounds of trash, leading to unsanitary conditions, impassable streets, and rampant disease. Typhoid, cholera, yellow fever, and dysentery were grim reminders of the unchecked accumulation of garbage.

The late 1800s marked a turning point, with the emergence of more organized efforts to manage municipal solid waste. New York City, for instance, established a sanitation department in 1895, employing uniformed workers to clean streets and collect refuse. Landfills, though often rudimentary, began to appear outside urban areas as designated burial sites for trash, a step that, while improving city cleanliness, also introduced new environmental challenges. Early methods of waste disposal, such as feeding wet garbage to pigs, chemical reduction, and unrestricted water dumping, were gradually discontinued due to safety concerns.

The mid-20th century, particularly after World War II, ushered in an era of increased consumption and disposable products, leading to a surge in household waste. This period saw the widespread adoption of specialized garbage trucks, including front-load models, which significantly improved the efficiency of waste collection and handling larger volumes. The 1970s brought a heightened awareness of environmental issues, culminating in the first Earth Day in 1970 and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Legislation like the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) began to define modern waste management practices, pushing for the closure of unregulated open dumps and requiring regional planning for waste disposal.

The 1980s solidified the modern concept of solid waste management in the United States, as more cities established systematic collection and disposal services. The industry also saw a growing emphasis on recycling. While recycling had existed in various forms for millennia—ancient Greeks had landfills in 3000 BC, and the Chinese recycled bronze in 2000 BC—it truly began to gain traction in the U.S. during this period.

The 1990s proved to be a pivotal decade for the American waste management industry. The volume of waste generated continued to rise, with Americans producing

an estimated 4.3 pounds of waste per person per day in 1990, a significant increase from earlier decades. This era also witnessed a dramatic surge in recycling tonnages and a growing public and governmental push for recycling initiatives. The EPA introduced a "Waste Hierarchy" that prioritized recycling, followed by composting and waste-to-energy incineration, with landfills as the least preferred option. Many states set ambitious recycling quotas, sometimes as high as 70%.

This increased demand for recycling led to a boom in recycling programs, growing from 600 in 1989 to 4,000 by the early 1990s. However, this rapid expansion also created a glut in the market for recycled materials, and not all collected materials were actually being recycled. Despite these challenges, the recycling industry attracted significant investment, with over \$2 billion projected to be spent on recycling equipment within five years from 1990.

Against this backdrop of evolving waste management practices and a burgeoning industry, Republic Services began to take shape. While formally incorporated as Republic Services in 1996, its roots stretch back through a lineage of strategic mergers and acquisitions that spanned the preceding two decades. It initially operated as a waste management division within Republic Industries, a diversified services company founded by entrepreneur H. Wayne Huizenga. Huizenga, a notable figure in American business, had previously co-founded Waste Management, Inc. in 1968, which grew to become the largest waste hauler in the country by 1982. His experience and vision in the industry were instrumental in the early trajectory of Republic Industries' waste services arm.

The company's initial base of operations was Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the same city where its parent company, Republic Industries, was headquartered. This early period was characterized by aggressive growth through acquisitions, a strategy that would become a hallmark of Republic Services' future expansion. By the mid-1990s, the stage was set for the waste management division of Republic Industries to become an independent entity, poised to make its own significant mark on the American environmental services landscape. The company was ready to embark on a new chapter, transitioning from a subsidiary to a standalone public company in a rapidly changing industry.

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