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Symantec Corp.

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Introduction

Symantec Corporation is a name deeply embedded in the history and evolution of cybersecurity. Founded in the early 1980s amid a wave of Silicon Valley innovation, the company began with an ambitious vision of pushing the frontiers of artificial intelligence. Over the ensuing decades, Symantec would transform itself from a modest, research-driven startup into a global leader in digital defense and software security, setting standards and shaping expectations in a rapidly changing digital world. Its journey reflects not only the relentless pace of technological development but also the determination of American enterprise in the face of change and challenge.

Throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Symantec established itself as the guardian of digital environments, evolving well beyond its original mandate. With the acquisition of Peter Norton Computing, the company became a household name through its Norton-branded antivirus products, protecting millions of computers at the dawn of the internet age. Symantec's strategy of aggressive acquisition allowed it to diversify into new domains, consistently adapting its offerings to counter emerging threats, embrace cloud computing, and address both enterprise and consumer needs.

However, Symantec's rise was not without setbacks. The company navigated fierce market competition, sector shake-ups, and shifting consumer demands. Internally, it experienced leadership changes and the complexities of integrating dozens of acquired firms. Externally, it faced controversies, including legal battles over product claims, allegations of improper government contracting, and questions surrounding its accounting practices. Each challenge was a crucible, testing the resilience and adaptability that would define the company's character.

The transformation of Symantec entered a new era with the sale of its enterprise security business to Broadcom in 2019, marking a watershed moment. The divestiture ushered in a focus on consumer cybersecurity, accompanied by a dramatic rebranding as NortonLifeLock. Meanwhile, under Broadcom, the Symantec enterprise brand continues to play a critical role in protecting the data and infrastructure of the world's largest organizations. This dual existence underscores the enduring relevance of what Symantec built—a suite of technologies and a legacy of innovation in digital safety.

Today, the story of Symantec is more than just a chronology of mergers, products, and market statistics. It is a microcosm of the broader story of American technology companies: marked by invention, expansion, reinvention, and, at times, turbulence. As the global landscape continues to evolve under the threat of cyberattack and the promise of digital transformation, Symantec's history offers vital lessons about

adaptation, leadership, and the eternal importance of trust in a connected world.

In tracing the arc of Symantec Corporation from its formation to its current role under Broadcom and NortonLifeLock, this book aims to provide a comprehensive account of its achievements, setbacks, and ongoing influence. The following chapters are an exploration of Symantec's past, an analysis of its present, and a contemplation of its future—a story that remains vital to understanding not only cybersecurity, but the nature of technological progress itself.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Birth of Symantec: Origins and Vision

The year 1982 marked a vibrant period in the burgeoning technology landscape, especially in Silicon Valley, where innovation seemed to bloom daily. Amidst this fertile ground, a new entity, Symantec Corporation, took root on March 1, 1982. Its inception was not driven by antivirus software or digital security, but by a more fundamental pursuit: artificial intelligence (AI). The company's founder, Gary Hendrix, a distinguished expert in natural language processing and AI, envisioned a future where machines could understand and interact with human language.

Hendrix was not a newcomer to the world of advanced computing. His academic background included undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Texas, where he delved into topics like robotics and planning. His doctoral work, completed in 1975, further solidified his expertise. Before founding Symantec, Hendrix had worked at SRI International, a renowned research institute, and even attempted another venture, Machine Intelligence Corporation, which ultimately did not succeed. These experiences, however, undoubtedly provided valuable lessons that would inform his next endeavor.

The initial capital for Symantec came from a National Science Foundation grant, a testament to the academic and research-oriented origins of the company. With this funding, Hendrix began assembling his team, strategically recruiting natural language processing researchers from Stanford University. These early hires included individuals like Barry Greenstein, who would later become known as a professional poker player, but at the time was instrumental in developing the word processor component for Symantec's first product. Jerry Kaplan, an entrepreneur and author, also contributed as a consultant, focusing on building an in-RAM database for the same product.

The initial focus of Symantec was clearly on AI-related projects, including the development of a database program. This early vision was ambitious, aiming to create sophisticated software for networked environments, with an eye towards both business and consumer markets. However, the path from groundbreaking research to marketable products is often long and winding, and Symantec in its nascent stages was still far from releasing its first offering.

By 1983, recognizing the need for additional financial backing, Hendrix sought out venture capitalists who shared his enthusiasm for artificial intelligence. This injection of private funding signaled a shift from purely grant-funded research to a more commercially driven enterprise, though the core AI focus remained. The early days

were characterized by intense development work, as the team strived to bring their innovative concepts to fruition.

A significant turning point arrived in 1984, a mere two years after Symantec's founding. The company, though focused on promising AI projects, found itself acquired by a smaller competitor known as C&E Software. This merger might seem counterintuitive at first glance—a smaller fish swallowing a slightly larger one—but it proved to be a pivotal strategic move. C&E Software was co-founded by Dennis Coleman and Gordon E. Eubanks Jr., with Eubanks at its helm.

Gordon Eubanks was a figure of considerable acumen and a background that was as unconventional as it was impressive for a software executive. A former nuclear submarine commander, Eubanks possessed a disciplined and strategic mindset. He had studied computer engineering at the Naval Post-Graduate School in Monterey, California, where he even developed an innovative microcomputer tool called EBASIC for the CPM operating system as part of his master's thesis. Eubanks had also founded Compiler Systems, Inc. in 1975, authoring products like CBASIC, one of the early successful languages on personal computers.

The acquisition of Symantec by C&E Software was a mutually beneficial arrangement. While C&E Software was also working on a database program, the combined expertise of both companies proved complementary. The decision was made to retain the Symantec name for the combined entity, acknowledging the brand's early recognition and the vision upon which it was founded. With the merger complete, Gordon Eubanks stepped into the role of chief executive officer of the newly enlarged Symantec. Hendrix, the founder, transitioned to the role of vice president in charge of advanced technology, ensuring his continued influence on the company's innovative pursuits. The corporate headquarters were established in Cupertino, California.

This early strategic maneuver set the stage for Symantec's future trajectory. It combined the deep research and AI focus of Hendrix's original vision with the pragmatic leadership and market-oriented approach of Eubanks. The company, now under new leadership and with a broadened pool of talent, was poised to make its mark on the burgeoning software industry. The quiet beginnings of Symantec, rooted in artificial intelligence and nurtured by a strategic acquisition, laid the groundwork for what would become a formidable presence in the world of digital technology.

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