

Background



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CORPORATE BACKGROUND

Ashton-Tate is one of the world's premier developers and marketers of business software for microcomputers. The company is the leading supplier of database management systems, offers advanced integrated and word processing packages and provides a level of customer service and support that has become an industry standard.

Based in Torrance, California, Ashton-Tate was founded in 1980 and rapidly became an industry leader in sales, marketing and innovation. One of the fastest growing companies in the personal computer industry, Ashton-Tate has seen revenues and net income more than quadruple in two years. For the fiscal year 1986, ended January 31, 1986, the company had record revenues of \$121.6 million and net income of \$16.6 million, an increase of 47.7 percent and 122 percent, respectively, from the previous year.

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Ashton-Tate's initial product, the best-selling dBASE II, was introduced in 1981 and was followed by a series of significant enhancements. The company has released a succession of software packages that significantly increase business productivity, including dBASE III PLUS and Framework II.

In a move to significantly broaden its product line, Ashton-Tate, in December 1985, acquired MultiMate International Corporation of East Hartford, Connecticut, producer of the best-selling MultiMate Professional Word Processor. Founded in 1982, MultiMate has become the leading developer and marketer of microcomputer word processing software for the business marketplace. As a result of the acquisition, Ashton-Tate has leading products in three significant market segments -- word processing, database management and integrated software.

Under its "distributed" product development strategy, the company maintains research and development centers throughout the U.S. and also maintains relationships with independent software developers. For example, Framework and Framework II were designed by Forefront Corporation of Sunnyvale, California. Ashton-Tate, taking an equity position in the company, produced and marketed Framework beginning in 1984. It subsequently acquired Forefront in 1985.

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Ashton-Tate offers comprehensive service and support to business, from the Fortune 500 to small businesses. The company's products are sold through an extensive distribution network, including retail dealers, value-added resellers (VARs), and hardware and software vendors. In addition, the company is the leader in the international software marketplace, which accounted for 24 percent of the firm's total revenues for the fiscal year ended January 31, 1986.

The Ashton-Tate Publishing Group, the first established in the microcomputer software industry, has published more than 40 books, book/disk packages and add-in software products that help computer users better understand and use hardware and software products.

Product Development

Ashton-Tate's product development efforts are headed by Harvey Jeane, vice president of product development, and Robert Carr, chief scientist.

In addition to Ashton-Tate's development center in Glendale, California, the MultiMate facility in East Hartford, Connecticut and its Forefront Development Center in Sunnyvale, California, the company works with several independent firms. Among these are Queue Associates Inc. and Intelligent Designs.

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The "development center" strategy gives Ashton-Tate an entrepreneurial capability and degree of design specialization generally found only in small companies. In addition to developing products itself, Ashton-Tate encourages development of applications software by outside vendors and users, designed for use with Ashton-Tate products.

Products

o **dBASE III PLUS** -- dBASE III PLUS is the most complete database management system for microcomputer users. dBASE III PLUS addresses the needs of beginning and experienced computer users, allowing them to store, edit, retrieve and print information quickly and easily across a broad range of applications -- without programming. Powerful in a single-user configuration, dBASE III PLUS also incorporates a built-in multi-user capability to accommodate businesses and organizations wishing to expand into the local area network (LAN) environment.

dBASE III PLUS improves upon the industry standards established by dBASE III by offering greater depth, power and ease of use. dBASE III PLUS sorts up to two times faster and indexes up to 10 times faster than dBASE III. In addition, the Assistant, the dBASE III PLUS menu-driven user interface, employs Framework-like pull-down menus, making the program easy to learn and operate.

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dBASE III PLUS also incorporates several new features that increase the capabilities of the product without requiring programming by a user. These include the Advanced Query System, which uses pull-down menus -- not commands -- for retrieval of selected information; View, which provides advanced relational capability through virtual connection between databases; Screen Painter, a pull-down menu option for creating custom entry forms and Applications Generator, which creates custom applications without programming.

dBASE III PLUS is also a powerful tool for programmers developing specific applications. It includes more than 50 additions to the dBASE programming language, incorporating all the features and benefits of the dBASE III Developer's Release including Runtime+. It also includes the Data Catalog, which organizes and maintains related files.

More than 1,700 dBASE programs are currently being marketed using the Runtime products, with applications ranging from insurance to dental/medical to the oil and gas industries.

dBASE III PLUS also includes a built-in multi-user capability that allow simultaneous access to data by multiple users without fear of data corruption on a LAN. Users can also purchase the dBASE III PLUS LAN Pack, which contains three access disks that allow three additional users on a network to share dBASE III PLUS on a network-only basis.

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o **FRAMEWORK II** -- Framework II is an integrated package for managers and professionals who need the combined power of a spreadsheet and word processor. The seamless integration of spreadsheet and word processor in Framework II enables users to organize concepts and develop finished documents, complete with words, numbers and graphs.

Framework II's spreadsheet is comparable to the best stand-alone spreadsheets and goes beyond stand-alone limitations by including a database, graphs, telecommunication links and programming as well as tight integration with the word processor. And, Framework II's word processor is equal to the most popular stand-alone word processors -- and includes outlining, spelling checker, mailmerge and abbreviations, in addition to close integration with the spreadsheet.

Framework II is the successor to Ashton-Tate's successful Framework, introduced in July 1984. Hundreds of corporations are using Framework for a variety of applications, including financial analysis, time management, sales management, research projects, and writing and editing of all types of materials.

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o **MULTIMATE LINE** -- The MultiMate Line of word processing packages have been designed to bring to the microcomputer the power and flexibility established by dedicated word processing systems. Products include:

o **MultiMate Advantage Professional Word Processor, version 3.6** -- It improves upon the original MultiMate 3.3 Series Professional Word Processor by also providing columnar operations, a built-in 40,000-word thesaurus, automatic footnoting and footnote renumbering, line and box drawing capabilities, and additional advanced features. Suggested retail price is \$595.

o **MultiMate Professional Word Processor 3.3 Series** -- A menu-driven package operating on IBM and IBM compatible 256K systems with more than 130 text editing and document handling features including an 80,000-word spelling checker, a merge utility and support for more than 300 printers and sheet feeders. Suggested retail price is \$495. It is also available in a local area network version.

o **Just Write** -- The entry-level product in the MultiMate line is Just Write. Designed for occasional word processing users, the product includes all basic text processing features, automatic reformatting and footnoting, a 50,000-word spelling checker and the ability to handle documents up to 200 pages. Suggested retail price is \$145.

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o **MultiMate On-File** -- A filing system for maintaining lists of information such as mailing lists, personnel records and inventory, which is offered as part of the MultiMate Advantage package.

o **GraphLink** -- A text and graphics integrator that can be used to import graphics produced by other software and merge them with Advantage documents. GraphLink is available only as part of the MultiMate Advantage package.

Other Ashton-Tate products include dBASE II, the first full-function relational database management system for 8-bit computers. Ashton-Tate also co-markets several products with third party vendors including: dBASE/Answer with Sterling Software; Natural/Connection with Software AG and ADR/PC DATACOM with Applied Data Research. These products allow information to be transferred between corporate mainframes and Ashton-Tate products running on personal computers.

International

Ashton-Tate established itself early as the leading microcomputer software vendor in the international marketplace, offering a comprehensive line of products in many languages. dBASE II is currently available in 11 languages, while dBASE III and Framework have been translated into 10 languages. The company was one of the first to offer its products in such a variety of languages. Foreign language versions of Framework II and dBASE III PLUS will be available in 1986.

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The company maintains subsidiaries in West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and Australia. It also has agreements with distributors in several countries, including New Zealand, France, and Brazil, and works jointly with major hardware manufacturers, including IBM, Olivetti, ACT, and Ericsson, to distribute its products. In addition, Ashton-Tate serves the Japanese market through Nippon Ashton-Tate, a company formed under a joint venture agreement with Software International, a subsidiary of Japan Systems Engineering (JSE), Tokyo, Japan. Nippon Ashton-Tate develops and sells software products specifically designed for the expanding Japanese market.

Service and Support

Ashton-Tate's position as one of the top microcomputer software firms gives it the resources to provide its customers with comprehensive service and support. From the Fortune 500 to small businesses, users of Ashton-Tate products are assured of quick and aggressive response to service and support needs.

Through its Corporate Emphasis Program, Ashton-Tate provides technical support, training, and important information for corporate MIS/DP professionals about issues such as applications development and resource sharing. The elements of the program include product support, training and information exchange.

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Ashton-Tate's Corporate Advisory Board, comprised of MIS/DP executives from 14 major American corporations, provides a regular dialogue with the company, enabling Ashton-Tate to design products and services that address the needs of corporate users.

Publishing

In 1983, Ashton-Tate was the first microcomputer software company to establish a Publishing Group. The group's publications include Everyman's Database Primer for dBASE III PLUS, dBASE II For Business, Framework II: An Introduction, and the Through The MicroMaze series. The group also publishes a quarterly magazine called The Ashton-Tate Quarterly, which provides users of Ashton-Tate products with practical advice on how to use those products.

The Publishing Group releases books, book/disk packages and add-in software to help computer users better understand and use a variety of hardware and software products. The group sells its products through a variety of channels. Books and book/disk packages are distributed to the book trade by McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. In addition, books and book disks along with add-in software are marketed through computer retail stores. The add-in software products increase the functionality of Ashton-Tate's applications.

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Management

Edward M. Esber Jr. became president and chief executive officer of Ashton-Tate in November 1984. He joined the company in May 1984 as executive vice president, marketing and sales. Esber previously held several executive positions at VisiCorp, was a marketing manager for Texas Instruments' Consumer Products Division and held engineering positions with IBM's Systems Products Division.

Esber holds an MBA from Harvard Business School, an MSEE from Syracuse University, New York and a BS in computer engineering from Case Institute of Technology in Ohio.

The company's three executive vice presidents are Roy E. Folk, who directs marketing and strategic planning; Ronald S. Posner, who heads sales and international activities; and Norman H. Block, responsible for finance and administration.

Folk had more than 16 years of marketing and management experience in the computer industry before joining Ashton-Tate in August 1985. Folk most recently was president and CEO of Paladin Software Corporation, a company he founded in October 1983. From February 1981 through May 1983, Folk was marketing manager at VisiCorp. Prior to that, Folk served in key marketing positions with Digital Equipment Corporation, Xerox, Amcomp and Applicon. He holds a BS and MS in computer science and an MBA in management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Posner has been a member of Ashton-Tate's board of directors since April 1984 and was appointed to his current position in August 1985. He previously served as acting vice president of the company's international organization.

Before joining Ashton-Tate, Posner was founder, chairman and chief executive officer of National Training Systems, a provider of microcomputer training programs. He holds an MBA from Harvard Business School.

Block joined Ashton-Tate in December 1983, and brings nearly 20 years of experience in corporate finance at major corporations. He has served in senior financial positions with several companies, including Mattel, Dominion Textile (USA), a large multinational corporation, and ITT Data Services. He holds an MBA from New York University.

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