# Apple Inc. (AAPL)

Headquarters: Cupertino, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Apple was founded on April 1, 1976, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne. Incorporated as Apple Computer, Inc. in 1977, rebranded to Apple Inc. in 2007.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Apple began with the Apple I, designed by Steve Wozniak and marketed by Steve Jobs. The Apple II brought early success, and in 1984 Apple launched the Macintosh, one of the first mass-market computers with a graphical user interface. Jobs departed in 1985 after internal conflicts, and Apple struggled until his return in 1997 through the acquisition of NeXT. He introduced a series of innovations including the iMac, iPod, iTunes Store, and the iPhone in 2007, which reshaped the mobile industry. Apple later expanded into wearables, services, and digital ecosystems.

## Present Day Focus:

Today, Apple is a leader in consumer electronics and digital services. Its products include the iPhone, Mac, iPad, Apple Watch, and services such as Apple Music, iCloud, and the App Store. It continues to innovate in areas such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and sustainability.

## Key People:

* CEO: Tim Cook
* Chairman: Arthur D. Levinson
* COO: Jeff Williams
* SVP, Software Engineering: Craig Federighi
* SVP, Hardware Technologies: Johny Srouji

# Microsoft Corporation (MSFT)

Headquarters: Redmond, Washington, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, initially to develop and sell BASIC interpreters for the Altair 8800.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Microsoft’s early breakthrough was licensing MS-DOS to IBM in 1981, which became the foundation of its dominance in PC operating systems. Windows, launched in 1985, grew into the world’s leading operating system. The company expanded into office software with Microsoft Office, enterprise solutions, gaming with Xbox, and cloud computing with Azure. Bill Gates stepped down as CEO in 2000, succeeded by Steve Ballmer, and later Satya Nadella in 2014, who shifted the company towards cloud-first and AI-powered strategies.

## Present Day Focus:

Today, Microsoft is a diversified technology giant focusing on cloud computing (Azure), software (Windows, Office 365), gaming (Xbox), and AI tools. Its cloud and enterprise businesses drive much of its growth.

## Key People:

* CEO: Satya Nadella
* Chairman: Satya Nadella
* President & Vice Chair: Brad Smith
* CFO: Amy Hood

# Alphabet Inc. (GOOG)

Headquarters: Mountain View, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin while at Stanford University.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Originally Google Inc., the company revolutionized internet search with its PageRank algorithm. It quickly grew into a dominant force in online advertising with AdWords and AdSense. Over the years, it expanded into Gmail, Google Maps, YouTube, Android, and Chrome. In 2015, Google restructured under a new parent company, Alphabet Inc., to manage its growing portfolio including Google, Waymo, DeepMind, and other ventures.

## Present Day Focus:

Alphabet remains a global leader in search, digital advertising, cloud computing, and AI. It also invests heavily in future technologies like self-driving cars (Waymo), health sciences (Verily), and quantum computing.

## Key People:

* CEO: Sundar Pichai (Alphabet & Google)
* Founders: Larry Page, Sergey Brin
* Chairman: John L. Hennessy

# PayPal Holdings, Inc. (PYPL)

Headquarters: San Jose, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in December 1998 as Confinity by Max Levchin, Peter Thiel, and Luke Nosek; merged with X.com founded by Elon Musk in 2000 and became PayPal.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

PayPal was an early pioneer in online payments, allowing individuals and businesses to send money securely over the internet. It grew rapidly after integrating with eBay in 2002, which later acquired PayPal. In 2015, eBay spun off PayPal as an independent publicly traded company.

## Present Day Focus:

PayPal is a leading digital payments platform used worldwide. It operates Venmo, Braintree, and has expanded into cryptocurrency trading and financial services.

## Key People:

* President & CEO: Alex Chriss
* Chairman: John Donahoe

# American International Group, Inc. (AIG)

Headquarters: New York City, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1919 in Shanghai, China, by Cornelius Vander Starr; moved headquarters to New York in 1949.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

AIG became one of the world’s largest insurance and financial services firms. It faced near-collapse during the 2008 global financial crisis and required a massive U.S. government bailout. Since then, AIG has undergone restructuring, divestitures, and renewed focus on core insurance operations.

## Present Day Focus:

AIG provides insurance products for commercial, institutional, and individual customers. It operates in more than 80 countries.

## Key People:

* Chairman & CEO: Peter Zaffino

# PG&E Corporation (PCG)

Headquarters: San Francisco, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Pacific Gas and Electric Company traces its origins back to 1905; PG&E Corporation became the parent holding company in 1997.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

PG&E has been one of the largest utility providers in the United States, supplying natural gas and electricity to much of Northern California. It faced significant challenges due to liability for wildfires in California, leading to bankruptcy filings in 2001 and again in 2019. The company emerged from bankruptcy in 2020 under new oversight and governance structures.

## Present Day Focus:

PG&E focuses on providing safe, reliable energy and modernizing its infrastructure while working to improve wildfire safety and resilience.

## Key People:

* CEO: Patricia K. Poppe
* Chairman: Robert C. Flexon

# Sears Holdings Corporation (SHLDQ)

Headquarters: Hoffman Estates, Illinois, USA (now defunct)

Founded / Origins: Sears was originally founded in 1892 by Richard Warren Sears and Alvah Curtis Roebuck.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Sears grew from a mail-order catalog business into one of the largest retail chains in the United States. It merged with Kmart in 2005 to form Sears Holdings Corporation. Facing intense competition and declining sales, Sears filed for bankruptcy in 2018. Its remaining assets were sold off, and the company effectively ceased operations.

## Present Day Focus:

Sears Holdings no longer operates as a major retailer. Its legacy lives on through its historical influence on American consumer culture.

## Key People:

* Former CEO: Eddie Lampert (final years before bankruptcy)

# McDonald’s Corporation (MCD)

Headquarters: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1940 as a restaurant by Richard and Maurice McDonald; franchised by Ray Kroc in 1955.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

McDonald’s grew rapidly under Ray Kroc’s franchising model, becoming one of the world’s most recognized brands. It introduced iconic menu items like the Big Mac, Egg McMuffin, and Happy Meal. McDonald’s has consistently adapted to global markets while maintaining standardized operations.

## Present Day Focus:

McDonald’s is the world’s largest restaurant chain by revenue, operating in over 100 countries. It focuses on quick-service dining, digital ordering, and sustainability initiatives.

## Key People:

* CEO: Chris Kempczinski
* Chairman: Enrique Hernandez Jr.

# Barclays plc (BCS)

Headquarters: London, United Kingdom

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1690 in London as a goldsmith banking business.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Barclays is one of the oldest and most prominent British banks. It was a pioneer in adopting modern banking technologies, introducing the world’s first ATM in 1967. It has played major roles in international finance, though it has faced scandals and regulatory challenges.

## Present Day Focus:

Barclays is a multinational bank offering retail, corporate, and investment banking services worldwide.

## Key People:

* Group CEO: C.S. Venkatakrishnan
* Chairman: Nigel Higgins

# NVIDIA Corporation (NVDA)

Headquarters: Santa Clara, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1993 by Jensen Huang, Chris Malachowsky, and Curtis Priem.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

NVIDIA began as a graphics chip company and became a leader in GPUs with the GeForce product line. It expanded into high-performance computing, data centers, and AI applications. Its CUDA platform revolutionized GPU computing and enabled breakthroughs in AI research.

## Present Day Focus:

NVIDIA is now at the forefront of AI hardware and software, with its GPUs powering data centers, autonomous vehicles, and scientific research.

## Key People:

* CEO & Co-founder: Jensen Huang
* Chairman: Jensen Huang

# Intel Corporation (INTC)

Headquarters: Santa Clara, California, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded in 1968 by Gordon Moore and Robert Noyce.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Intel pioneered the development of semiconductor memory and microprocessors. Its 4004 chip, launched in 1971, was the world’s first commercial microprocessor. Intel became the dominant supplier of processors for personal computers during the PC revolution. It has faced competition in recent years from AMD and ARM-based designs.

## Present Day Focus:

Intel remains a key player in semiconductors, producing processors for PCs, servers, and data centers while investing in manufacturing capacity and AI hardware.

## Key People:

* CEO: Pat Gelsinger
* Chairman: Frank D. Yeary

# Amazon.com, Inc. (AMZN)

Headquarters: Seattle, Washington, USA

Founded / Origins: Founded July 5, 1994 by Jeff Bezos in his garage.

## Detailed History & Evolution:

Amazon began as an online bookstore and quickly diversified into electronics, apparel, and more. It went public in 1997, launched third-party seller services in 2000, and created Amazon Web Services (AWS) in 2002. Amazon Prime, Kindle, and Alexa further expanded its influence. Jeff Bezos stepped down as CEO in 2021, becoming Executive Chair.

## Present Day Focus:

Amazon is a global e-commerce and cloud computing giant, operating AWS, Prime Video, Alexa, Whole Foods, and other businesses.

## Key People:

* CEO: Andy Jassy
* Executive Chair: Jeff Bezos