Mark Dean

Mark Dean was born in Jefferson City, Tennessee on March 2, 1957. As a child, Mark developed a passion for building things that would carry on into his adult life. His curiosity carried over into his academics as well, as he finished his high school career with straight A’s and eventually graduating at the top of his class at the University of Tennessee in 1979. While at the University of Tennessee, Mark studied electrical engineering and was able to secure a job with IBM shortly after graduation. Mark would go on to help IBM create some of its biggest products during his tenure.

Computers have been around since the 1800’s in some type of capacity. Although, prior to 1981 computers were genuinely reserved for engineers and tech companies. Mark dean joined IBM in 1980 and was given the title of Chief engineer for a team of 12 engineers. The team’s task was to develop IBM’s first PC (personal computer). Just a year later in 1981, IBM released its first personal computer under the direction of Mark. The process required 9 different patents and 3 of the patents belong to Mark. This was a huge accomplishment in the computing and technology world. An accomplishment of this magnitude may cause some to rest on their laurels but not Mark. While leading his team in developing IBM’s PC, Mark continued his education at Florida Atlantic University and received his master’s degree in electrical engineering in 1982. During this time, Mark would also play a huge role in the creation of the Industry Standard Architecture (ISA) bus and the Color Graphics Adapter. The ISA bus made it possible to connect external devices such as a printer or modem to computers. The Color Graphics Adapter made it possible for color monitors. Both of these features are fairly common in today’s computers and that is due to Mark.

Mark’s thirst for knowledge and passion for learning was not quelled due to his success. He would go on to enroll at Stanford University and receive his doctorate in electrical engineering in 1992. His newfound knowledge along with his previous contributions would help him become the director of the Austin Research Laboratory and director of Advanced Technology Development for IBM. In 1996, He was made an IBM Fellow, becoming the first African American to achieve such status. In 1997, he received the Black Engineer of the Year award, and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Over the next couple of years , Mark would lead this team in the development of the first gigahertz CMOS chip in 1999. This chip allowed for computers to make calculations drastically faster. This monumental accomplishment would land another promotion within the IBM structure. He was named the Vice President for Systems Research at IBM’s Watson Research Center in New York. He would go on to become the Vice President of IBM’s Storage Technology Group. Lastly, he would move on to become the Vice President of the IBM Almaden Research Center in San Jose, California. In 2001, Mark was elected as a member of the National Academy of Engineers.

After his highly decorated career at IBM, Mark would return to his alma mater and become the John Fisher Distinguished Professor at the University of Tennessee College of Engineering. He would continue his award winning ways and receive the National Institute of Science Outstanding Scientist Award, the University of Tennessee College of Engineering Dougherty award, Ronald H. Brown American Innovators Award, and become a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Mark’s contributions to IBM during his 30+ year tenure helped the company grow into the brand as we know it today, as well as advance the capabilities of computer industry. Mark’s contributions to IBM and the computing industry make him one of the most important engineers of the last 100 years. His legacy also serves as motivation for young aspiring black engineers across the world.