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Female CEO Biography Virginia (Ginni) Rometty, IBM CEO Abstract IBM recently promoted Virginia (Ginni) Rometty to its top leadership position. Ms. Rometty will become the first white female chief executive officer in the company's 100-year history and every move she makes will be carefully watched. Rometty has truly earned this position and has an impressive history with IBM to show it. There are challenges ahead but Ms Rometty's education, experience and determination will suit her well in this new role. Female CEO Biography Virginia (Ginni) Rometty, IBM CEO On January 1, 2012, Ms.

Virginia Marie Rometty took the helm as CEO of the 19th largest revenue generating company in the world and 5th largest in market value, IBM (Hempel, 2012). At age 55, she will earn a \$1.5 million salary to add to her current net worth of \$25 million. Rometty began her ascent at Big Blue over 30 years ago and hasn't looked back. Research into her background, education and experience paint a picture of a woman who is the true embodiment of success. Rometty has paved her way up the corporate ladder using unparalleled determination and drive that can only be admired by career women (and men) worldwide.

Born in July 1957 as Virginia Marie Nicosia, the IBM leader grew up outside of Chicago, IL. She is said to come from a close-knit family, the eldest of four and raised by a single mother who saw great potential in all of her children. Ginny and her siblings were pushed to aim high. Brother Joseph is a figurehead in the commodities trading world and recently stepped down from Allenberg Cotton after serving 30 years as the CEO. One sister is a partner at Accenture and another is a senior executive at Coca-Cola. In

September of 1975, Rometty entered the McCormick School of Engineering at

Northwestern University on a General Motors scholarship (Waters, 2011). She went on to intern for the automobile giant during her junior and senior years and graduated in 1979 earning a Bachelor of Science with high honors in computer science and electrical engineering, an area of study dominated by males. Upon graduating, she accepted a position at GM where she was responsible for application and systems development. It is also where she met her husband, Mark Anthony Rometty. They married in 1980. Rometty & Rometty have been married for 32 years and have no children.

They live their personal lives as far out of the spotlight as possible. They own homes in New York and Florida and enjoy scuba diving, Broadway plays and golf. Ginni credits her husband with providing great strength, support and encouragement throughout her career; something critics have interpreted as sacrificing his own career in the process (The New York Times, 2011). This societal stereotype that women should stay at home (or have a less successful career) and men should be the primary breadwinners is detrimental to the advancement of women.

Mark Rometty should be applauded for his self-assurance and not falling victim to this mainstream thought process. Shortly after her second year with General Motors, Rometty accepted a systems analyst/technical consultant position at IBM (Hempel, 2012). She spent the first 10 years working her way up through sales and management positions in a variety of industries such as banking and insurance and made headlines in 2002 when she was credited with leading the largest professional services acquisition in

history. Bloomberg (2011) reports that the \$3. billion acquisition of PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting gained her the attention of then CEO, Sam Palmisano. Palmisano promoted her to senior vice president of Enterprise Business Services in 2005 and within 2 years of the move, she increased EBS' profit by 42%. In 2008, she was made Managing Partner of the Business Consulting division and rose to head IBM global sales where she was responsible for IBM's worldwide results exceeding \$99 billion in 2010 (IBM, 2012). It was at this point she became recognized as one of the most powerful women in business and a potential successor to Sam Palmisano.

A strong voice of women's initiatives, Rometty has been instrumental in IBM's Women inTechnologyCouncil and the Women's Leadership Council. She has been named to Fortune Magazine's annual " Most Powerful Women in Business" list for eight consecutive years and is also a regular on the presentation circuit speaking at industry and business conferences. She continues to serve on the Board of Trustees of Northwestern University and the Board of Overseers and Managers of the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (DailyFinance, 2012).

Her strategic approach, innovative mind and keenness toward risk-taking define her leadership style. Ginni Rometty has said, " I learned to always take on things I'd never done before" (Hymowitz, 2011). She admits to having an ever-present internal critic who judges everything she thinks and does. She quite enjoys this process of objective analysis and believes " growth and comfort do not coexist" (Hymowitz, 2011). Rometty has a magneticpersonalityand has always been comfortable engaging people and forging lasting relationships.

This strength helped her to be at the top of her game in a career she has spent largely courting big name clients. Ms. Rometty's new role is a first in her career, a first for IBM and a giant leap forward for career women everywhere. However, all eyes will be focused sharply on Ms. Ginni Rometty. While many have high expectations and are watching in hopeful anticipation, it is understood that there are significant challenges ahead. Some believe Rometty is not up to this task and is only promoting her predecessor's vision and strategy for the future of IBM.

She has stated her goal of adding \$20 billion in revenue growth between now and 2015, and has further confirmed she will be following a plan put in place by Palmisano to do it (Zolman, 2012). However, it should be noted that Rometty had significant input into this plan and has implicit faith and trust in its underlying principles. Rometty does not accept second best and would not take stock in any plan for the future that she did not whole-heartedly believe in. Another area of concern expressed by Zolman (2012) is the change in corporate culture at IBM.

Skeptics are critical of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness resulting from the layers of management that have accumulated over the last decade. These layers slow the decision making process, hide true accountability and cost the company large sums of money to provide salaries to managers hiding virtually undetected within these layers. Further, IBM has changed from a hardware company to a professional services corporation. While this decision has served them well for the most part, the sales culture is quite possibly tainted in that their product knowledge is limited and their desire for higher and higher margins is criminal.

Rometty will need to address culture issues to keep IBM ahead of its industry. While the challenges are many, there is no one better suited to lead this icon of corporate America into the second century. Her technological expertise along with her storied business and management success at IBM make her a top choice to lead IBM. Ginni Rometty is driven and unrelenting and will only accept the highest levels of achievement in her pursuit. At the same time, her feet are planted firmly on the ground. She knows this will not be a walk in the park, and she prefers it that way. pic]

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