

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

Top boss who headed up Porsche GB to speak at GCA conference

KEVIN Gaskell will be one of the headline speakers at the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) annual conference next month (January 25-28, 2015).

The businessman and entrepreneur who ran Porsche GB Limited in the early 1990s will present to the conference at the De Vere Carden Park in Chester on the Tuesday, January 27.

Iain Wylie, Chief Executive of the GCA, said: "Kevin is an energetic and passionate leader with a proven record of managing growth, driving successful turnarounds and delivering substantial improvements in companies already considered to be market leaders.

"Recognised as one of the most capable managers of his generation he qualified as an engineer and accountant. He completed an MBA before starting his career in the construction sector before moving into the chemical industry and then to the automotive sector.

"In 1987 he joined Porsche GB Limited and four years later, at the age of 32, was appointed UK Managing Director. He later went on to become a dot com entrepreneur."

Kevin ensured Porsche GB became one of the UK's most profitable car companies. He went on to become Managing Director at BMW (GB) Ltd where he formed a team who challenged themselves to develop the business. This led to four years of record growth where sales improved by 40% and profitability increased by 250%.

He has also trekked to the North and South Poles to raise money for Cancer Research.

On the Tuesday Roger Martin-Fagg, a renowned economist turned strategist, will also be speaking at the event. He presents at conferences around the world on the economic outlook and its impact on business. His quarterly economic update is sent to 1200 SME's.

Iain added: "It's not too late to book for our conference, so if you are hoping to attend, please visit the members' section of our website via www.gca.org.uk to book your place.

"With a new venue, a great line-up of speakers and plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends from the industry, the conference is set to be a fantastic event.

"To book, please visit the members' section of our website via www.gca.org.uk. Sponsorship slots have filled up well too but there are still one or two left so if companies are interested in this, please give me a call."

The conference kicks off on Sunday, January 25 with an afternoon of fundraising activities for the charity Greenfingers. Two teams will go head-to-head to battle it out for the Greenfingers Challenge Cup.

Iain continued: “Monday’s (January 26) part of the conference will focus on the operational side of our industry and will include talks from a range of inspiring and engaging business speakers to help motivate us for the year ahead.

“During the day on Tuesday (January 27) there will be more of a focus on the strategic element of business, with opportunities to listen to some inspirational speakers and a chance to experience the associate’s exhibition.”

Scotts and Westland Horticulture are the event’s headline sponsors and David Thomas, who broke the world record for reciting the maths formula Pi (3.14..) to 22,500 digits will be attending. He will speak about techniques for improving memory at the conference on Monday, January 26.

Iain continued: “When he was 20-years-old David joined the Fire Service, after failing his promotion exams he bought a book on memory to help him pass the test. Since then he has gone on to develop one of the most powerful memories in history.

“He is an expert in personal development and one of the leading speakers in the field of memory and we are delighted he has agreed to join us at the conference.

“David will speak about his inspirational story and the lessons he’s learnt that have got him where he is today.

“He will discuss techniques for improving memory, efficiency and time management, as well as problem solving and decision making. David will also share tips on presentation skills. We’re really looking forward to hearing what he has to say.”

David is the bestselling author of ‘Essential Lifeskills: Improving Your Memory’. His clients range from Olympic athletes, government officials to national businesses.

Professor Greg Whyte OBE, who has helped celebrities complete various physical challenges, will be sharing his secrets on achieving the seemingly impossible at the conference too.

He has led 18 celebrity Comic Relief challenges, which have raised more than £33 million for the charity.

Professor Whyte, who is an advisor to the Benetton and Renault Formula 1 Teams and several Premiership football clubs, will also be speaking at the event on Monday, January 26.

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

Through sharing information and its inspection programme the GCA helps members to achieve high standards in customer service, plant quality and reliability.

The conference takes place at the De Vere Carden Park in Chester from January 25 until 28. More than 300 delegates are expected to attend.

For further information, please call 0118 930 8918. Alternatively, visit www.gca.org.uk, log on to www.facebook.com/GardenCentreAssociation or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.

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For further media details, please call Porcupine PR on 01278 446801 or email Rachel@porcupinepr.co.uk. Alternatively, please contact Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive on 07843 633408 or email Iain@gca.org.uk.

Photo caption one: Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive.

Photo caption two: David Thomas, who broke the world record for reciting the maths formula Pi (3.14..) to 22,500 digits will be speaking at the GCA conference on Monday, January 26.

Photo caption three: Kevin Gaskell, an energetic and passionate leader with a proven record of managing growth, who is speaking at the GCA Conference on Tuesday, January 27.

