

## WILL WHITEHORN



### **Former President of Virgin Galactic Space Industry Pioneer**

Will Whitehorn is a well-known British innovation specialist and business leader with over 35 years experience. He is a space industry pioneer and has been known as Richard Branson's right hand man for years. Since 2019 he has been President of UKspace, the trade association which represents the UK space industry.

Having graduated from Aberdeen University with an honours degree in History and Economics he worked for British Airways flying helicopters in the North Sea oil industry before becoming a graduate trainee with Thomas Cook. In 1987 he joined the Virgin Group, where he became brand development and corporate affairs director as well as special advisor to Sir Richard Branson and founded a number of Virgin companies including Virgin Trains and Virgin Galactic. He was at the hub of one of the most exciting business ventures of the early twenty first century: commercial space travel, developing it from a nascent dream in the mind of Branson to a project with real spacecraft, test flights and a spaceport. 2014 saw the first commercial flights one hundred miles above the Earth's surface. He steered Virgin Galactic from concept to reality. He convinced investors, oversaw technical plans and developed a strategy which will soon lead to daily flights one hundred miles above the Earth's surface. Few can claim to be involved in such a breakthrough project.

After retiring from Virgin, Will Whitehorn has become Chair or non exec director of several companies in the UK and is one of the team managing that county's first public driverless car experimental project.

Will is a fellow of The Royal Aeronautical Society and holder of its highest award for his contribution to the space industry. He is Vice President and a fellow of The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and a fellow of The Marketing Society.

In presentations he draws the distinction between invention and innovation – and argues that with the right incentives, the private sector can create a whole new industrial revolution in space. He also explains that Virgin can go almost anywhere, from cola to credit cards to space; even if a particular venture doesn't work out, the brand remains undamaged.

#### **Topics (Selection):**

- Breakthrough innovation
- From vision to strategy
- Large scale project delivery
- Technology and investment
- Leadership and transformation