
William Whitehorn



As Richard Branson's right-hand man, William Whitehorn took the space tourism venture, Virgin Galactic, from a mere dream to a project with real spacecraft and its own spaceport. 2014 saw the first commercial flights one hundred miles above the Earth's surface. Regulation dictated that he hand over to a US-based President (he now chairs a body promoting British expertise in integrated transport), but nobody is better placed to tell the story of Virgin's role as aviation pioneer.

Previously a search-and-rescue helicopter crewman in the North Sea, William Whitehorn once had to pluck Branson out of danger. He went on to become Virgin Brand Development and Corporate Affairs Director, Branson's right-hand man.

After working on large scale Virgin projects including the Pendolino train, he took up the post of President of Virgin Galactic. He was at the helm of developing commercial space travel, steering 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.

After handing over to a US-based President for the next phase, William Whitehorn has returned to venture capital, brands and communication. He was a founding shareholder of Purplebricks Group PLC. He is Chairman of the Scottish event campus, the Scottish Gallery and Deputy Chairman of Stagecoach Group PLC. He is also Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Most recently he helped the owners of Clyde Space merge their satellite manufacturing company and put it on a firm footing for global expansion. He also joined the board of The Royal Air Force in 2018.

William Whitehorn 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.