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LSC Supports Small Businesses at Breast Cancer Care Gala Event

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is offering small to medium sized businesses the chance to attend Allan Leighton's *On Leadership Gala Dinner*, as part of its Leadership and Management Advisory Service.

The *On Leadership Gala Dinner* is an exciting addition to the business calendar and sees the cream of British business leaders: Allan Leighton (ASDA, Royal Mail), Sir Stuart Rose (Marks and Spencer), Jacqueline Gold (Ann Summers) and Val Gooding CBE (Bupa) offer their insights into leadership, as well as tips for success during the current economic downturn.

The event, which will raise money for Breast Cancer Care as part of Leighton's personal pledge to raise £1million for the charity, takes place at the London InterContinental Hotel, Park Lane, on **Thursday 27 November**.

The LSC's Leadership and Management Advisory Service, which is part of the Train to Gain programme, offers leadership and management support to small and medium-sized businesses (5-249 employees). LSC funding of up to £1,000 is available for these businesses through the service. The financial support is available per organisation, the first £500 by grant, and the second £500 must be match funded by the employer, and can be used by managers to access support or training, including networking opportunities.

David Hughes, LSC Regional Director for London said:

“Never before have skills been so important. If British business is to remain competitive in the economic downturn, skills and leadership must be developed. We are supporting businesses with Leadership and Management grants and with this chance to learn from successful business leaders how to develop resilient organisations through skills and leadership development.”

Allan Leighton adds:

“It’s essential that smaller businesses have access to skills training and support, so I’m delighted that the Learning and Skills Council are getting behind the Gala Dinner and offering business leaders the chance to attend. With the personalities on the menu – Rose, Gold, Gooding - the event promises to be a highly entertaining evening, as well as offering some very honest conversations about leadership and personal experiences from the best in the business.”

Anyone interested in applying for the grant call 0203 008 6593

To set an example and show how important skills are to business success, Breast Cancer Care will be signing up to the Skills Pledge at the event.

**Allan Leighton’s On Leadership Gala Dinner in aid of Breast Cancer Care
Thursday 27 November, 7.30pm
London InterContinental Hotel, Park Lane**

For more information about the event visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/onleadership

-ENDS-

For more information, please contact

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Notes to editors

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Train to Gain

Managed by the Learning and Skills Council, Train to Gain is the government's flagship service to support employers in England, of all sizes and in all sectors, to improve the skills of their employees, unlock talent and drive improved business performance. A key element of Train to Gain is the skills brokerage service which offers free impartial advice, and helps find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training providers to meet business needs. For more information visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

Leadership and Management Advisory Service

Is a discrete service within Train to Gain. Skills Advisers may refer small to medium businesses (5-249 employees) that require support for leadership and management. A total of £1000 is available, with the first £500 on a grant basis and the second £500 match funded by the employer. The primary beneficiary will be owner/managers or senior managers/directors. Funding can be used to access any support or training identified in the managers personal development plan, this can include: coaching, mentoring, networking, qualifications or informal learning.

What is the Skills Pledge?

An initiative launch by the government in 2007, the Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs). The purpose is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company/organisation. The Pledge can be given by the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, owner/manager or other Board member, on behalf of the organisation. It is a corporate commitment covering the whole company/organisation. For those employees who do not already have a full Level 2 qualification, the Government will provide funding to help them gain basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as their first full Level 2 qualification. The Skills Pledge is open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

For more information visit: www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge/

Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do. Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free helpline on 0808 800 6000.

Speaker biographies

Allan Leighton

Allan started his career in Mars Confectionery as a Salesman in 1974. He worked his way up through the company before leaving in 1991. He then joined Pedigree Petfoods, where he was Sales Director until his appointment in 1992 to Asda Stores Ltd. He began his career in Asda as Group Marketing Director and was appointed Chief Executive in September 1996. In November 1999 when the American company Wal-Mart bought Asda, Allan became the President and CEO of Wal-Mart Europe.

In November 2000 he left Asda and developed a new work ethic – 'Going Plural' – and is currently Chairman of Royal Mail Group; Deputy Chairman of Selfridges & Co, George Weston Ltd and Loblaw Companies Ltd; and Non Executive Director of BSKyB Group plc.

In June 2007 Allan's book *On Leadership: Practical Wisdom from the People Who Know*, was published by Random House. At publication, it was the best selling business book in the UK. World Business called it "a profoundly hopeful read – informed by the almost palpable joy Leighton feels in inspiring and leading others". Chris Blackhurst Business Editor of the Evening Standard said it was "The best management book I've read in a long while".

Sir Stuart Rose

Stuart Rose first joined Marks & Spencer in 1972 as a management trainee, spending seventeen years at the high street giant before joining the Burton Group in 1989. There, initially, he was a director of Debenhams and went on to become chief executive of the Multiples Division, including Dorothy Perkins, Burtons, Evans and Principles. In 1997 he moved on to become chief executive of Argos, where he was unsuccessful in defending the company from a takeover bid by Great Universal Stores, but won respect for securing an increased price for the company. He subsequently joined Booker, which he turned around and then merged with Iceland Plc. He then went on to turn around the Arcadia Group, which he subsequently sold to Philip Green in 2002.

Rose rejoined Marks & Spencer as Chief Executive in 2004 was appointed Executive Chairman on 1 June 2008. He was knighted in the New Year Honours List this year, for his services to the retail industry and corporate social responsibility.

Jacqueline Gold

Jacqueline Gold joined Ann Summers, then just comprising two sex shops, as an office junior mid-way through her A Level year. She hit upon the idea of selling sexy lingerie and sex toys at private parties because she realised that many women did not want to be seen in the shops and, in so doing, transformed the business into a multi-million pound concern, with a sales force of 7,500 women as party organisers.

Jacqueline has been voted the second Most Powerful Woman in Retail by Retail Week, the Most Inspirational Businesswoman in the UK in a survey by Barclays Bank and handbag.com, one of Britain's Most Powerful Women by many publications including Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping and Woman magazines, one of Britain's 100 Most Influential Women by the Daily Mail, Business Communicator of the Year 2004, and was made a new entry in Debrett's 'People of Today' 2005 for her contribution to British society.

Val Gooding CBE

Val Gooding began her career as a reservations agent for British Airways, working her way up through a number of senior positions, including head of cabin services and director of business units. After twenty-three years at BA, she quit to join BUPA because she felt it was too 'narrow' to spend a whole career with one company in one industry. After two years as managing director, UK operations, Val Gooding became chief executive and has presided over annual double-digit income growth.