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INNOVATION, CUSTOMIZATION -- Keys to successful navigation of the “Discontinuous Change” path for international automotive industry

ANN ARBOR, Mich., July 13, 2007 – Continuous innovation and integrated customization are key competitive advantages successful players in the international automotive industry are using to gain market share and create new revenue streams. Two sessions at this year’s Management Briefing Seminars will highlight the impact of innovation and customization.

Ralph Gilles, vice president, Jeep/Truck and Advance Interior Design, Chrysler, will join **Frank Paluch**, vice president, Automobile Design Division, Honda R&D Americas, Inc.; **John Horn**, executive director, Industrial and Transportation Business, Research & Development, 3M; **Ralph Colello**, managing director, Business Innovation Consulting LLC; **Robert Niemiec**, Twistthink, LLC; and **Dana Clarke, Sr.**, chairman, president & CEO, Applied Innovation Alliance, LLC in “Innovate or Die!” a session co-chaired by Dave Cole and Richard Gerth of the Center for Automotive Research. CAR is the host of the prestigious automotive industry event, August 6-10, at the Grand Traverse Resort & Spa, near Traverse City, Michigan.

“Everyone knows innovation is important. The question is how to create an innovative organization that can capitalize efficiently and in a timely manner on market opportunities.

This session’s speakers cover many dimensions of organizational innovation—representing OEMs, Tier 1 suppliers and consultants; large global and small national companies; and companies that operate inside as well as outside the automotive industry,”

said Gerth, senior research scientist in the Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology (MET) group at CAR.

Mike O'Brien, corporate manager, Product Planning, Toyota Motor Sales, USA and **Nancy Philippart**, executive director, GM Accessories Business Channel, General Motors will lead off “Designing for Customization,” a session offered in cooperation with the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA). Session co-chair Brett Smith, assistant director of CAR’s MET group, said. “The speakers at this session will highlight why designing for customization early in the product development process is especially important to today’s automotive industry. The interesting mix of the panel from manufacturer to traditional supplier to branded aftermarket suppliers--all the way to the dealership--will offer the attendees insight into how successful companies are creating profitable partnerships which help consumers make great products even more unique.”

“Customization presents challenges as well as opportunities. Integrating SEMA and its member companies, OEMs and suppliers into this session is an excellent example of how the auto industry is quickly evolving and creating new aftermarket opportunities for collaborative growth,” said John Waraniak, vice president of vehicle technology at SEMA. “It’s even more relevant as more and more manufacturers, suppliers and dealers are engaged in customization, accessorization and personalization.”

The customization panel also includes : **Beau Boeckmann**, president, Galpin Auto Sports and vice president, Galpin Motors (and host of host of MTV’s Pimp My Ride); **Michael Chetcuti**, CEO, Quality Metalcraft, Inc. and principal, Streetcar USA; **Dave Yegge**, operations manager, American Expedition Vehicles; **Larry Conville**, industry & public relations manager, Skyjacker Suspensions; **George Dettloff**, CEO & president, SKF North America; and **Steve Irby**, founder and president, Kicker Car Audio.

“The Road Ahead: Discontinuous Change” is the overall conference theme. The Management Briefing Seminars attract more than 1,000 attendees who participate in targeted sessions, senior-level executive panels and highly valued networking opportunities.

In addition to the targeted sessions, the general automotive sessions on Wednesday and Thursday (Aug. 8-9) will focus on critical global strategies, followed by a session highlighting the commercialization of innovation on Thursday afternoon.

Speakers in additional Aug. 6-7 sessions will address the globalization of manufacturing and the continued---and growing---impact of the connected vehicle. The Aug. 10 Advanced Powertrain Forum provides an update on developments, including the advances in biofuels and the electrification of the vehicle. Several automotive analysts will also provide their perspectives on the week's critical issues in a session on supplier strategies and tactics. An up-to-date listing of speakers and sessions is available on CAR's Web site: www.cargroup.org.

CAR's mission is to conduct research on significant issues related to the future direction of the global automotive industry, as well as organize and conduct forums of value to the automotive community.

Registration for the 2007 Management Briefing Seminars is available by visiting www.cargroup.org. For more information regarding MBS registration, contact the Center for Automotive Research at (734) 662-1287.

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