



## Tech 9

# Fast track to success

Words: Paul Davies Photography: David Wigmore

When Porsche co-opts you into its team for the high-profile Spa 24 Hours race, lends you one of its star drivers, provides you with technical assistance, and then gives you the job of debuting the latest competition version of the 997 GT3 in the United Kingdom, you know you've arrived. When you hire a former Official Porsche Centre manager to oversee the next stage of your business development, everyone else can see you're serious.

Tech 9 has a lot going for it. Tucked away under the flight path to Liverpool's recently renamed John Lennon Airport, Phil Hindley's 12-year-old business is preparing for take-off. You can only imagine what comes next: expansion of its TechArt distributorship? A move into car sales? An entry at Le Mans? Wait and see...

Meanwhile, today's business, early in August, is getting that evolution GT3 ready for a shake-down at Silverstone prior to the weekend's round of the British GT Championship, where

regular drivers Matt Harris and Tom Ferrier will seek to close the gap between Porsche and this year's pace-setting Ferraris and Aston Martins.

The Tech 9 racing pedigree is nearly faultless. No mean driver himself – and one who still holds an ambition to progress behind the wheel, if time allows – Hindley was runner-up in the 2002 Porsche (later to become Carrera) Cup. As a team manager, he directed British GT title wins in 2003 for Matt Griffin and Patrick Pearce, took the '04 teams' title with Adam Sharpe, and the '05 drivers' title with Piers Masarati and Dimitris Deverikos. But the icing on the cake – and best result to date – was Sean Edwards' overall 2006 FIA GT3 title in the Tech 9 Porsche 997 GT3 Cup.

Long the master at building turn-key, production category, race cars for customer use, Porsche has been caught on the hop in 2007 in both the British and FIA series and needs to make up time. This year, Tech 9 has moved up to the GT2 category of the FIA championship, as well as FIA GT3, and continues in British GT – but

the opposition is stiffer than ever.

However, with the help of Tech 9, things are looking up for Porsche. The evolution GT3 outing at Silverstone was promising, and in the GT2 category the very latest Porsche GT3 RSR is getting ever closer to the Ferrari 430. The British team's third place, with factory man Sascha Maassen joining Leo Machitski and Edwards in a first-of-the-year Porsche 1-2-3 over the Prancing Horse at Spa, is an indication that perhaps, just perhaps, the tide is turning.

Hindley, who runs Tech 9 with fellow director and wife Sharon, reckons that motor sport accounts for about one third of the company's business. Other key elements in place at the 7500 sq ft Hale Garage premises are general service and repair work – for Porsches, of course – and the marketing and fitting of TechArt upgrade products, for which Tech 9 is the sole UK distributor. The new appointments of Calvin Adams, as general manager, and Mike Mawson as service manager, add a new dimension – of



# ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE



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The writing on the wall says it all. Sharon and Phil Hindley (centre) take a bow with some of the 12-strong staff at Tech 9's Hale Garage premises

The trials of racing! A major incident at Spa meant one of the Tech 9 cars needed a complete re-build. These parts will soon be a new FIA GT3 racer

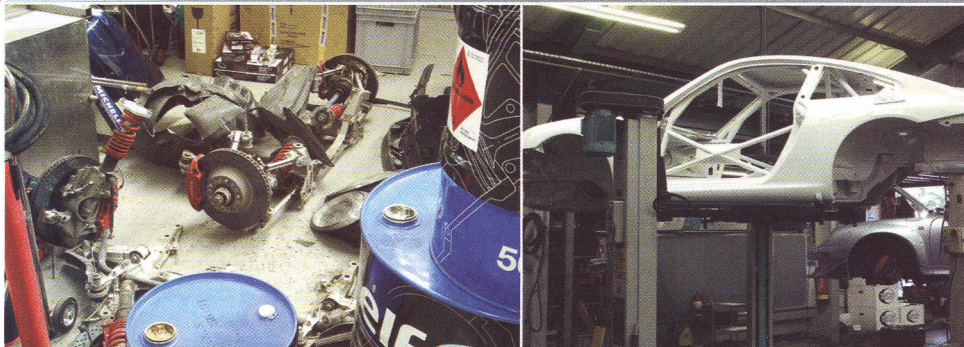
Brand-new 997 GT3 Cup bodysell from Porsche will form the basis for the rebuilt car. Tech 9 has developed a good working relationship with Weissach

With Sascha Maassen joining Sean Edwards and Leo Matchitski, Tech 9's best result for '07 was a third in GT2 at the Spa 24 Hours with the GT3 RSR

which more later.

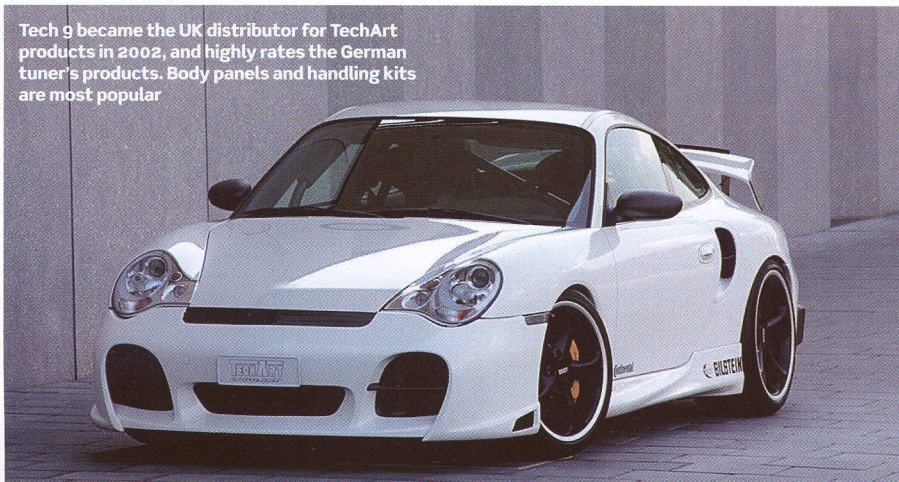
Phil formed the company in 1995. Trained as a civil engineer, he was a successful grass track racer in a Mini in north-west England, moved to circuit racing in a Porsche 944 he prepared himself from a write-off, and then campaigned a 964 in Porsche Club GB events. Race wins came his way, but no titles – until he switched to the promising TVR Tuscan one-model series in 1997 – and carried off the trophy in '98, taking third the following year.

Parallel to prepping and driving his own cars, Phil moved down the familiar road of fettling fellow competitors' machines, with the inevitable result of setting up his own business, starting in a one-car garage in Runcorn. The name Tech 9 was chosen because, he says, it was 'catchy' with the right technical (!) feeling about it, and a link to the famous g-series design numbers. Namewise there's no connection with TechArt, although he's recently found a Moto GP team called Tech 3. Porsche-only status was





Tech g became the UK distributor for TechArt products in 2002, and highly rates the German tuner's products. Body panels and handling kits are most popular



Phil and Sharon Hindley are directors of Tech g. Racing takes up a third of the workload, shared with maintenance and the marketing of TechArt products

planned from the beginning.

'I'd owned Porsche road cars, was a big fan and very much aware of their competition history and pedigree, so I decided to stick with the make. It's been a good decision,' he says.

With knowledge that the UK was an important outlet for Porsche aftermarket accessories (although lagging behind Germany and the USA, where upgrades are almost an essential part of modern Porsche ownership), Phil saw the acquisition of the TechArt distributorship in 2002 as an important facet of the Tech g strategy.

'I'd always seen TechArt as the premium Porsche tuning brand in the world. They were linked with the company in the '90s, before Porsche went its own way with its Tequipment brand. The engineering is very good and the quality first-rate. We'd bought their products, and then I got talking to them at the Essen show. They knew about us, and said they were looking to change their UK distributor. It's gone very well. We're both very happy.'

Most of the UK sales of TechArt products are non-engine – mainly body panels and suspension and brake upgrades. 'We can carry out engine and transmission work, as we have our own engine and gearbox re-build facility,' says Phil, 'but most of the conversions focus on suspension, bodywork and wheels. We also get involved in interior upgrades.'

'The fit of TechArt body styling equipment is perfect. They have invested heavily in moulds and tooling, so we're not trying to fit glassfibre panels. Everything that arrives is pu. plastic, exactly like

the original equipment fitted by the manufacturer. Our job is easy, and it's also easy for any other body shop to fit if we supply mail order.'

Because much of the TechArt work involves body panels – and customers are from all over the UK – the company has forged an alliance with local Porsche-approved body shop, Lloyds Autobody. Fitting of parts is carried out at Hale Garage, but painting is at Lloyds, giving customers access to the nationwide network of approved bodyshops if any warranty issues arise.

TechArt equipment is for modern Porsches, and the swing is already moving away from the 996 Turbo and first generation Cayenne to the latest 997 models and the re-vamped version of the SUV. Phil tactfully adds that the popularity of Cayenne body kits is because there are so many of them on the roads that owners are looking to personalise their cars. Nothing to do with the questionable looks of the big Porsche, of course!

'TechArt's tuning programme for the facelift version of the Cayenne is to be launched at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September,' says Phil. 'We expect the new range to be a big seller.'

Tech g sells TechArt tuning equipment throughout the UK (there are a few sub-dealers), and a number of customers also make the trip from Ireland, where TechArt is not represented. Several Irish Porsche owners have also caught the ferry to Liverpool to seek assistance in trouble-shooting technical problems with their cars. For practical reasons, the repair and servicing side of the business is mainly local.

The focus in the Tech g workshops is on later model cars. Although they will repair or service a Porsche of any age, the company does not specialise in the older car and is not in the restoration business. 'That's not our market place,' says Phil. 'The independent Porsche specialist network in the UK is incredible. I think it's important to know where you are established and work well in your own area. There are quite a few good guys here in the north west, but very little crossover.'

Credit for much of the success of the company, on track and in the workshop, can be attributed to Phil's solid business approach. He obviously likes involvement in racing and is very much aware of the publicity it can bring to the company's other activities, but most definitely sees it as a commercial activity. There are, he says, no free lunches in motor sport – drivers are expected to pay their way in cash or (sponsor) kind. The Tech g website invites drivers to bring £85,000 (each, two to a car) to the party for a season of FIA GT3 in cars owned by the team.

'We are in a fortunate position. We operate a very professional team and have been successful – and to run at that level it costs a lot of money,' says Phil. 'In addition to the FIA GT programme, we prepare cars for customers at club level in the Porsche Open, sprints, hillclimbs and for trackdays. People trust our ability.'

The commercial approach of Phil and Sharon Hindley is underlined by the recent appointment of Calvin Adams as general manager. With 16





A one-time grass track winner, Phil prepared and raced Porsches in Intermarque and Porsche Club GB. He was runner-up in the '02 Porsche Cup

years' Porsche experience – he was dealer principal at Road Range, Liverpool, and general manager at Stratstone, Wilmslow, both now Porsche Centres – he's well placed to further Tech g's ambitions. 'My brief is to develop the general workshop and the TechArt side of the business, and to create new opportunities,' he says. An expansion of car sales is also part of the plan: 'Our heritage is in motor sport and specialist Porsche performance models, and this is likely to dictate our sales market.'

A second recent addition to the business team is Mike Mawson, who has joined from Porsche Centre Chester, with responsibility to develop the workshop and service side of Tech g.

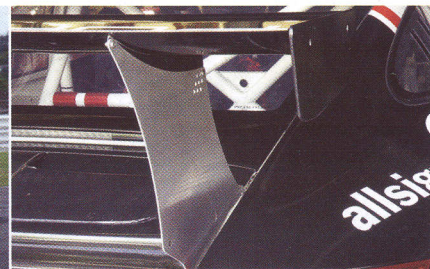
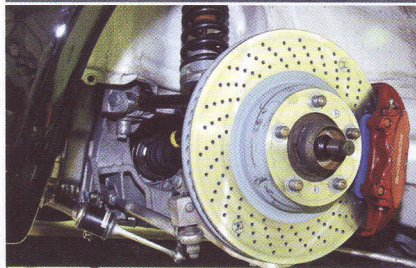
The development of the race team, says Calvin, is left to Phil. So where does the team manager see the future? 'Our ambitions are to be successful. My goal for the race team is to compete at Le Mans and win our class. It's a definite possibility. We have positioned ourselves as a leading Porsche team in FIA GT and the next step is Le Mans – hopefully, with Porsche assistance,' he says.

And, looking at the Tech g record to date, expect Phil Hindley to be masterminding a victory in France before long. **12**

Regular British GT drivers Matt Harris and Tom Ferrier debuted the evolution version of the 997 GT3 Cup car at the Silverstone round of the championship in mid-August, finishing fifth overall.

The GT3 category car borrows many of its latest features from the more powerful (FIA GT2) RSR version: front track is widened by 50mm, Sachs four-way adjustable dampers are fitted, along with adjustable front and rear anti-roll bars, and uni-ball joints are used throughout the suspension system. The car has revised aerodynamics, with a new front splitter and a taller mounting for the adjustable rear wing. The RSR clutch and flywheel are also fitted.

'We could have made third spot, but Matt spun the car on his way into the pits,' comments Phil. 'The improvements made to the car were a positive step. We qualified and finished highest placed Porsche, which was encouraging.'



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