

SME Export Track 100 regional press release

Thursday 23 May 2019



22 COMPANIES IN THE SOUTHEAST WIN PLACES ON LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN'S FASTEST-GROWING SME EXPORTERS

Published this weekend, the 5th annual **Sunday Times WorldFirst SME Export Track 100** league table ranks Britain's small and medium-sized private companies with the fastest-growing international sales.

The 22 companies headquartered in the **southeast** (compared to 21 last year) include 14 new entrants to the league table. Their international sales have grown by an average of 78% a year over two years to a total of £181m, and together they employ 1,470 people.

The region is home to two companies that are placed in the top ten nationally – **CitNOW** and **The Marketing Practice** – and both are featuring for the first time. Based in Wokingham, **CitNow** produces software designed to make the process of buying, selling or fixing a car more efficient. It works with over 40 vehicle manufacturers around the world, which helped overseas sales hit £4.5m in 2017. Business-to-business marketing agency **The Marketing Practice** is based in Oxfordshire and has offices in Seattle and Munich. Overseas turnover reached £4.9m in 2017.

The companies in the southeast appear with well-known businesses from around Britain, including online jewellery brand **Missoma**, popcorn maker **Joe & Seph's**, and coffee shop chain **AMT Coffee**. The latest league table shows that despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit, Europe continues to be the most important overseas market with more than four fifths of companies (85) selling there. However, they are looking further afield for future growth – 82 companies are targeting future expansion outside of Europe.

The SME Export Track 100 is sponsored by **WorldFirst**, **DHL Express** and **Heathrow Airport**, and is supported by the government's **Exporting is GREAT** campaign. It is compiled by **Fast Track**, the Oxford-based research and networking events firm.

Jonathan Quin, CEO and co-founder at WorldFirst, the title sponsor, commented:

"At WorldFirst we'd like to be the first to congratulate all the businesses that feature on this year's top 100. International markets present tremendous opportunities for UK businesses and the rewards of being a successful exporter are clear from the growth demonstrated by all the businesses here. That said, there are challenges and risks too and so we should also recognise the brave and committed leadership that has got them to this point."

Liam Fox, Secretary of State for International Trade, commented:

"SMEs are fundamental to achieving our target of increasing exports as a percentage of GDP to 35%, so it is vital we give them the recognition they deserve. The exporters listed in this year's SME Export Track 100 are pioneers whose example should be followed by ambitious businesses across the UK."

Private SMEs in the southeast with the fastest-growing exports – ordered by county

HQ location & county	Rank [2018 rank]	Company Activity	Annual int'l sales growth over 2 yrs	Int'l sales £m	Total sales £m	Staff	Year end ‡	Comment
Wokingham, Berkshire	8	CitNOW Video software developer	194%	4.5	11.6	91	Dec 17	Has more than 8,000 installations in franchised car dealerships in 55 countries
Reading, Berkshire	19 [56]	Sandbag Music merchandise distributor	123%	16.3	23.4	60	Mar 18	Says it has sold millions of tickets to events across six continents
Bracknell, Berkshire	35	British Medical Auctions Medical auction house	86%	*7.4	*8.0	17	Dec 18	Sells used medical equipment to customers across Europe, Asia, Africa and South America
Reading, Berkshire	50	Livingstone Technologies Software asset management services	66%	4.9	10.4	71	Dec 17	Last year it sold a majority stake to US private equity firm The Carlyle Group in a reported £50m deal
Milton Keynes, Bucks	39	IMS Evolve Energy management systems	83%	4.9	8.6	79	Dec 17	German energy giant Eon owns a 25% stake in the company
Marlow, Bucks	55	Thomas International Assessment developer	58%	6.8	16.7	131	Dec 17	Its psychometric assessments are available in 56 languages and have been taken in 200 countries
Colchester, Essex	37	OMG How Cheap Online stationery retailer	84%	*3.1	*7.1	35	Feb 19	Has plans to expand into Japan to serve the growing Asian market
Loughton, Essex	54	USB International Luggage manufacturer	60%	9.6	19.4	34	Mar 18	Its luggage conforming to low-cost airlines' rules is popular with German and American travellers
Harlow, Essex	70 [42]	Baker Ross Group Craft products retailer	52%	7.6	24.8	86	Dec 17	Sells more than 3,000 craft products via 11 international websites
Hockley, Essex	76 [34]	Digiflex Online consumer goods retailer	48%	*5.2	*9.5	49	Mar 18	Has Amazon Marketplace stores in eight countries
Farnborough, Hampshire	44	Exclaimer Email-signature software developer	76%	*8.6	*9.6	61	Sep 18	Has 75m users in 150 countries, with customers including Sony, Aldi and the Government of Canada
Aldershot, Hampshire	74	Perei Lighting Automotive lighting manufacturer	49%	5.6	15.6	74	Jun 18	Its headlamps, indicators and reverse lights are used by car manufacturers in Europe
Fareham, Hampshire	78 [43]	TouchNetix Touchscreen developer	47%	*5.5	*5.9	17	Dec 18	Has sold more than 500,000 touchscreens in countries such as Germany, Sweden and Austria
Knebworth, Hertfordshire	56	DV Signage Corporate AV specialist	58%	*5.1	*5.1	25	Mar 18	Worked on Accenture's landmark ten-storey innovation centre in Bangalore
Harpenden, Hertfordshire	59	QHi Group Monitoring systems developer	57%	*5.1	*5.1	15	Mar 19	Has opened a US office on Wall Street to service its clients in North America
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire	79 [37]	Pet Food UK Pet food manufacturer	46%	4.8	12.6	25	Dec 17	Its quirkily named products like Pooched Salmon and Fat Dog Slim are popular across Europe
Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire	87 [82]	Dotmatics Data management software developer	43%	*18.1	*21.4	160	Dec 18	Scientific research teams in the US, Japan and South Korea use its suite of software products

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Welham Green, Hertfordshire	90	Detectortesters <i>Testing equipment developer</i>	41%	13.3	16.9	110	Mar 18	Property owners and fire maintenance professionals in 120 countries use its range of products
East Hendred, Oxfordshire	9	The Marketing Practice <i>Marketing agency</i>	193%	4.9	11.1	124	Dec 17	Opened a US office in Seattle to support its client Microsoft, which is headquartered there
Oxford, Oxfordshire	31	Oxford Summer Courses <i>Educational course provider</i>	91%	*7.3	*8.1	26	Sep 18	Its summer courses are popular with students from America and India
Abingdon, Oxfordshire	81	P2i <i>Liquid repellent nano-coater</i>	45%	23.1	23.1	155	Dec 17	Global consumer electronics giants Sony, Lenovo and Xiaomi use its nano-coating technology
Guildford, Surrey	22	Payen <i>Online payment provider</i>	118%	9.2	9.8	25	Mar 18	The Premier Lotto in Nigeria uses the company's platform to prevent money laundering

‡ Financial year end of latest available accounts

* Supplied by company

The national picture

This year's SME Export Track 100 achieved, on average, record-high international sales growth of 89% a year over two years to a total of £833m. Together they employ more than 8,900 staff, having added 3,000 jobs over the period.

The dominant region for company HQs is London (32 companies), followed by the southeast (22). There are 11 companies based in the Midlands and 8 in Yorkshire. Of the remainder, six are in the northwest, five each in the southwest and Scotland, three each in Wales, the northeast and the east of England, and two in Northern Ireland.

The full league table is published on 26 May as a 6-page supplement in the business section of **The Sunday Times**, both in print and in the digital edition, and on www.fasttrack.co.uk.

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Notes for editors

Fast Track has published league tables of the UK's top-performing private companies with **The Sunday Times** for the past 22 years. The company was founded and is run by Dr Hamish Stevenson, who also holds an associate fellowship at Green Templeton College, Oxford University.

League table criteria

Companies have to be registered in the UK and be independent, unquoted and ultimate holding companies. International sales growth is measured by compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the latest two financial years. Annualised international sales have to be greater than £150,000 in the base year, exceed 20% of total sales in the latest year, and show a rise from the previous year. Companies have to be making an operating profit in their latest year. Recruitment and payroll firms are required to achieve gross profits greater than £5m in their latest accounts.

Excluded companies include those with total sales of more than £25m (covered by our sister league table, International Track 200), pure property developers, financial trading companies and LLPs.

The research was carried out by Fast Track between January 2019 and May 2019. Most of the companies were interviewed by telephone or visited by the Fast Track research team. The research is based on the limited available data on international sales. Most small firms file abbreviated accounts, whilst others may not disclose geographical sales. For this reason, sales and international sales figures for many companies are not available. There may, therefore, be omissions.

About our sponsors

About WorldFirst

WorldFirst is delighted to sponsor The Sunday Times WorldFirst SME Export Track 100 for 2019.

At WorldFirst we know first-hand that an international business perspective can be very rewarding and it is our mission to support the ambitious businesses that share this outlook. Back in 2004 we were one of the first to see that international payments for SMEs were unnecessarily slow, complicated and expensive and set about developing a genuine alternative that businesses could trust.

15 years on, we're still combining award-winning customer service with best in-class technology and products to make it easier, faster and cheaper for exporters to send and manage their money around the world. Our latest product – The World Account – really is a product built for exporters, enabling them to collect, convert and make global payments all on one simple platform. It's why over 400,000 customers choose WorldFirst.

www.worldfirst.com @WorldFirstLtd

About DHL Express

DHL Express is a main sponsor for the third year.

DHL is the global market leader in the international express market, specialising in time and day critical shipment delivery to all corners of the world. It ensures your products are quickly and reliably delivered to your customers all over the world, providing tailored delivery options and returns. DHL also provides expert advice for UK businesses looking to expand into global markets and advises on everything from delivery options on your website to the intricacies of customs duties and taxes.

www.DHLGuide.co.uk @DHLEExpressUK

About Heathrow Airport

Heathrow Airport is a main sponsor for the fourth year.

Heathrow, the UK's hub airport, is home to more than 80 airlines connecting to more than 210 destinations, and every year Heathrow welcomes 80 million passengers. These connections drive the UK economy by connecting British businesses to the world's established and emerging markets.

Heathrow is Britain's biggest port by value for global markets outside the EU and Switzerland, handling more than a third of the UK's exports.

www.heathrowexpansion.com @yourHeathrow

Exporting is GREAT

The government's Exporting is GREAT campaign is supporting SME Export Track 100 for the fourth year.

The Exporting is GREAT campaign aims to inspire and support UK companies to export overseas or export further. At the heart of the campaign are everyday businesses of all shapes and sizes from around the UK, that are proudly selling overseas and sharing their stories and experiences with other businesses to spark a national conversation about exporting. For information about starting your export journey, or growing further overseas, visit great.gov.uk where you can create a free business profile, access advice, guidance and events, apply for live export opportunities or see how you can sell online.

www.great.gov.uk #ExportingisGREAT