

# SME Export Track 100 regional press release

Thursday 23 May 2019



## SIX COMPANIES IN THE NORTHWEST WIN PLACES ON LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN'S FASTEST-GROWING SME EXPORTERS

Published this weekend, the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 six companies headquartered in the **northwest** (compared to eight last year) are all new entrants to the league table. Their international sales have grown by an average of 147% a year over two years to a total of £31m, and together they employ 398 people.

The top-ranked company in the region is Manchester-based **Missy Empire**, which also placed in the top three nationally. The online fashion retailer grew international sales by an average of 360% a year to £3.3m in 2019 and is now looking to America, Europe and Australia, for future expansion. Another featured company is dental veneer retailer **INSTAsmile** whose patented clip-on veneers are popular with customers in the US. International sales hit £3.5m last year.

The companies in the northwest 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 northwest 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
Widnes, Cheshire	94	<b>PolyBlend</b> <i>Plastics manufacturer</i>	40%	5.0	14.3	30	Sep 18	Sells Pantone-standard pigment dispersions for paints and inks to customers in Europe
Manchester, Greater Manchester	Top 3	<b>Missy Empire</b> <i>Online fashion retailer</i>	360%	*3.3	*13.9	45	Mar 19	Its trend-led and celebrity-inspired designs are popular with fashionistas in the US, Europe and Australia
Manchester, Greater Manchester	14	<b>CMSPI</b> <i>Payment optimisation service</i>	127%	2.3	5.7	39	Apr 18	Helps international clients including H&M and Marriott optimise and reduce the cost of payments
Manchester, Greater Manchester	23	<b>INSTAsmile</b> <i>Dental veneer retailer</i>	115%	*3.5	*5.6	45	Sep 18	Its patented clip-on veneers are popular with customers in the US
Rochdale, Lancashire	77	<b>Frontline Healthcare</b> <i>Online chemist</i>	46%	1.6	5.4	21	Feb 18	Its 18,000 sq ft warehouse supplies pharmacy products to customers as far afield as Australia
Wirral, Merseyside	10	<b>PharmaPac</b> <i>Pharmaceutical manufacturer</i>	192%	15.1	23.0	218	Jun 18	Has boosted its exports by diversifying into the manufacture of e-cigarette liquids

‡ 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](http://www.fasttrack.co.uk).

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PLEASE CREDIT IN FULL: "SUNDAY TIMES WORLDFIRST SME EXPORT TRACK 100"

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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.

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#### **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.

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## **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.

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## **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](http://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.

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