

Sunday 26 April 2020

## BRITAIN'S PRIVATE COMPANIES WITH THE FASTEST-GROWING PROFITS REVEALED IN SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION

Published today, the 21<sup>st</sup> annual **Sunday Times Profit Track** league table ranks Britain's private companies with the fastest-growing profits over their last three years, and before coronavirus struck. It also highlights their contribution to the economy at this difficult time and gives examples of how they are stepping up to support the NHS and their communities (see over page).

Due to the impact of Covid-19, our usual ranking of 100 is reduced to 70 companies that explicitly still wanted to be featured, with 30 qualifying firms choosing to withdraw because of the pandemic. Featured companies include TV producer **Plimsoll Productions**, solar power firm **Solarcentury** and sports nutrition brand **Grenade**. Profits over the last three years grew by between 45% and 156% pa to a combined £769m, and league table companies employ 31,100 staff, having added 10,700 jobs over the period.

The top spot on this year's league table goes to **Gymshark**, the Solihull-based fitness clothing retailer, which was founded in 2012 by Ben Francis, 27. It saw its profits rocket by 156% a year to £18.6m in 2019, on sales of £176.2m. The firm has no plans to furlough staff and is also supporting the Birmingham Women's and Children's hospital, donating £5 for every #NHSsweatselfie photo taken by its fans, and will raise £175,000 for the NHS by the end of April.

This year's Profit Track league table is sponsored by **Santander Corporate and Commercial** and **UBS Wealth Management**, and compiled by **Fast Track**, the Oxford-based research and networking events firm. Hamish Stevenson, founder and chief executive of Fast Track, said:

*"These Profit Track companies make an important contribution to our economy, paying taxes that support the NHS and other public services we are relying on at this very difficult time. We hope their impressive profit growth will give them resilience in the face of the serious economic disruption caused by the pandemic."*

### Top 10 companies on the Sunday Times Profit Track league table

Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	HQ location	Average annual profit growth over 3 years	Latest profits £m <sup>†</sup>	Staff	Year end	Comment
1 [2]	<b>Gymshark</b> Fitness clothing retailer	Solihull	156%	18.6	420	Jul 19	Will donate £175,000 to the Birmingham Women's and Children's hospital via its #NHSsweatselfie campaign
2	<b>Northern Gas &amp; Power</b> Energy management consultancy	Gateshead	117%	8.4	285	Dec 18	Staff are supporting local NHS hospitals, helping to arrange delivery of vital products
3	<b>Plimsoll Productions</b> TV show producer	Bristol	116%	*7.3	149	Aug 19	Its documentaries have won Baftas and Emmys
4 [52]	<b>Invenio Business Solutions</b> IT consultancy	Reading	103%	7.5	727	Mar 19	It has been helping the Fijian government launch an online taxation service

Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	HQ location	Average annual profit growth over 3 years	Latest profits £m‡	Staff	Year end	Comment
5	<b>Vashi</b> <i>Diamond jewellery retailer</i>	Central London	98%	6.9	55	Dec 18	Has temporarily closed its jewellery stores but continues to offer its engraving services online
6 [36]	<b>Clipfine</b> <i>Construction logistics</i>	Central London	98%	10.1	186	May 19	It has halted work on a key construction project and donated protective gear to the NHS
7	<b>Spencer Ogden</b> <i>Recruitment consultancy</i>	Central London	97%	*5.3	452	Dec 19	Helping to recruit temporary and remote-working staff for clients during the pandemic
8	<b>Orbis Protect</b> <i>Vacant property and staff security</i>	West London	94%	*3.7	432	Mar 19	Providing coronavirus deep clean and decontamination services for the NHS and care homes
9	<b>STATS Group</b> <i>Pipeline engineering services</i>	Aberdeenshire	93%	4.5	230	Dec 18	Last month it announced a major expansion in Oman, but has restricted travel due to the pandemic
10	<b>Metaswitch</b> <i>Communications technology</i>	North London	90%	24.6	839	Aug 19	Is developing software to manage a long-term increase in remote working

‡ Profits = operating profits before exceptional items

\* Supplied by company

### Examples of positive responses to Covid-19

In addition to paying the taxes that help fund vital services, such as the NHS, many of the league table companies have stepped up to the challenges created by the coronavirus crisis. They include **NG Bailey**, which helped turn a convention centre in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, into an NHS hospital, completing its work in just two weeks. Meanwhile **Tropic Skincare** is developing hand sanitisers for NHS staff, and **Brompton** is building up to 1,000 of its folding bikes to rent to NHS staff for free.

Some of our largest Profit Track alumni have also mobilised. **Dyson** is producing 10,000 of its CoVent ventilators for the NHS, and former No 1 **The Hut Group** (THG), the e-commerce retailer based in Manchester, has created a £10m aid package.

#### FURTHER FINDINGS

**Industry:** The companies operate in the following industries: TMT (16), consumer goods (12), building-related (11), business services (10), engineering (5), food and drink (4), finance (3), leisure (2), other (7)

**Regions:** The companies are based in the following regions: Southeast (19), London (17), Northeast and Yorkshire (9), Northwest (7), Southwest (5), Scotland (4), Northern Ireland (3), Midlands (3), Wales (2), East of England (1)

**Ownership:** Majority ownership of the companies falls into the following categories: entrepreneur/founder (27), PE/ VC / business angels (21), family (14), management and employees (8)

**International expansion:** 40 companies have used international expansion to boost their sales and profits

The full league table is published today with the business section of **The Sunday Times**, both in print and in the tablet edition, and on [www.fasttrack.co.uk](http://www.fasttrack.co.uk).

See Appendix I below for the full league table of 70 companies

## THE PROFIT TRACK “ONES TO WATCH”

The Profit Track “Ones to Watch” list features a cross section of seven companies that did not meet the strict criteria of the league table, but have seen good profit growth and merit recognition. This year’s Ones to Watch companies includes **Xceptor**, which provides financial automation software to financial sector clients and achieved profits of £7.9m on sales of £20.1m in 2019. It also includes Manchester-based bakery products provider **St Pierre Groupe**, which sells more than 200m of its bakery products every year in 35,000 supermarkets and grocery shops across the UK, America, and the Middle East, and hit profits of £6.9m in 2018.

See the Appendix II below for the list of 7 Ones to Watch

ENDS

PLEASE CREDIT IN FULL: “SUNDAY TIMES PROFIT TRACK”

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#ProfitTrack

### Notes for editors

**Fast Track** has published league tables of the UK’s top-performing private companies with **The Sunday Times** for the past 23 years. The company was founded and is run by Dr Hamish Stevenson, who also holds an associate fellowship at Green Templeton College, Oxford University.

The 21<sup>st</sup> annual Profit Track 100 supplement was due to be published on Sunday 5 April. Given the pandemic, we delayed publication in order to liaise with the companies and our sponsors and, with their support, now present today’s special **Profit Track Covid-19 edition**.

Data on profits, sales and staff all relate to before the virus struck. Out of our original 100 companies, 70 have explicitly asked to be featured, and 30 did not want to be included. We hope this special edition recognises the impressive past performance of these successful companies, their contribution to the economy and their response to the pandemic.

### **League table criteria**

Companies had to be registered in the UK and be independent, unquoted and ultimate holding companies. Profit growth is measured by compound annual growth rate over their latest three financial years.

Profits are defined as operating profit (a company’s profit before taxation, interest, dividends and exceptional items). Profits have to exceed £3m in the latest available accounts and £500,000 in the base year. Firms have to show a rise in profits from penultimate to latest year. Some exceptions were made to the qualification criteria.

The research was carried out by Fast Track between October 2019 and March 2020, with additional research into coronavirus responses until publication.

See website for full qualification criteria: [www.fasttrack.co.uk](http://www.fasttrack.co.uk)

## About our sponsors

### Santander Corporate & Commercial

Santander Corporate & Commercial is proud to be a main sponsor of Profit Track for the second year running.

During these uncertain times, it's imperative that businesses feel supported and continue to get the help they need to adapt and survive in this rapidly changing world. For that they need the support of people they can trust. At Santander, we're committed to building close and enduring relationships with each of our business customers, so that we understand how we could help you achieve your business ambitions. Every business is different, and every business is being impacted differently and we are focused on understanding the specific impact to your business and offering appropriate support.

We continue to support business locally through our relationship teams and specialists in the UK, we have a strong international presence thanks to our extensive global network in major markets. So whatever the plan is for your business, whether you've had to adapt it or you continue with the next step for growth, acquisition or to break into an overseas market, we can help you get ahead.



[www.santandercb.co.uk](http://www.santandercb.co.uk)

### UBS Wealth Management

UBS Wealth Management is a main sponsor of Profit Track for an 18<sup>th</sup> year.

UBS provides a complete wealth management service in the UK. We have a long history of working with UK entrepreneurs planning their business, family and investment needs as they approach a liquidity event. Our advisors will help you learn how to protect and grow your hard-earned wealth drawing on the strength of our Global Chief Investment Office. Whether you want to leave money in trust for your children, sort out your pension arrangements or, increasingly, become a philanthropist, we can help you achieve your goals.



[www.ubs.com/wealthmanagement-uk](http://www.ubs.com/wealthmanagement-uk)

## Appendix I: The 2020 Sunday Times Profit Track

Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	HQ location	Average annual profit growth over 3 years	Latest profits £m <sup>†</sup>	Staff	Year end	Comment
1 [2]	<b>Gymshark</b> <i>Fitness clothing retailer</i>	Solihull	156%	18.6	420	Jul 19	Will donate £175,000 to the Birmingham Women's and Children's hospital via its #NHSsweatyselfie campaign
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9	<b>STATS Group</b> <i>Pipeline engineering services</i>	Aberdeenshire	93%	4.5	230	Dec 18	Last month it announced a major expansion in Oman, but has restricted travel due to the pandemic
10	<b>Metaswitch</b> <i>Communications technology</i>	North London	90%	24.6	839	Aug 19	Is developing software to manage a long-term increase in remote working
11	<b>BAP Pharma</b> <i>Pharmaceuticals supplier</i>	Slough	89%	6.5	14	Dec 18	Due to some border closures, is finding alternative ways to ship drugs used in clinical trials
12	<b>EnerMech</b> <i>Engineering services provider</i>	Aberdeen	89%	*32.8	2,959	Dec 18	Has implemented strict protocols at its energy projects to prevent the spread of the coronavirus
13	<b>Aspen Pumps</b> <i>Pump manufacturer</i>	Eastbourne	86%	11.7	178	Dec 18	Sold a million pumps in 2019 and has donated to a foodbank during the pandemic
14	<b>ACC Aviation</b> <i>Aviation services provider</i>	Surrey	85%	8.2	41	Dec 18	Offering help with urgent repatriation, evacuation and cargo flights during the pandemic
15	<b>SmartSearch</b> <i>Anti-fraud technology developer</i>	West Yorkshire	82%	*3.7	98	Dec 19	Is switching customers to electronic document verification when physical presentation of ID is not possible
16	<b>Ede Homes</b> <i>Housebuilder</i>	Oxfordshire	79%	3.8	21	Oct 18	With physical viewings on hold, its new homes can be viewed in detail by customers on its website
17	<b>Marshall Amps</b> <i>Amp manufacturer</i>	Milton Keynes	78%	7.8	476	Dec 18	It has cancelled its annual live music festival at the Marshall Arena in Milton Keynes on June 6
18	<b>Complete Utilities</b> <i>Utilities provider and engineer</i>	Gloucester	77%	5.0	195	Jul 19	This firm tunnelled under the River Severn to lay fibre-optic cable
19	<b>ExcelRedstone</b> <i>IT infrastructure provider</i>	Central London	76%	6.5	661	Mar 19	Has been advising customers about the use of its secure remote-working services
20	<b>S&amp;R London</b> <i>Plastering services provider</i>	St Albans	75%	4.4	28	Aug 18	Its projects include what it says will be the tallest residential building in Europe, near Canary Wharf
21	<b>CG Fry &amp; Son</b> <i>Housebuilder</i>	Dorchester	75%	9.5	175	Dec 18	It has stopped work on its 10 development sites in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire
22	<b>Thatchers Cider</b> <i>Cider producer</i>	Somerset	74%	9.4	252	Aug 18	Is helping local residents collect shopping and prescriptions, and is delivering free school meals

Rank [2019 rank]	Company <i>Activity</i>	HQ location	Average annual profit growth over 3 years	Latest profits £m <sup>‡</sup>	Staff	Year end	Comment
23	<b>Commsworld</b> <i>Telecom services provider</i>	Edinburgh	73%	*3.1	100	Dec 19	Is using its website to share insights and advice on remote working technology
24	<b>Bamboo Distribution</b> <i>Handset supplier and recycler</i>	Hertfordshire	73%	3.8	90	Jun 19	Has donated 250 smartphones with a value of £70,000 to the NHS
25	<b>General Traffic</b> <i>Vehicle parts retailer</i>	Bolton	73%	3.6	405	Dec 18	Temporarily closed all its operations on March 31 to protect its staff
26	<b>CAE Technology Services</b> <i>IT reseller</i>	Watford	72%	3.9	275	Jun 19	Installed wi-fi in Mulberry's luxury handbag shops around the world
27 [70]	<b>Acorn Insurance</b> <i>Specialist motor insurer</i>	Liverpool	69%	30.7	722	Dec 18	With its call centre receiving a large number of enquiries, it is directing customers to its online service
28	<b>Collinson</b> <i>Benefits and loyalty provider</i>	Central London	69%	38.8	2,082	Apr 19	The curtailment of air travel has seen it temporarily close some airport lounges
29	<b>Oil Salvage</b> <i>Waste collection and fuel delivery</i>	Liverpool	69%	3.6	68	Dec 18	Recycles waste oil that would otherwise be sent to landfill
30 [58]	<b>Veezu</b> <i>Taxi hire provider</i>	Newport	69%	4.9	316	Dec 18	Running grocery and takeaway food collection schemes and offering frontline NHS staff a 20% discount
31	<b>Portview</b> <i>Fit-out contractor</i>	Belfast	67%	10.3	86	Nov 18	Has donated several thousand surplus face masks to the Northern Ireland Hospice
32	<b>Payen</b> <i>Payment services provider</i>	Guildford	66%	3.6	26	Mar 19	A lottery operator in Sub-Saharan Africa uses the company's platform to prevent money laundering
33	<b>GRITIT</b> <i>Winter gritting specialist</i>	Surrey	66%	4.5	129	Sep 18	Counts the NHS among its customers and continues to provide services during the lockdown
34	<b>Solarcentury</b> <i>Solar power developer</i>	Central London	66%	14.0	185	Mar 19	5% of profits go to SolarAid, a charity helping provide solar lighting to homes in Africa
35	<b>Trace Group</b> <i>Software developer</i>	Central London	64%	4.1	169	May 19	Has offered free online training sessions to clients using its property management software remotely
36 [64]	<b>Send For Help</b> <i>Lone-worker protection provider</i>	Southwest London	64%	4.7	111	Mar 19	Says it is helping to protect thousands of key workers during the coronavirus pandemic
37	<b>PureGym</b> <i>Gym operator</i>	Leeds	64%	*68.2	1,212	Dec 19	Has temporarily closed all its gyms and suspended membership payments
38 [88]	<b>Canagan</b> <i>Pet food supplier</i>	Bucks	64%	5.9	26	Mar 19	Continues to deliver pet food to pet stores and homes
39	<b>Reflex</b> <i>Vehicle hire provider</i>	Loughborough	64%	3.9	76	Dec 18	Has introduced a coronavirus continuity programme to help clients



Rank [2019 rank]	Company <i>Activity</i>	HQ location	Average annual profit growth over 3 years	Latest profits £m <sup>‡</sup>	Staff	Year end	Comment
40 [24]	<b>Tropic Skincare</b> <i>Beauty products manufacturer</i>	Croydon	63%	6.4	147	Jun 19	It is working to produce 50,000 hand sanitisers and 10,000 packs of balm for NHS staff and key workers
41	<b>Thomas Hardy Holdings</b> <i>Contract bottler</i>	Warrington	62%	3.7	123	Sep 18	Can bottle up to 30 million cases of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages a year
42	<b>Anglia</b> <i>Electrical equipment distributor</i>	Cambridgeshire	62%	7.1	145	Dec 18	Its coronavirus task force has been working to get parts to firms designing and building ventilators
43 [91]	<b>Amelia Knight</b> <i>Cosmetics designer and manufacturer</i>	Cheshire	62%	4.5	328	Dec 18	It has donated hand sanitiser, protective gloves and face masks to health workers and charities
44	<b>Harman Technology</b> <i>Photography products developer</i>	Cheshire	61%	3.1	192	Dec 18	Named after an early photography pioneer, it can trace its roots back to the 19th century
45	<b>Star Tissue</b> <i>Hygiene paper manufacturer</i>	Blackburn	60%	3.3	116	Sep 19	Can manufacture 1,000 paper rolls a minute and has reported a “surge” in orders
46	<b>Braidwater Group</b> <i>Housebuilder</i>	County Londonderry	58%	4.3	65	Mar 19	Growth-capital firm BGF has invested three times in the past five years
47	<b>Cennox</b> <i>Banking automation services</i>	Surrey	57%	4.3	694	Dec 18	Services, installs and secures cash machines for blue-chip clients worldwide
48	<b>Bluecube</b> <i>Seating manufacturer</i>	North London	57%	3.4	9	Dec 18	Has installed more than one million seats in excess of 300 venues across 39 countries
49	<b>Emerson &amp; Renwick</b> <i>Production machinery manufacturer</i>	Lancashire	56%	3.1	169	Dec 18	Founded in 1918, it makes machinery for producing wallpaper and for printing electronic devices
50	<b>Exclaimer</b> <i>Email-signature software developer</i>	Farnborough	55%	*8.2	89	Sep 19	It has expanded capacity in its data centres to ensure it offers a resilient service
51 [42]	<b>Lowé Rental</b> <i>Fridge and catering rental</i>	County Antrim	55%	*6.2	260	Aug 19	NHS kitchens, under pressure due to Covid-19, are using its equipment
52	<b>Grenade</b> <i>Sports nutrition brand</i>	Solihull	54%	*7.0	48	Dec 18	Has been delivering packs of its products to frontline NHS staff
53	<b>PX Group</b> <i>Energy infrastructure services</i>	Stockton-on-Tees	53%	6.6	427	Mar 19	Says its teams are “working around the clock” to ensure power supplies are secure during the pandemic
54 [62]	<b>Regatta</b> <i>Outdoor clothing distributor</i>	Manchester	53%	*24.4	1,760	Jan 19	Its online store is offering a 20% discount to NHS workers
55	<b>Laings</b> <i>Jewellery and watch retailer</i>	Glasgow	53%	4.1	151	May 19	This sixth-generation family business was re-merged in 2017 after being split up in 2005
56	<b>La Fosse Associates</b> <i>Recruitment consultancy</i>	Central London	53%	4.7	171	Dec 18	Is conducting video interviews, which it says are quicker to arrange than face-to-face

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57 [33]	<b>Motor Parts Direct</b> <i>Motor parts retailer</i>	Essex	52%	5.7	1,123	Dec 18	Staff are supplying car parts to independent garages for vital repairs to vehicles used by key workers
58	<b>Pickering Interfaces</b> <i>Electronic testing and measurement</i>	Essex	51%	3.4	188	Dec 18	Says it has “substantial financial resources to withstand long periods of disruption”
59 [22]	<b>NG Bailey</b> <i>Mechanical and electrical contractor</i>	West Yorkshire	51%	20.6	3,224	Mar 19	Part of the team that transformed Harrogate Convention Centre into an NHS Nightingale hospital
60	<b>Riverford</b> <i>Organic produce retailer</i>	Devon	51%	3.0	699	Apr 19	It is currently putting new customers on a waiting list after a surge in demand for its organic veg boxes
61 [90]	<b>Pricecheck</b> <i>Consumer goods supplier</i>	Sheffield	51%	4.3	155	Apr 19	Has donated £1,000 of hand cream to a local cancer charity to help its staff cope with intensive washing
62	<b>Dotmatics</b> <i>Data management software</i>	Hertfordshire	50%	4.2	162	Dec 18	Scientists continue to have full access to its cloud-based data and tools when working from home
63	<b>Options</b> <i>Financial technology provider</i>	Central London	50%	4.9	210	Dec 18	Has raised more than £145,000 to help frontline medical staff in Belfast, London and New York
64	<b>Wireless Logic</b> <i>Technology platform provider</i>	Berkshire	50%	*20.3	154	Apr 19	It has remote-working capabilities in place for the vast majority of its staff
65 [25]	<b>Pure Retirement</b> <i>Specialist mortgage broker</i>	Leeds	49%	10.2	81	Dec 18	Is conducting desktop home valuations as it responds to the restrictions on the housing market
66	<b>Matchroom Sport</b> <i>Sporting events promoter</i>	Essex	49%	29.5	87	Jun 19	Has pledged to give up to 200 free tickets to NHS staff to future boxing events as a “thank you”
67	<b>Hyperion Insurance Group</b> <i>Insurance broker and underwriter</i>	Central London	48%	107.7	4,332	Sep 18	Is supporting the Alzheimer Society’s emergency appeal and matching employee charity donations globally
68	<b>The Trade Centre Group</b> <i>Car dealer</i>	West Glamorgan	47%	22.4	524	Nov 18	It has closed all its showrooms until further notice, but is providing essential repairs for key workers
69	<b>OCL Facades</b> <i>Building facade contractor</i>	Essex	46%	6.2	52	Jun 19	Worked on Newfoundland Tower, a 220m-tall residential skyscraper in Canary Wharf
70	<b>Brompton</b> <i>Bicycle manufacturer</i>	West London	45%	3.9	291	Mar 19	It has raised more than £300,000 to build 1,000 bikes to rent to NHS staff for free

‡ Profits = operating profits before exceptional items

\* Supplied by company

† Annualised figure



## Appendix II: The 2020 Sunday Times Profit Track Ones to Watch

Company Activity	HQ location	Latest profits £m‡	Latest sales £m	Staff	Year end	Comment
<b>Go-Pak Group</b> <i>Catering packaging manufacturer</i>	Glos	4.9	34.6	432	Mar 19	Maker of plastic, compostable and biodegreable packaging. It has recently begun to produce protective face masks in its factories in Vietnam
<b>Jupiter Group</b> <i>Fruit grower and exporter</i>	Shropshire	*4.0	*77.2	*113	Sep 19	Is packaging more fruit ready for sale at its farms and vineyards to reduce handling through its supply chain
<b>Nationwide Metal Recycling</b> <i>Metal recycling specialist</i>	Essex	2.4	20.8	80	Mar 19	Set to invest in a £3m shredder that will enable it to extract greater value from scrap metal
<b>Printbetter</b> <i>Fire safety services</i>	Lancashire	*6.3	*37.6	*400	Dec 19	Counts Greggs and the Ministry of Defence among its customers. It is operating at a reduced capacity to ensure employee safety
<b>SIS Pitches</b> <i>Sports pitch services</i>	Cumbria	*3.3	*33.6	*101	Dec 19	Provides and maintains sports pitches, including for top-flight football clubs across Europe, and has temporarily closed its UK factory due to Covid-19
<b>St Pierre Groupe</b> <i>Bakery products provider</i>	Manchester	6.9	69.5	27	Dec 18	Sells more than 200 million of its bakery products every year in 35,000 supermarkets and grocery shops across the UK, America and the Middle East
<b>Xceptor</b> <i>Financial automation software</i>	Central London	7.9	20.1	*108	Jul 19	Supplies software to financial sector clients, including HSBC, and has invested in natural language processing and artificial intelligence

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