

# Dive into global trade and the world is your oyster

It takes bravery to expand your business overseas, but take the leap and you could reap big benefits

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To see the huge rewards on offer to those companies courageous, committed and resilient enough to brave the world of international trade, you need look no further than the export stars on this year's International Track 200 league table.

These companies have increased international sales in the past two years of trading from £4.6bn to £10.1bn, seeing total operating profits

double to £1.6bn – and the benefits of such success extend beyond shareholders. The 200 companies employ 106,000 people, a rise of 24,000 in two years.

Some of the success stories are astonishing. Take cycling clothing maker Rapha (No 155). Its exports of £48.1m last year represented 72% of total sales – and that's even more impressive when you consider that 10 years ago, the business had only just broken the £1m turnover mark.

More broadly, UK companies are telling us a similar story of confidence and growth. Our latest report on global trade – titled Navigator – found that 72% of UK-based companies plan to increase cross-border sales over the next 12 months. They identify priority markets as the US, Germany and France, echoing the top markets in this year's league table.

With the global economy continuing to grow strongly,

opportunities abound. Our trade forecast predicts that, despite wider uncertainties, the value of UK goods and services exports will rise by 10% in 2018 – the fastest growth since 2011.

Taking both our research findings and the significant growth we're seeing in this year's league table, it is clear that there is strong appetite for UK companies to grasp growth opportunities abroad.

This is where we have an important role to play. As a global bank, our commercial banking network covers 54 international markets, giving us access to about 90% of world trade flows, which means we're uniquely positioned to help businesses leverage these opportunities. This is evident in the fact that more than a quarter of the companies listed in this year's table are our customers.

Our footprint means that we can do more than provide the capital required. We have



VICKI COUCHMAN

**On a roll: Simon Mottram's Rapha (No 155) enjoyed exports of £48.1m for its cycling clothing last year**

a deep understanding of how doing business differs in different markets, which we can share with customers to help them confidently begin, or increase, their international offering. For example, earlier this year, we took 42 British businesses to Hong Kong as part of our support for the GREAT Festival of Innovation. The trip included travelling to Shenzhen, where customers met potential buyers and suppliers, as well as gaining in-depth insight into the local market.

The feedback we get from these trips always proves their value. One attendee, the Midlands car maker and our customer the Morgan Motor Company, told us that the visit helped galvanise and focus its efforts on increasing exports to China.

It is not alone in recognising the potential of the Chinese market. Fellow car maker Aston Martin, No 166 on this year's table,

opened its second dealership in Beijing in April after China became its fastest-growing market in 2017.

Closer to home, on Tuesday, we will help launch the International Business Festival in Liverpool, which attracts up to 27,000 people from ambitious firms looking for new orders, new contacts and new ways to succeed overseas.

We also see a bright future for this country's services industry, with exports of services expected to equal those of goods by 2030 – up from 40% today.

Services exports are already the best-represented sector on the league table, with 89 companies.

Teneo, for instance, the Reading IT specialist at No 53, is growing strongly in the US, France and Australia, as it supports its corporate customers in adopting new technology.

One of Teneo's specialisms

is integrating the latest "wide area network" technology, which enables clients to transmit data over long distances. In doing this, it is tapping into the growth of the global digital economy, in turn enabling services businesses to find new customers overseas.

Overall, it is good to see entrepreneurial spirits remaining high, with ambitions to grow not dampened by the uncertainties surrounding Brexit – and we don't see this changing over the next year. In fact, the Navigator report shows that 62% of companies expect Brexit will have either a neutral or positive impact on their business.

So we will continue to support our customers as they navigate these challenges and opportunities – and look forward to seeing more of them climb up the list.

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