

# Want to conquer the world? Just be online and be on time

A straightforward, efficient website and fast delivery are two ways you can give overseas sales a huge boost

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The unparalleled reach of the internet has shrunk the world – and is helping ecommerce exporters sell British goods, from jewellery to cycling gear, to customers in every corner of the globe.

This year, a record 35 ecommerce businesses feature among the International Track 200, up from 25 last year. However, it's not just the retailers that are trading online. We are seeing a far greater number of businesses using ecommerce

to reach other businesses, in sectors as diverse as homewares, healthcare and engineering. A study we published earlier this year, in partnership with Cranfield School of Management, shows how these companies are increasingly using digital tools and behaving in the same way asetailers.

For anyone seeking to increase sales to other businesses overseas, this strategy is worth exploring – the value of cross-border business-to-business ecommerce transactions is predicted to reach \$1.2 trillion by 2021.

Trading online is allowing Britain to access new markets at relatively low cost, and helping us diversify beyond Europe in the face of an uncertain trading environment.

One company that has reaped the rewards of this approach is children's fashion retailer Childrensalon – No 139 on this year's league table. It sells more than 280 designer childrenswear

brands online, including Armani, Gucci, and Stella McCartney Kids. Founded in 1952, the business is now led by the founder's daughter, Michele Harriman-Smith and her husband, George.

The two launched a website in 1999 and started offering international express shipping the following year. This was a shrewd move – our research shows that online retailers who offer premium shipping grow an average 1.6 times faster than rivals. Michele, who is chief executive, credits the company's success to its online presence: "We are an ecommerce company. We love technology and are always pushing its boundaries," she says.

Last year, it launched childrensalonoutlet.com, for out-of-season childrenswear, and started shipping to the Middle East using DHL Express. Childrensalon now ships to more than 160 countries, helping exports reach £68m in 2017.

Another retailer making



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Fitting success: Childrensalon's Michele Harriman-Smith

strides in the Middle East is Missguided (No 21), which sells celebrity and trend-inspired women's fashion via eight international websites. In May, it partnered with retail giant Azadea to open 15 franchised stores in the Middle East.

Missguided releases up to 1,000 styles a week that are promoted to its millions of social media followers, and had overseas sales of £88m last year. It is still led by its founder, chief executive Nitin Passi.

Business-to-business exporters are also using ecommerce and social media to access new markets. Take Bearmach (No 183), which supplies parts for Land Rovers. It launched a website last January and has been steadily increasing its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter following.

"While Bearmach's core business is as a B2B distributor, we've also been raising brand awareness. Since launching the site, we've seen significant growth

in B2C trade," says sales director Stuart Truckel.

Bearmach, based in Wales, is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and has used its significant experience in serving trade clients to meet the demands of its new customers. "Speed is immensely important to us, so DHL Express is a vital partner," says Truckel. "Our customers want to get parts as soon as possible so they can get their vehicles back on the road – or in the mud."

User experience has been an important consideration in developing its website. "Ease of use was key. The fewer clicks to buy the part, the better," says Truckel. Customers can search by category and vehicle model.

Launching the ecommerce site while continuing to serve core trade customers placed extra demands on the team at Bearmach, but it's paid dividends – the project has increased the company's engagement with end users and also helped it reach new markets.

"As well as the business-to-consumer trade, the site has helped improve our visibility with smaller business-to-business customers in the US. It's useful that we have a logistics partner that does what it says on the tin," says Truckel.

At DHL Express, we are always supporting exporters undergoing rapid growth – be they direct retailers, business-to-business traders or a combination of the two.

Now that delivery is such an important part of what a company offers, consistently meeting customer expectations and adapting to changing delivery preferences is key to building trust across borders.

We are immensely proud of all the International Track 200 businesses and their role in increasing the country's prosperity by exporting British goods and services around the world.

We need them now more than ever.  
*Ian Wilson is chief executive of DHL Express UK & Ireland*