



Fast-growing firms are helping Britain shine on the world stage

Top 1,000 'Companies to Inspire' show how our more creative industries are flourishing



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Britain's manufacturing, technology, construction and creative industries are thriving, generating real economic growth and helping the UK to shine on the world stage, according to the latest analysis of UK-based fast-growth firms.

The 1,000 Companies to Inspire Britain report, now in its third year and supported by *The Daily Telegraph* since its inception, was created by the London Stock Exchange to find the best small-to-medium-sized businesses from across the UK, and celebrate their disproportionate effect on the economy.

Nesta, the innovation charity, claims that 6pc of high-growth firms account for 54pc of all net new employment. This year's study, which uses revenue, profit, and job creation data from Duedil, identified several trends – more high-growth companies are now found outside London, with Scotland leading the way in terms of revenue growth, with its top firms driving up revenues by 80pc.

Last year, the report showed that a quarter of the UK's most successful firms were in the manufacturing, construction or engineering industries, and this is also true of 2016's list.

IT, telecommunications and the creative industries are also top performers this year.

The 1,000 companies featured in the research are growing turnover by

an average of 44pc each year and creating well-paid jobs for skilled workers. They are competing with rival firms using smart innovation, rather than trying to win on cost alone, the ISE claimed.

"There is a business revolution brewing in Britain," said ISE chief executive Xavier Rolet. "A generation from now, we may look back and say this was the moment that business in Britain changed forever."

Britain is now home to record numbers of new businesses, with more than 600,000 created last year alone but Rolet warned that these firms needed more financial support and guidance to survive.

Many of the 1,000 companies have tapped into growing consumer trends. Here are some of the most exciting success stories from the study.

The underwater innovator

The North Sea oil and gas sector has spawned hundreds of Aberdeen-based companies providing all kinds of support services to the industry. ROVOP, an underwater robotics company, was launched four years ago to carry out tasks on the sea floor, from fixing cables to removing unexploded Second World War bombs.

The oil price slump has hit many players in the industry hard but ROVOP, which works across the whole energy sector, including wind farms and power cables, has grown turnover from £15m to £17m year on year.

"Aberdeen is a centre of engineering excellence and we take that expertise and sell it all over the world," explained co-founder Steven Gray. "Around 75pc of our projects are outside the UK, and we work in Brazil, Africa and the Gulf of Mexico, creating a real economic value for the UK."



A pint at the Rovers Return

THE company behind the longstanding Coronation Street tour, York-based Continuum Attractions, has doubled its turnover to £18m within two years.

The 30-year-old business, which operates seven attractions across the UK, has benefited from the rise of social media – pictures and posts about its tour drive sales – and a wider trend where young people are more inclined to spend money on experiences than material items.

"People want to share pictures of themselves outside The Rovers," said director Andrew Pawson. "Social media has influenced people's buying habits, and we've grown over the past couple of years." Last year was challenging for the business, which suffers during spells of cold weather or driving rain. "2014 was glorious but last year wasn't the best weather, and a lot of people left the country for holidays," Pawson said.

World's most expensive cars

THIS is the third year running that Tom Hartley's eponymous luxury car

It's space-grade technology – we can

deploy sensors and see in zero visibility using complex sonar technology

business has featured in the 1,000 list. The business, which is run from a 40-acre estate in Oversal, Derbyshire, helps the world's super-rich find high-end performance cars.

It was responsible for the sale of the most expensive vehicle ever sold from a showroom – a classic 1957 Ferrari 250, which went for \$40m (£28.3m) in 2014. Customer service is key to the success, Hartley claimed.

"We and my son live on the site and I'm involved in every deal we do," he said. "We offer customers overnight accommodation, there is an onsite spa, meals, we even have our own helipad."

Hartley's group of companies turns over £200m and employs 100 people – the business even grew during the recession.

"We are entirely self-funded so we bought at lower prices and then passed those on to the customer," said Hartley. "We do well when the market's good and better when it's bad. The trick is never to get greedy."

The 54-year-old, who left school to start his first business at just 12, added: "Gut feeling and experience has served me better than any research or training. I'm proof that dreams really do come true."



because these are highly-skilled roles that are well paid."

The company, which employs 130 people, sends robots the size of small cars down into depths of up to 3km – whereas divers can operate in waters that are around only 100m deep.

explained Gray. He added: "This is space-grade technology being used underwater. We can carry out complex tasks – deploy sensors to check pipes, cut things, and see in zero visibility using complex sonar technology."

Companies such as Tom Hartley's eponymous luxury car business, which he runs with his son Carl, top, and Continuum

Attractions, which tours Coronation Street, above, are among the UK's best small firms