

Getting down to business

Key players tell Simeon de la Torre about the current state of play and why business owners should base themselves in Britain

Doing business in the UK is really rather simple. In fact, according to gov.uk, the UK is the easiest major European economy in which to do business. Coupled with the strong and flexible labour market, robust infrastructure and lack of red tape, perhaps the question we should be asking is why *wouldn't* businesses want to base themselves in the UK?

As a leading investment destination for companies wishing to relocate and expand or develop their global reach, the UK is an attractive proposition according to many experts. Here's what some of them have to say on the matter.

Diversity and positivity

Fiona Blades is the CEO and president of MESH Experience, a data and analytics agency helping Fortune 500 companies, such as Delta Air Lines and LG Electronics, optimise their marketing investment. Blades launched her business in 2009 and says setting up in London was one of the best

things she's ever done. "Much of my career has been in creative agencies and the UK has always been a hub for innovation and creativity," she says. "Looking at our global database of people's experiences with brands, we see that many of the most engaging advertising campaigns come out of UK agencies. The UK is an island, so it has to embrace what the wider world is up to and this makes it a stimulating environment to work in. I also believe the UK flourishes from its diversity and this has a positive impact on business."

Brexit is an opportunity

Tobias Antius, CEO and MD of Swedish industrial IT and automation specialist Novotek AB, recently launched in the UK and Ireland. "While we'd been investigating a move to the UK market for some time, it was Brexit that provided us with an opportunity to get ahead," says Antius. "As the UK and Ireland markets adapt to their changing place in the world, we want to be



"I'd encourage any companies looking to expand into the UK to take the leap. The potential in the UK is huge"



part of the journey. By relocating, we can get closer to existing customers and work to develop the company further.”

Airtasker is a community marketplace that connects people and businesses with members of the local community who are able to complete tasks to earn additional money. It launched in the UK in March – the company’s first market outside Australia. Co-founder and CEO Tim Fung says the decision was supported by the UK’s massive skilled workforce and the cultural

affinity with Australia. “One of the main reasons we chose the UK is because of the huge market size. We’re creating more than A\$100m per year in working opportunities in Australia, and the UK population is almost three times the size.”

Aaron Brooks, co-founder of influencer and content-marketing platform Vamp, is another advocate of relocating to the UK. “I’d encourage any companies looking to expand into the UK to take the leap. The potential in the UK is huge, and with so many

great brands in the market, it’s the perfect place to build a sustainable business. It’s also a great launch pad for businesses looking to grow into Europe.”

Head north

Of course, the UK doesn’t just mean London. Liverpool, for example, is at the centre of the UK’s second-largest regional economy and is currently attracting serious levels of investment, thanks to its market opportunities, low-cost base, international connectivity

CAME, SAW, CONQUERED.

Three UK-based success stories with roots overseas.



PICCOLO

Originally from Italy, Piccolo founder Cat Gazzoli relocated to Britain to set up her business. It's now the fastest-growing baby food company in the UK. Such is the extent of her success, Cat is often invited to Downing Street and speaks to the Treasury Department about SME business opportunities.



MADE.COM

Following the tried and tested success of its consumer model in France, the three founding members' key plans to revolutionise the furniture market included establishing a UK base. They are now one of the major players in the furniture and fittings market in this country.



COBRA

The idea for Cobra beer first came to founder Lord Bilimoria when he was a student from India reading law at the University of Cambridge. With London as its base, Cobra is now a household-name brand exported to over 40 countries and the proud winner of 101 gold medals for taste and quality.

and quality of life. In the past 10 years, the city has enjoyed over £7.5 billion investment, and over the next decade will deliver some of the UK's largest and most ambitious development and infrastructure schemes (fyi, contact investliverpool.com for free investment support).

Making the move

Expanding a business into a new territory isn't without challenges, of course. New regulations, a new

economy, new culture and new employees are just the beginning. However, setting up in the UK is much easier than in many other countries. Here's Rick Hammell, CEO of Elements Global Services, with a few tips: "Become familiar with the specific employment, payroll and tax regulations in the UK – along with any other relevant laws. It might seem simple, but don't underestimate the extent of the differences between markets."

What examples indicate that

it's easier to set up business in the UK than in other parts of Europe? "In Germany, for example, you're obliged to contribute towards your employees' health-insurance policies. In the UK, where healthcare is free, this isn't mandatory."

The final word goes to Dr Johnny Hon, chairman of the Global Group, which is based in Hong Kong and has offices in London: "The UK is perfectly placed for global business and travel. It's a suitable regional base not just for Europe, but Africa and the Middle East. The time zone also means that normal working hours overlap with both East Asia and North America. Whatever the complications Brexit may entail, the City is likely to remain the world's leading financial centre, with its numerous investors, high-net-worth individuals, rich heritage and rule of law."

