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DO THE RIGHT CONDITIONS EXIST FOR COMPANIES IN THE NORTH WEST TO GROW THROUGH INTERNATIONAL TRADE?

YES, BUT...



MICHAEL OLIVER, OLIVER VALVES

"Compared with other parts of the UK, the North West is an ideal place for export-led manufacturing businesses, with affordable property rates, excellent transport connections and a healthy local skills market. The government needs to recognise the importance of manufacturing to the UK economy and put in place a tax regime that will allow us to get closer to competing with global competitors."

MAYBE



CHARLES WOOLLEY, RECTORY FOOD GROUP

"With the closure of the Northwest Regional Development Agency, the success of international trade in the North West is yet to be determined. There's a need to support small businesses affected by market failures, particularly in relation to the lack of information about opportunities. And the continued development of our regional infrastructure is paramount."

YES



IAN WILSON, WFEL

"With the right product a 'Made in the UK' badge is still seen as a hallmark of engineering quality, and the North West, in particular, has remained at the cutting edge of innovation, particularly in defence. With the pound still relatively cheap there has rarely been a better period for export. Emerging economies in the Middle East, Latin America and the Far East are also fertile ground for growth."

MAYBE



BRIAN SLOAN, GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER

"While exports are strong, they should be doing better. Exporters are fixed on weak European and more traditional overseas markets. And the lack of understanding of UK Trade & Investment's (UKTI) role in helping companies establish relationships in strong emerging markets is certainly holding things back. Government cuts to the Chamber-linked UKTI operation are a serious concern at this time."

YES



DAN WRIGHT, VISION SUPPORT SERVICES

"Regional companies have the technical expertise, industrial heritage and the recognised brands to develop business across the world. We have the international networks in the regions of economic growth to exploit these advantages. And we're doing it successfully, despite the red tape, restrictions and disincentives foisted on us by our governing classes."

YES



STEPHEN HOUSTON, DWF

"The weakness of the pound has been beneficial for exporters, which will boost confidence in the UK's technical manufacturing base. The region has an innovative hold in the intellectual property market, which will become a significant foundation for our exports in the future. Prospects for growth will be even better if the global economy stays open and doesn't lapse into an era of protectionism."

YES



DAVID CASH, BDP

"BDP is winning lots of work in the Middle East, China, India and Eastern Europe. It's quieter on the domestic front, but this frees up resources to pursue global opportunities. Demand is high for schools, hospital and transport, and we are exporting our expertise into emerging markets. You need to get out there and immerse yourself in the culture to give yourself the best chance to succeed."

YES



BRIAN COLQUHOUN, YORKSHIRE BANK

"The export market is not just for big business, it offers opportunities for smaller operators too. Lending to the manufacturing sector, for example, is strong and there are indications that we could see more mergers and acquisitions this year. The relative position of the pound and high demand for British products abroad could offer export growth opportunities for strong businesses."

YES



MELANIE CHRISTIE, ICAEW

"Current exchange rates support growth from exports, putting UK businesses in a competitive position. Research by the ICAEW indicated that 70 per cent of UK businesses are looking overseas to further their recovery. The UK market is almost saturated, and with spending cuts and slow growth cutting domestic demand we should be looking to increase the pace of globalisation."

YES



CLIVE DRINKWATER, UK TRADE & INVESTMENT

"The argument about why companies should export was won a long time ago, but we need more companies to listen and look at the opportunities. The government's recent White Paper is a help for small businesses, but there are also measures to help larger businesses. We're really hoping this will encourage more businesses to consider exporting."

POWERofTEN

Leading North West business figures reveal their opinions on a hot topic of the moment