

## **Making it in Leeds**

**Manufacturers in the city of Leeds have risen to the challenges of globalisation with a winning combination of enterprise and innovation that is enabling them to build market leadership and win new business in the face of fierce competition from overseas.**

Leeds is the UK's third largest manufacturing centre, with over 1900 firms employing almost 39,000 people. Manufacturing accounts for 8% of total employment in Leeds and punches above its weight by generating 11% of the city's total £15 billion output.

Despite international trends towards outsourcing production to developing economies, Leeds companies have maintained and enhanced their position globally through innovation, diversification, and a shift into high tech product solutions and processes which are difficult to replicate.

Paul Stephens, Leeds City Council's chief economic services officer said: "There are some highly innovative companies based in the city, pushing the boundaries and, in some cases, leading the world in their respective fields."

"The sector is also incredibly diverse, the majority of manufacturing companies are small to medium sized businesses, they play a key role in the economic life of the city, adding to the diversity and vitality of the economy and ensuring the city's fortunes don't depend on individual industries or companies."

### **Innovation and enterprise**

Specialised engineering remains the largest sub-sector with around 13,600 employees. Printing and publishing, medical technology and food and drink production are also major employers. But Leeds manufacturers turn out a wide range of products used across the world, from artificial heart valves, to precision motor components and jet turbine blades.

Leeds-based company Glassflake Ltd is Europe's largest producer of microscopic flaked glass particles, which are used for a variety of applications from paints and plastics to power stations. Competitors in the Far East have been unable to replicate the company's high tech production process, and Glassflake is rapidly expanding its share of emerging markets in the region.

General Manager Simon Brigham comments: "There is tremendous potential for us to work with Chinese companies. We have recently appointed a network of local agents to service these markets on the ground. We're already supplying the rapidly expanding Chinese power station network. The car manufacturing industry is another sector we're examining."

### **Print jobs**

Leeds is the UK's largest centre for printing, packaging and publishing outside London, with a workforce of around 8,550.

Leeds Web is the printing arm of Yorkshire Post Newspapers and produces 125 million copies a year, with titles like Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post, as well as other dailies including the Financial Times.

Chris Green, head of Johnston Press North, explains: "Leeds has one of the largest media communities outside of London, so we have access to an abundance of skilled staff and a wide range of industry suppliers. This enables us to offer our contract customers production techniques that enhance their publications and grow their revenue streams."

Other major firms in the city include Nampak, producer of the new 'unzippable' sandwich packs, originally created for Marks and Spencers, which have revolutionised the FMCG packaging market and garnered multiple awards around the world.

Direct mail specialist Blackburns is also a key supplier to the city's financial services sector, providing personalised print, mailing and fulfilment service for major banks and insurance companies.

Leeds College of Technology is the Centre of Vocational Excellence for Print in the north of England, and provides print courses and training to companies and individuals alike, ensuring a continued supply of skilled staff for the industry.

### **Appetite for production**

Some 4,200 people work in food and drink production in Leeds, with companies ranging from famous national brands to smaller independents.

Northern Foods Plc is one of the UK's leading food producers with around 11,000 employees nationally, and in 2005 moved its corporate headquarters to Leeds. The firm, which was behind the creation of chilled ready meals, has led the frozen pizza market with its Goodfellas range. It is also a major supplier for the UK food and drink market, producing a variety of supermarket own brand products for customers like Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco.

At the other end of the scale, Bagel Nash opened its first retail outlet in Leeds in 1987. Owners Karen and Uri Mizrahi soon started baking their own bagels – then, as now, they were the only dedicated bagel producer in the north of England, with their Leeds bakery now turning out 250,000 bagels every week.

Initially selling to multiple retailers and frozen food distributors around the country, the business has expanded rapidly with a workforce of 40 at the Meanwood bakery and an expanding chain of retail outlets. Karen Mizrahi explains: "We now export more than 35% of our output to over 20 countries worldwide, throughout mainland Europe and Scandinavia, and to many Arabic countries, including Dubai and Saudi."

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