UK200Group

Media Coverage

01 September – 31 October 2016

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CCH Daily
inc accountancy LIVE

- Date: Friday 9 September 2016
- CCH Daily inc Accountancy Live provides independent news, analysis and insight on the accounting profession with a strong emphasis on technical content for accountants.
- Reach: 52,000
- URL: https://www.cchdaily.co.uk/making-tax-digital-impact-authorised-tax-agents

Making Tax Digital: the impact on authorised tax agents

HMRC's Making Tax Digital (MTD) programme is set to change how businesses and individuals pay their tax. Alan Boby, head of tax and wealth planning at Ellacots explains the large impact the policy will have on businesses and accountants

9 Sep 2016

Alan Boby
Head of tax and wealth planning, Ellacots LLP
View profile and articles.

The rational part of me says that the ethos of MTD is a good thing, if the government can collect taxes more efficiently and people have a real-time view of their taxation, this would seem like progress. However, it may be that the government is using this opportunity to collect fuller taxes. They are calling it MTD but actually, it seems they want to force businesses to do more work and pay taxes earlier.

What is unsettling is that successive governments have had a poor track record of successfully digitising services. Perhaps the best example is the NHS National Programme for IT, instigated by the Department of Health in England, to create a central electronic care record. This took seven years to launch, was beset by problems and ended £17m over budget.

A practical issue that has frustrated accountants is that HMRC has failed to address the issue of authorised agent access. It is essential that agents and their clients can access the same platforms and information but the reality is that at some point between now and December 2016 authorised agents will be able to access and manage their clients' digital accounts. Dual access from day one would have been far more sensible and yet it is not clear what access will be provided to accountants.

One would think that accountants would be thrilled by the potential growth in business that could be achieved, given the requirements for SMEs to provide quarterly up-dates on their business and taxation status, but this is not the case.

We live in a world where many UK200Group members are themselves SMEs. There is a genuine fear that enterprising individuals will be side tracked from the essential job of growing their business and potentially getting mired in form filling rather than selling or producing goods and services.

Perhaps one outcome of the MTD policy is that it will be more important than ever for SMEs to be paid promptly by customers because tax will need to be paid with more urgency.

There is at least one silver lining, which is that each partner in a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) will not need the software to maintain their own digital records to give quarterly updates to HMRC. If MTD does away with the need for so many tax returns, this would make matters easier for businesses. The less bureaucracy, the easier it would be.

About the author

Alan Boby is the head of tax and wealth planning at Ellacotts LLP, a provider of accounting, tax and business advice services. Ellacotts LLP are members of the UK200Group.

Houseswareslive

The business-to-business website for housewares retailers and their suppliers

- Date: Tuesday 4 October 2016
- Housewares magazine serves the homeware, DIY and garden retail sectors
- Reach: 5,000
- URL: http://www.housewareslive.net/uk200group-businesses-say-no-change-in-growth-since-brexit

UK200Group: businesses say 'no change' in growth since Brexit

Published: 4 October 2016 - 11:03

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A survey by the UK200Group – an association of independent accountancy and law firms – in conjunction with member firm and chartered accountant Hillier Hopkins LLP, shows that 65.4% of private business owners have noticed no change in new business enquiries or sales since the Brexit vote.

The remainder were split. With reference to new business enquiries, 10.3% felt their situation had improved and 12.6% felt that it had deteriorated. In terms of sales, 11.2% believed the situation had improved and 11.7% felt that it had deteriorated.

The report was presented to the UK200Group's Brexit Forum, a newly-formed group that met to discuss the implications of Brexit for their clients, notably SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), owner-managed businesses and privately-owned businesses.

The survey was completed by 238 of the UK200Group's members and their clients up until September 2. Respondents were divided into three groups: those with concerns about Brexit, those who were confident, and those who were unsure.

Part 1

Some 78% of those asked thought that economic forecasts are no more reliable than weather forecasts. There was an underlying theme of distrust of politicians as well.
When asked what would be most likely to allay their business fears, respondents who had said they were worried about Brexit responded strongly that they would be reassured if:

1. The government would enter into a set of trade agreements with the EU similar to the old Common Market

2. The government would agree with the EU that there will be no tariffs imposed on cross-border trade

3. They could be sure that after the political arguments, sterling will revert to its usual levels

The report's conclusion, written by Jonathan Franks of Hillier Hopkins LLP, said:"The survey shows that entrepreneurs fear recession and the uncertainty. General economic slow-downs and the uncertainty which drives economic failure are always bad for business. Concerns about trade tariffs, currency strength and the property market, which supports underlying business borrowing, were all important.

"The survey noted both opportunities and risks around Brexit, from trade tariffs and damage to the EU itself, to the possibilities of creating new advantages in a more tax favourable environment once the EU is no longer restricting government policy.

"A recurring theme is that there were two very different stances taken regarding the free movement of people. This has been generally accepted as the most difficult area for government to balance correctly, irrespective of its impact on Single Market negotiations.

"Our population was divided fairly equally between those who were confident that the UK did not need migration on the one hand, and those who fear that curbing migration will have a seriously detrimental impact on the availability of appropriate labour.

"Above all, most businesses reported that, since [the EU referendum on] June 23, very little has changed. Those who imported noted increased costs, doubtless because of currency movements, and this should not be underestimated.

"The real change is in confidence, which has suffered significantly, and if there was one message that came out more clearly than others it is the need for clarity, simplicity, and consistency. These are not things the business community has been used to seeing over recent years, but with a new government we are all hopeful."

He added: "One outcome of the survey that I found slightly surprising is that although only around 15% of respondents were engaged in imports or exports, concerns about tariffs and exchange rates were the most all-pervading issues raised.

Part 2

"This can be explained because the probable repercussions of an increase in import and export costs would be further-reaching as they cascade along the supply chains.

"For example, a firm may provide services, or sell constituent parts, to a client who exports or imports. If that client's trade is affected, the supplier is likely to feel the effect too."

James Abbott, president of the UK200Group, said, "One of the most surprising things that the report expressed is that, for the majority of firms, very little has changed. The UK200Group's members act for over 150,000 owner-managed businesses and over the coming months and years the owners of those businesses will turn to them for advice and reassurance.

"Our job as an association is to collaborate and talk to one another, so that when decisions are made and new regulations or business conditions come into place, we are well-placed to offer clear and confident advice as quickly as possible."

The UK200Group's members have over 150,000 SME clients in total. Those who completed the survey were also invited to leave a comment on their views on Brexit. Here is a selection:

• "It would be interesting to learn from businesses in the UK who have a worldwide or Europe-wide remit, whether they are considering either moving some more work into the EU or setting up new plants in the EU, to capitalise on free movement of goods and people in the future."

• "Please do not let politicians get away with abandoning the greatest example in history of reconciliation and cooperation between former enemies and countries that has emerged from totalitarianism, in favour of preferential bilateral 'free trade' deals with communist China, undemocratic Russia etc.

• "It is very difficult to judge the immediate consequences because in the summer, and particularly July and August, activity levels are always lower."

• "I believe that it is very important that we accept the result and quickly move forward, keeping a positive outlook and reassuring those that invest in UK that we will get through this in a successful manner."

James Abbott, president of the UK200Group

Part 3

Powering the electrical retail industry for over 125 years

- Date: Wednesday 5 October 2016
- ERT Online
- Reach: 374
- URL: http://ertonline.co.uk/news/uk-spending-unaffected-by-brexit-vote/

UK SPENDING UNAFFECTED BY BREXIT VOTE

5th October 2016

HOME > NEWS > UK SPENDING UNAFFECTED BY BREXIT VOTE

Consumer spending has been unaffected by the UK's decision to leave the EU, according to new data.

In its latest report the Office of National Statistics (ONS) has revealed that the UK economy grew by 0.6 per cent in the run-up to the EU referendum, despite concerns of a slowdown in the lead up to the vote.

Gross domestic product (GDP) also saw a slight rise on the first quarter, up 0.4 per cent. This is the 14th consecutive increase since the beginning of 2013. The biggest contributor to the growth of GDP was household consumption, which account for two-thirds of GDP growth.

The report also found that retail sales increased by an estimated 5.9 per cent in July compared with the same period last year. Sales increased 1.4 per cent on June 2016, with all sectors reporting growth.

The ONS revealed that the consumer price index (CPI) rose by 0.6 per cent in the year to July 2016. Although this is the highest increase reported since November 2014, it is still relatively low in the historic context.

Part 1

Powering the electrical retail industry for over 125 years

Input and output prices (PPI) for UK manufacturers also increased, after two years of falls. Total input prices rose by 4.3 per cent in the year to July, compared with a fall of 0.5 per cent in the year to June 2016. Similarly, output prices for goods produced by UK manufacturers rose 0.3 per cent in the year to July 2016, compared with a fall of 0.2 per cent in the year to June 2016.

The ONS said the results suggest that higher input costs are feeding into output prices of manufactured goods. It also claimed that the sharp depreciation of the pound immediately after the EU Referendum result may have impacted on input producer prices.

Throughout July, production remained broadly stable, growing at a monthly rate of 0.1 per cent compared with June. Manufacturing contracted at a monthly rate of 0.9 per cent in July, but remains 0.8 per cent higher than July 2015. Manufacturing output was relatively unchanged.

Despite earlier reports of weakening consumer confidence following the referendum result, the ONS has not seen this reflected in consumer spending.

Figures show that since 2014, 'durable goods' – such as furniture and major household appliances – have provided 'solid' contributions to growth.

A recent survey issued by accountancy and law firms association UK200Group also supported these results, with the majority (65.4 per cent) of private business owners reporting no change in new business enquiries or sales since the Brexit vote.

The remainder were split, with 10.3 per cent saying their situation had improved and 12.6 per cent feeling it had deteriorated.

With regards to sales, 11.2 per cent believed that the situation had improved and 11.7 per cent felt it had deteriorated.

Part 2

MARKETING STOCKPORT

- Date: Wednesday 5 October 2016
- Marketing Stockport is a business news publishing platform for the Stockport in Greater Manchester
- URL: http://www.marketingstockport.co.uk/news/uk200group-survey-concurs-ons-figures-uk-economy-resilient/

UK200GROUP SURVEY CONCURS WITH ONS FIGURES: UK ECONOMY IS RESILIENT

A new survey issued by the UK200Group – the UK's association of independent, quality-assured accountancy and law firms - shows that 65.4% of private business owners have noticed no change in new business enquiries or sales

UK200Group – Despite fears that EU referendum uncertainty could hit growth, strong growth in the quarter immediately before the Brexit vote show that confidence was robust.

Part 1

MARKETING STOCKPORT

Office for National Statistics figures for UK economic growth in Quarter 2 of 2016 show that gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 0.7% since Quarter 1, 2016. This was revised upwards from a provisional figure of 0.6%.

A new survey issued by the UK200Group – the UK's association of independent, quality-assured accountancy and law firms – shows that 65.4% of private business owners have noticed no change in new business enquiries or sales since the Brexit vote, further underlining the resilience of the UK's industries.

The survey was completed by 238 of the UK200Group's members and their clients.

The remainder were split: with reference to new business enquiries, 10.3% felt that their situation had improved and 12.6% felt that it had deteriorated.

In terms of sales, 11.2% believed that the situation had improved and 11.7% felt that it had deteriorated.

The report was presented at the UK200Group's Brexit Forum, a newly-formed group that meet to discuss the implications of Brexit for their clients, notably SMEs, owner-managed businesses and privately-owned businesses.

Respondents were divided into three groups:

those with concerns about Brexit
those who were confident and
those who were unsure.

Some 78% of those asked thought that economic forecasts are no more reliable than weather forecasts. There was an underlying theme of distrust of politicians as well.

When asked what would be most likely to allay their business fears, respondents who had said they were worried about Brexit responded strongly that they would be reassured if:

1. The government would enter into a set of trade agreements with the EU similar to the old Common Market

2. The government would agree with the EU that there will be no tariffs imposed on cross-border trade

3. They could be sure that after the political arguments, sterling will revert to its usual levels

Read the report's conclusion, written by Jonathan Franks of Hillier Hopkins LLP.

Declan Swan, CEO of the UK200Group, said, "One of the most surprising things that the report expressed is that, for the majority of firms, very little has changed since the EU referendum.

"As we can see from the Office for National Statistics' second quarter figures, the economy seemed to be in good shape before the EU referendum.

"The majority of people we spoke to say that nothing has changed, which would indicate that they are experiencing the same economic conditions as before.

"Up to 2 September, nothing had tangibly changed for businesses in the UK – it may be that we will not feel the effects of the Brexit decision for some time.

"The UK200Group's members represent the interests of around 150,000 owner-managed businesses, and over the coming months and years the owners of those businesses will turn to them for advice and reassurance. Our job as an association is to collaborate and talk to one another, so that when decisions are made and new regulations or business conditions come into place, we are well-placed to offer clear and confident advice as quickly as possible."

The UK200Group, which was established in 1986, represents a group of trusted, quality-assured business advisers – accountants and lawyers – who have around 150,000 SME clients in total. As such, the UK200Group acts as the voice for 1,500 charities, over 10% of all registered academies, more than 3,700 farms, 800 healthcare businesses and over 500 property and construction professionals.

Part 2

kbbreview

- Date: Wednesday 5 October 2016
- KBB is the most widely circulated newspaper for the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom industry
- Reach: 15,000
- URL: http://www.kbbreview.com/news/uk-spending-unaffected-brexit-vote/

UK SPENDING UNAFFECTED BY BREXIT VOTE

5th October 2016

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The report also found that retail sales increased by an estimated 5.9% in July compared with the same period last year. Sales increased 1.4% on June 2016, with all sectors reporting growth.

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Input and output prices (PPI) for UK manufacturers also increased, after two years of falls. Total input prices rose by 4.3% in the year to July, compared with a fall of 0.5% in the year to June 2016. Similarly, output prices for goods produced by UK manufacturers rose 0.3% in the year to July 2016, compared with a fall of 0.2% in the year to June 2016.

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Part 2

NEWS TODAY

- Date: Wednesday 5 October 2016
- URL: http://newsexcellent.com/news/UK200Group-Survey-Concurs-with-ONS-Figures:-UK-Economy-is-Resilient/

UK200Group Survey Concurs With ONS Figures: UK Economy Is Resilient

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Office for National Statistics figures for UK economic growth in Quarter 2 of 2016, released today, show that gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 0.7% since Quarter 1, 2016. This was revised upwards from a provisional figure of 0.6%.

Many were worried that, even in advance of the EU referendum, uncertainty could hit growth, but strong growth in the quarter immediately before the Brexit vote show that confidence was robust.

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The remainder were split: with reference to new business enquiries, 10.3% felt that their situation had improved and 12.6% felt that it had deteriorated.

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Part 1

NEWS TODAY

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The report's conclusion, written by Jonathan Franks of Hillier Hopkins LLP, says, "The survey shows that entrepreneurs fear recession and uncertainty. General economic slow-down and the uncertainty which drives economic failure, are always bad for business. Concerns about trade tariffs, currency strength and the property market, which supports underlying business borrowing, were all important.

"The survey noted both opportunities and risks around Brexit, from trade tariffs and damage to the EU itself, to the possibilities of creating new advantages in a more tax favourable environment once the EU is no longer restricting government policy.

"A recurring theme is that there were two very different stances taken regarding the free movement of people. This has been generally accepted as the most difficult area for government to balance correctly, irrespective of its impact on Single Market negotiations. Our population was divided fairly equally between those who were confident that the UK did not need migration on the one hand, and those who fear that curbing migration will have a seriously detrimental impact on the availability of appropriate labour.

"Above all, most businesses reported that, since 23rd June, very little has changed. Those who imported noted increased costs, doubtless because of currency movements, and this should not be underestimated. The real change is in confidence, which has suffered significantly, and if there was one message that came out more clearly than others it is the need for clarity, simplicity, and consistency. These are not things the business community has been used to seeing over recent years, but with a new government we are all hopeful."

Jonathan Franks added, "One outcome of the survey that I found slightly surprising is that, although only around 15% of respondents were engaged in imports or exports, concerns about tariffs and exchange rates were the most all-pervading issues raised.

"This can be explained because of the probable repercussions of an increase in import and export costs would be further-reaching as they cascade along the supply chains.

"For example, a firm may provide services, or sell constituent parts, to a client who exports or imports. If that client's trade is affected, the supplier is likely to feel the effect too."

NEWS TODAY

Declan Swan, CEO of the UK200Group, said, “One of the most surprising things that the report expressed is that, for the majority of firms, very little has changed since the EU referendum. As we can see from the Office for National Statistics’ second quarter figures, the economy seemed to be in good shape before the EU referendum. The majority of people we spoke to say that nothing has changed, which would indicate that they are experiencing the same economic conditions as before. Up to 2 September, nothing had tangibly changed for businesses in the UK – it may be that we will not feel the effects of the Brexit decision for some time.

“The UK200Group’s members represent the interests of around 150,000 owner-managed businesses, and over the coming months and years the owners of those businesses will turn to them for advice and reassurance. Our job as an association is to collaborate and talk to one another, so that when decisions are made and new regulations or business conditions come into place, we are well-placed to offer clear and confident advice as quickly as possible.”

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Those who completed the survey were also invited to leave a comment on their views on Brexit, a selection of which can be found below:

• “It would be interesting to learn from businesses in the UK who have a worldwide or Europe-wide remit, if they are considering either moving some more work into the EU or setting up new plants in the EU to capitalise on free movement of goods and people in the future.”

• “Please do not let politicians get away with abandoning the greatest example in history of reconciliation and cooperation between former enemies and countries that have emerged from totalitarianism, in favour of preferential bilateral 'free trade' deals with communist China, undemocratic Russia etc.

“Similarly do not allow bogus 'free trade' rhetoric to be allowed to dodge our responsibilities to our future by dismissing action on climate change as red tape, and repealing it.”

• “It is very difficult to judge the immediate consequences because in the summer, and particularly July and August, activity levels are always lower.”

• “I believe that it is very important that we accept the result and quickly move forward, keeping a positive outlook and reassuring those that invest in UK that we will get through this in a successful manner.”

- Date: Tuesday 18 October 2016
- Equities.com is the leading financial news source for emerging growth companies. An interactive and informative global online platform with over 90,000 subscribers.
- Reach: 168,361
- URL: https://www.equities.com/news/national-minimum-wage-how-does-the-increase-affect-you

National Minimum Wage: How Does the Increase Affect You?

M2 PressWIRE | Tuesday, 18 October 2016 07:50 (EST)

As the National Minimum Wage for young people in the UK has been increased by the government, the UK200Group warns SME business owners about the changes, what they mean for employers, and some of the most common mistakes made by business owners.

The UK200Group is the UK's leading membership association of independent quality-assured accountancy and law firms, and its member firms act as key business advisers to around 150,000 SMEs across the UK. Because of this, the UK200Group is warning business owners to ensure they don't get in trouble as a result of the new regulations.

Firstly, what is the difference between the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage?

Very little - just that the National Living Wage applies to working people over the age of 25, whereas the National Minimum Wage concerns the earnings of those who are 24 and younger.

The new minimum wage rates are as follows:

* 6.95 per hour for workers aged 21 - 24

* 5.55 per hour for workers aged 18 - 20

* 4.00 per hour for workers under the age of 18 who have finished compulsory education

* 3.40 per hour for apprentices under 19 years old, or in the first year of their apprenticeship

Jonathan Russell, Managing member of UK200Group member firm ReesRussell, said, "Increases in minimum wages are inevitable and, short of breaking the law, there is no way around them. There is no excuse for underpaying staff.

"My advice would be that, of course, you must pay your staff the minimum wage. Many business owners complain that this makes their businesses unprofitable, and I would encourage them to look at streamlining other parts of their business. Perhaps processes could be made more efficient by removing bureaucracy, or by grouping them together to increase economies of scale.

Part 1

"By investing in the productivity of your workforce, you may be able to increase your turnover without having to employ more staff."

One issue that can be easily avoided is a lack of information about wages for apprentices.

Small, owner-managed businesses have sometimes seen an apprenticeship scheme as a great way of giving a young person a start to their career, taking on young talent and paying a relatively low wage for the trouble.

When taking on an apprentice, many don't realise that the minimum wage for an apprentice can rise significantly after one year, depending on age. If the apprentice is aged 16 when taken on, they can be paid the apprenticeship minimum wage until they turn 19. However, if the apprentice is 19 when taken on, after a year of employment they would be entitled to 5.55 per hour, the minimum wage for workers aged 18 to 20.

Another fact which is often overlooked by business owners who take on an apprentice is that the apprentice must be paid for time spend training or studying for a relevant qualification, whether while at work or at a training organisation.

There are risks associated with underpayment of employees: there are knock-on effects such as a potential loss of motivation and productivity, and difficulty in hiring new workers and retaining existing ones. Furthermore, there is potential for the firm's reputation to be damaged, especially by the government, which has the right to 'name and shame' those who underpay their staff.

Media information provided by Famous Publicity. For further information, please contact *George Murdoch* on 0333 344 2341 or george@famouspublicity.com, *Adam Betteridge* on 0333 344 2341 or adam@famouspublicity.com or *Tina Fotherby* on 07703 409 622 or tina@famouspublicity.com.

About the UK200Group:

The UK200Group was formed in 1986, and is the UK's leading association of independent chartered accountants and law firms, with connections around the world.

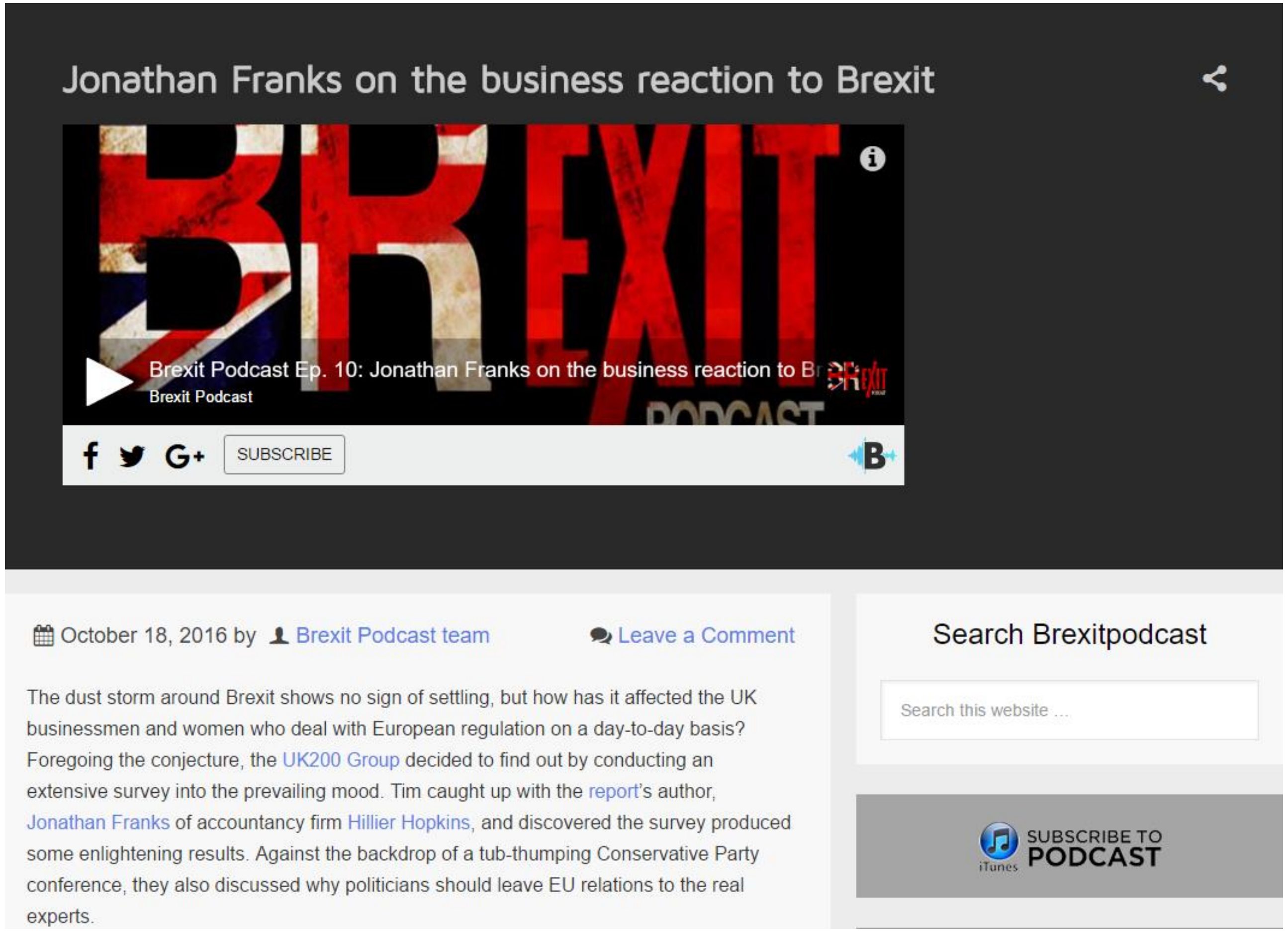
The association brings together around 150 member offices in the UK with more than 500 partners who serve roughly 150,000 business clients. Its international links in nearly 70 countries give its members access to expertise across the globe.

Part 2

Brexit Podcast

Making sense of the nonsense

- Date: Tuesday 18 October 2016
- Brexit Podcast is a website that is available to help visitors understand and clarify Brexit.
- URL: http://www.brexitpodcast.com/jonathan-franks/



CFO

theCsuite.co.uk

- Date: Wednesday 19 October 2016
- The C Suite is a unique platform for leading decision-makers across the C-suite.
- Reach: 9,133
- URL: http://www.thecsuite.co.uk/cfo/human-resources-cfo/national-minimum-wage-how-does-the-increase-affect-you/

National Minimum Wage: how does the increase affect you?

By UK200Group
Human Resources
Published: 19 October 2016

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- £5.55 per hour for workers aged 18 – 20
- £4.00 per hour for workers under the age of 18 who have finished compulsory education
- £3.40 per hour for apprentices under 19 years old, or in the first year of their apprenticeship

Jonathan Russell, Managing member of UK200Group member firm ReesRussell, said, "Increases in minimum wages are inevitable and, short of breaking the law, there is no way around them. There is no excuse for underpaying staff.

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Part 1

CFO

theCsuite.co.uk

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There are risks associated with underpayment of employees: there are knock-on effects such as a potential loss of motivation and productivity, and difficulty in hiring new workers and retaining existing ones. Furthermore, there is potential for the firm's reputation to be damaged, especially by the government, which has the right to 'name and shame' those who underpay their staff.

Part 2

- Date: Friday 28 October 2016
- Equities.com is the leading financial news source for emerging growth companies. An interactive and informative global online platform with over 90,000 subscribers.
- Reach: 168,361
- URL: https://www.equities.com/news/accountants-and-lawyers-go-back-to-school

Part 1

Accountants and Lawyers Go Back to School

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A New Way of Business Engaging with Education

In an unprecedented partnership between the UK200Group - the UK's leading membership organisation of independent quality-assured accountancy and law firms - and Coventry University London Campus, accountants and lawyers have supported MBA students to produce their final business plans.

The pilot of the YESS Initiative, which ran from June to September 2016, saw six students paired up with a partner-level business adviser, or 'Business Buddy', in the latest programme from the UK200Group to support entrepreneurs in the early stages of their careers.

The students and their business buddies met fortnightly throughout this period to discuss their business plan, a 10,000-word document that plays a similar role to the traditional thesis.

Declan Swan, CEO of the UK200Group, said, "Entrepreneurship is vital to the UK economy, and something which is firmly embedded in the DNA of our business community. We at the UK200Group recognise the contribution of owner-managed businesses, and set up the YESS Initiative in partnership with Coventry University London Campus to support the next generation of entrepreneurs.

"Our members have described a remarkable transformation in the students they mentored and the businesses that they planned to launch. The process of taking a student with an ambitious idea and giving them the practical, real-world advice that they need to succeed was one that they found extremely rewarding."

The six business advisers, from Cardiff-based *Watts Gregory*, Leeds and London-based Virtuoso Legal and Cheltenham-based Randall & Payne, each have a wealth of experience in advising SME business owners and brought that practical experience to the students.

Callum Morrison, leader of the Entrepreneurship module at Coventry University London, praised the input of the UK200Group members. "We at Coventry University London Campus, and especially the students who were fortunate enough to learn from the UK200Group's expert advisers, are very thankful for the input of the UK200Group and its members.

"The YESS Initiative has had an incredibly positive effect on the student participants. They are now much more confident and authoritative than they were before their meetings with their Business Buddies."

The students represented a broad range of backgrounds from around the world: two from India and one each from China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Nigeria. Their testimonials echo the sentiments of their mentors - that the programme was useful, transformative and offered insight which they would not otherwise have had access to.

Adeola Remi-John of Nigeria said, "My Business Buddy, *Will Abbott* of Randall & Payne, challenged my thinking and provided professional insight specific to my choice of business. Will is a professional with a key eye for detail and who takes a genuine interest in whatever project is in his hands. His comments and suggestions certainly improved my project, and would add value to any client."

Vishnu Vinay, a student from India, had a similarly positive testimonial for *David Challenger* of *Watts Gregory*. "I can confidently say that working alongside David has changed the direction of my business plan for the better, and that it's become much more presentable to a prospective investor.

"David went into great detail on each part of the business plan, and as a result the financial forecasts became more accurate and the business became more feasible. YESS has been a revelation to me."

The graduation of the students who took part in the YESS Initiative pilot will take place on 18 November 2016.

Useful links:

The UK200Group: http://www.uk200group.co.uk/

Coventry University London Campus: http://www.coventry.ac.uk/Coventry University London/

Watts Gregory: http://www.watts-gregory.co.uk/

Virtuoso Legal: http://virtuosolegal.com/

Randall & Payne: http://www.randall-payne.co.uk/

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