



### RYAN PAGE MD of Espresso Solutions

"The core of our business has traditionally been supplying parts for commercial coffee machines. When the first lockdown started, the spend of our largest customers dropped off significantly and we were concerned that the business would come to a halt with offices and hospitality businesses instantly closing across the country.

However, we quickly started to see the spend of smaller, regional businesses increase. Customers were going to their local coffee roaster looking for beans and coffee equipment to use at home to get their caffeine hit. We quickly shifted our communications to focus on selling

home brewing equipment, wholesale to roasters. Since the first lockdown, we now have a higher average order spend and our turnover is more evenly distributed across a wider range of customers. We were blown away when, mid-Lockdown, we had our best month on record, and 2020 continues to look like it is going to be our best year to date.

The single most important lesson the crisis has taught us, is that we must consider diversification of customers and product ranges, a key part of our ongoing business development."

[www.espresso-solutions.co.uk](http://www.espresso-solutions.co.uk)



### RACHEL WATKYN MD of Tiny Box Company Winner of the Natwest Everywoman – Woman of the Year Award 2020.

"Tiny Box have survived the pandemic so far, without job losses or loss of business. We closed 2020 about 36% up, having created 28 new jobs.

The plight of the planet has become more important to us over lockdown and influenced our attitude towards shopping. This unexpected move towards 'conscious consumption' has helped eco-friendly companies like ours grow.

2020 was an example of how sudden pressure can lead to massive change. It's been inspiring to see how each and every one of our staff has pulled together in the midst of that change to make our "tiny" team stronger than ever.

Faced with the spin cycle of bad news and uncertainty, it's easy to feel helpless. My way of coping with that was to focus on what we could do to make a difference. That meant concentrating on our communities - our local community and our online community.

We started by offering discounts to NHS key workers and hosting a wellbeing hub. Then we reached out to our artists and makers too, with the launch of Tiny Marketplace and by donating 10% of its profits to support small businesses. Recently, we started a free business advice clinic.

These things only happened because the staff pulled out all the stops. That's what this year has taught me - in the face of the upheaval that was 2020, I found out just how creative and resilient our team is."

[www.tinyboxcompany.co.uk](http://www.tinyboxcompany.co.uk)

# FEEDING THE HUMAN NEED...

Is business growth in 2021 closer to home than we realise?

Contrary to what, at times, seemed like apocalyptic economic news throughout most of 2020, the MDHUB are delighted to report on business growth.

Whilst the areas of growth might surprise you – do they really, given our very human need during the pandemic for safety and comfort?

### GEORGIA METCALFE

Founder & Director of The French Bedroom Company, luxury home e-commerce retailer, is defying the ongoing pressures of the current global pandemic by reporting record growth of 90% in year-on-year revenue.

An increase in DIY interest and home renovations resulted in huge sale spikes for this online business. Mattress sales rose by 320% just in October alone, bed linen sales were up 80% and sales of french beds up by 40%.

The French Bedroom Company's website saw a 28% increase in traffic and the brand saw a 300% rise in customer retention in 2020 compared to 2019.

The growth is primarily down to increased consumer demand for luxury goods, the wide range of in-

stock products and the aftercare service that they are famous for.

Georgia commented: "2020 taught us the importance of being dynamic and using disruptive thinking to navigate through these turbulent times. With Brexit now firmly upon us it's now going to be an exceptionally tricky few months for retailers to obtain a steady supply of goods from outside the UK. We can no longer look to the past and use it as a guide to shape the future, so we need to think how to plan and strategise in very different ways."

[www.frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk](http://www.frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk)



### DOUGAL FLEMING Business Development Director of Alastair Fleming Design

The initial consequence of lockdown for the business was that all design, manufacture and installation of their beautiful, bespoke kitchens were decelerated. However, because most people were forced to spend more time at home rather than on holiday, there was a 30% upturn in new enquiries.

"The very real need to strengthen the business by diversifying our service and product range has accelerated. This crisis has come about through massive human interference in nature. So 2020 has taught me that we need to use the principles of the Circular Economy in our business. Instead of continually using virgin materials, we need to design out waste and pollution, keeping our products working well and looking beautiful and reusing materials contained in end of life products."

[www.alistairflemingdesign.co.uk](http://www.alistairflemingdesign.co.uk)

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