

# Privileged printers with palace approval

Royal Warrants not only boost reputations, they can also help win business, finds Adam Hooker

To receive a Royal Warrant you have to have served one of the key members of the Royal Family for five years. So it is no surprise that England's first printer, William Caxton, became the first printer to receive the warrant in 1476 – presumably there was no-one else around to do the work.

The Royal Warrant has its roots as far back as 1155 when the tradesmen were handed Royal Charters. The first recipient was the Weavers' Company, which received its charter from Henry II. Dick Whittington's company, the Mercers, also received a charter in 1394. In the 15th century, the Charter became a Warrant of Appointment, with Caxton being one of the early recipients.

In the late 18th century, warrant holders began displaying the Royal Arms on their premises and stationery. Companies today can display the Royal Arms of the grantor along with the words 'by appointment' on stationery, buildings, vehicles, advertising and packaging.

## Elite club

Today there are more than 10,000 print companies in the UK for the Queen to select from, yet very few actually have the warrant. In Stationery, Printing and Calligraphy just 32 warrants have been handed out, around 15 of whom are print firms; across the whole of the UK economy there are only around 800. So when a company is awarded the Royal Warrant it can be forgiven for making a big deal about it.

The latest to join this elite list is Systematic Print Management in Caistor, which gained the accolade last month after providing print services to the Queen for over 10 years. Other compa-



Buckingham Palace: just 32 warrants have been awarded to firms in the stationery, printing and calligraphy sectors

nies on the list include Barnard and Westwood, Dolphin Graphics and Langstane Press (see box).

Three members of the Royal Family currently grant warrants: The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales – the Queen Mother also issued them. Each grantor may only award one warrant to any business, although, it is possible for a business to apply for more than one.

Warrants are usually granted for a period of five years to a named individual within the firm. This person is personally responsible for ensuring that the warrant is used correctly. If the person leaves the company, the warrant will be reviewed.

Kevin Higgins, production manager at Barnard and Westwood, which has held a warrant for over 20 years, says: "There is a prestige about having the warrant on business cards and letter headings. It lets people know that there is a standard qual-

ity. We win work based on the fact that we have the warrant – people contact us because of it."

Although it is an honour to hold the Royal Warrant, it is up to the company itself to take the lead in achieving it. Dolphin Graphics in King's Lynn has worked for the Royal Family since it started out 16 years ago. However, the company only received its warrant last year.

Maggi Batch, who founded the company with her husband, says: "We were asked why we didn't have it and they said we should apply. We did and have had the warrant now for just over a year."

## Promotional tool

Dolphin Graphics does a lot of short-run high-quality jobs and relies chiefly on word of mouth to get its name about. Having the warrant can help it do that.

Batch explains: "Having the Royal Warrant, people know they can rely on you for quality. If you are doing

## PRINT WARRANT HOLDERS

### The Queen

AccessPlus, Barnard and Westwood, Dolphin Graphics, DP Communications, Hobs Reprographics, Langstane Press, Stephen Austin and Sons, Sterling Greenaways, Systematic Print Management, Talk Paper, The Wren Press

### The Duke of Edinburgh

DP Communications

### The Prince of Wales

Colston Graphics, DP Communications, The Wren Press

Source: [www.royalwarrant.org](http://www.royalwarrant.org)

work for the Royal Family, it is going to be high quality. They won't expect you to be producing cheap and cheerful work."

Another warrant holder is Langstane Press in Scotland. Bob Bruce, the firm's print manager, argues that it is more about the prestige than bringing work in.

"We are all proud of the fact that we have the warrant," he says. "We have the occasional enquiry and, over the years, it has brought in new business. But it is prestigious for a company to have it, it means people expect better quality from you."

Barely a day goes by in print today without a company announcing a new business or environmental accreditation. But to be part of a select club of just 32 companies that have a Royal Warrant is that little bit special. So if you have been printing programmes for Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle for the past five years, it might just be worth giving the Queen a call.