



The winning team from Laurence Jackson school in Yorkshire, with Dave Maisey (far left) and the Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, David Briggs, MBE, KStJ (far right).



# Exporting excellence... a right royal approach!

*After several decades spent exploring the globe to seek out export opportunities, one Queen's Award winner has come full circle to promote the benefits of international trade on home turf in the UK – and to a right royal crowd no less.*

**D**ave and Wendy Maisey are co-founders of ICC Solutions, which has won four Queen's Awards for Enterprise, winning the first two in 2012, a third in 2016 and the latest this year. These awards have had a huge impact on Dave and his team, inspiring the company to develop and grow both within the UK and expand its chip and PIN testing software solutions to countries around the globe.

In 2015 Dave and Wendy struck up a relationship with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) – a cause they were both very keen to support. It wasn't long before a germ of an idea formed about how Dave could enthuse young people about the same career that had inspired him: export and international trade.

Dave says: "It was the timing! We'd won our third Queen's Award for Enterprise and the company had enjoyed huge success, especially in Canada and the US, so we started to think

about what we could do to inspire and make an impact on people's lives for the good. Winning a Queen's Award last year inspired us to go out and ignite this passion we have for export and international trade and especially in this case – enthusing young people."

Dave's team worked closely with the local DofE group, which offers young people the opportunity to take part in a range of challenges and activities in a progressive awards framework.

He developed his idea into the Exporting Excellence pilot, which consisted of six schools from all over the north of England undertaking a framework of export education over a three-month period, culminating in a final held in Warrington, Cheshire. Each school in the final was represented by a team of up to five pupils who were DofE participants. Each team had an exhibition area in which to display their evidence of exporting research, and delivered a 15-minute

presentation on their chosen product or service and their selected country to export to.

During the programme, the team at ICC Solutions shared their skills and experiences in international trade, acting as mentors and export champions with the DofE and the various schools.

Both the pilot and the competition were a huge success and very well received. As a parting shot during the final of the competition, the DofE announced that exporting would now be offered as an option in the skills section of a DofE programme. As a result, each year 300,000 young people would be afforded the opportunity to receive education, training and mentoring in international trade.

"The school pupils involved were dynamic and responsive and it's been superb to see the excitement and enthusiasm they've shown in exporting. They embraced the opportunity and, for many of them, it will encourage them to be the successful exporters of the future," says Dave.

His passion for trading overseas is infectious, and it is something he has been involved in for many years. But what drove his own interest in international trade? In the early 1990s Dave

started looking at chip and PIN technology while working for his former employer, a UK bank. It was then he had the opportunity to meet with major international organisations who visited from overseas.

"I got a real appetite for international activity, adapting to the different time zones, and people flying in from all over the world. I built a reputation in the sector and became well established in the industry and started to look at test tools for chip and PIN.

"I then left my employer to follow my vision in a company of my own and, from day one, I knew it was going to have to be an international organisation because one of my key targets initially was to work with a company that had a head office in California, and they were the first really big client I wanted to go after.

"Our business started within the UK then came to the attention of companies overseas and built the confidence with them that we had the experience to work with them on what they wanted, which was such an incredibly exciting time. Starting from nothing working in the spare bedroom to having international clients was such a huge achievement."

*"The impact of this is that each year 300,000 young people will be afforded the opportunity to receive education, training and mentoring in international trade"*

"I believe we are favoured because of that marvellous British 'soft power' – people around the world enjoy doing business with a British company so we often get favoured."

ICC Solutions has grown to a company just shy of 50 people, exporting software services to more than 60 countries, with 95% of overall turnover being international. With these credentials, it is no wonder that young people were galvanised by taking part in the DofE pilot and Dave suggested a proposal to include a new DofE skill, Exporting Excellence.

Kevin Rodgers, operations manager at DofE, was instrumental in turning Dave's idea into reality.

"This initiative was an excellent opportunity for the DofE to work closely with a business to provide a more well-rounded programme to our young people. The DofE is personal to each young person who takes it on, and that's why it's important we recognise a wide range of skills – from sewing and cooking, to newer skills, such as IT and exporting," he said.

"Reflecting on the event, it was amazing to witness the six schools from across the region come together to exhibit and present their research into how to export the item of their choice.

"It was clear all the young people invested more than the 12 hours required for the task to qualify as their DofE skill, which was most impressive. It was an absolute pleasure to witness ordinary young people achieve extraordinary things," he added.

Reflecting on the achievement, Kevin said: "Since the event, it has been exciting and rewarding to see the scale and impact the Exporting Excellence initiative has had on ICC Solutions, DofE, and, most importantly, the young people who took part. Not only has it opened their eyes to the world of exporting, it has opened doors of opportunity for them to explore."

So after forging such business success at home and abroad and equipping DofE students with the skills to do the same, what's next for Dave?

Conquering more countries in terms of export, of course. And another Queen's Award or two no doubt. ●

Dave and Wendy Maisey receiving their 2016 Queen's Award from the Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, David Briggs, MBE, KStJ.



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