

News release from Leeds Manufacturing  
22 July 2009

## Rare Print Jewel Turns Art Into Science



A Leeds printing company launched successfully in the depths of the 1970's recession is bucking the current downturn and thriving in a fiercely competitive market place with a state of the art £200,000 digital press the latest in a series of investments.

Jade Print was established by former copier technician Dennis Shepherd at the height of the 1973 recession and has grown to a £4 million turnover business employing 42 skilled staff. And despite the current tough business climate, sales have remained strong over the past 12 months.

The secret, according to managing director Darren Shepherd, is a modern business management approach and controlled but continuous investment in new equipment and techniques. "With the print industry always developing at pace, sound business principles are vital, particularly in the area of new state of the art technology. We apply stringent depreciation and write-down policies to ensure we stay ahead of the game and every capital purchase is carefully considered.

"Tremendously competitive, printing is now closer to a science than the original craft-based industry, therefore, we've adopted many of the practices of successful advanced manufacturing and engineering. Additionally, we're moving rapidly to take advantage of the opportunities available through the utilisation of e-business systems. This includes quotation,

ordering, proofing and stock call offs for both our print and stock managed products,” says Shepherd.

“This approach also gives our customers a high level of management information regarding their print spend and products for future financial budgeting. In turn, this allows for early and informed decisions to take advantage of variations in usage trends and reduce obsolescence.”

Founder Dennis Shepherd, who recently retired, had previously trained as a photo-copier engineer, before changing tack to offer local businesses a rapid printing service. The late Seventies and early Eighties saw continual growth and the acquisition of two competitors.

A major step forward came in 2001, with the move to the present Torre Road premises with space for Komori presses and the company’s highly successful client stock management system. And in 2006 a management buyout left directors Darren and Barrie Shepherd, Glen Haigh and long-serving Andrew Barber in charge, with Stephen Sayer running business development and an impressive client portfolio, ranging from local businesses to multi-national corporations.

The quality of print from the new seven colour HP Indigo press is virtually indistinguishable from conventional litho print. Additionally, it competes favourably with the more established print process on lower volume runs and has the advantage of being able to personalise every sheet, using variable data – or even variable imaging.

ISO 14001, FSC and PEFC accreditations have all been gained to ensure the company operates to the best possible environmental and business principles. And a series of seminars to keep customers abreast of developments has been highly successful.

Ian Williams, policy director Leeds Chamber of Commerce, comments: "Print is a fiercely competitive industry, and it has become doubly so in the current economic climate; so it's great to see Jade Print continuing to thrive. Their success demonstrates the lessons manufacturing businesses have learned from previous recessions about the importance of sustained investment and forward-thinking management."

Stephen Sayer says: “Intense competition has led in many cases to the commoditisation of print, with many traditional skill values removed. We have always tried to embrace new technology, with no dilution of quality and service standards. Really, like any other business, it’s about anticipating the way the market is moving and ensuring we have the equipment and processes in place to keep the customer satisfied.”

**Ends**

**Photography:** Stephen Sayer (left) and Darren Shepherd at Jade Print, Leeds.