

# Making it in Leeds

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News release from Leeds Manufacturing  
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## World Class Leeds Print Shop Trials New Kodak Process

A Leeds print company's reputation as an industry leader in direct mail ideas has led to it becoming a Beta site for trialling a revolutionary technique for a new, four colour ink-jet process developed by Kodak.

The Lettershop Group (TLG) has been selected to run the trials on the process that allows personalisation of printed items on runs from one to a million and at rates of up to 650ft a minute. As part of the pioneering development project, two Leeds technicians have just returned from a spell with Kodak in America.

The new system is 100% variable and means that leading retail and leisure brands can individualise every promotional mailing they send to each of their customers.

TLG has been at the forefront of print colour technology since launching its striking 140,000 sq ft purpose-built headquarters in landscaped gardens on the Whitehall Road, a stone's throw from the city centre, in 1992. Continuous and substantial capital investment keeps it ahead of the global game with 200 skilled employees and a £25 million annual turnover.

Recent state of the art acquisitions include the latest five colour Heidelberg printing press for multi-million runs – a stark contrast to the library-style peace of the proofing room, staffed by four erudite proof readers.

Production manager Mark Ward says: “We have become pre-eminent in the industry for innovative solutions to accurately targeted mailing campaigns. Using the latest 3D CAD design systems, we model flat pieces of paper into the most intricate three-dimensional mailers. It's a bit like Origami but from another planet.”

One of the many long-serving craftsman printers at the firm, Mark is also the resident welder, part of an in-house R&D team that includes engineers and electricians: “We have created and fabricated our own customised finishing lines – unique in the industry. There's no doubt this and our technical expertise has encouraged Kodak to entrust us with these important trials,” he says.

Bespoke software programmes, designed and implemented in-house, have set a new benchmark in automated mail sorting and significantly reduced costs, enabling TLG to stay ahead of competition in Europe and the US.

Executive director Simon Cooper says: “We're totally self-sufficient in the design and build of our own kit ancillary to the printing presses.”

“We're committed to lean manufacturing and have worked closely with the manufacturing Advisory Service to achieve best practice in all areas. Our expansion is self-funded, we carry no debt and we're in a strong position to continue expanding.

“We also have a policy of promoting from the shop floor up, which is how many of our long servers have progressed. But mindful of the demographics of a mature skilled work force, we also interface with Leeds College and local schools, looking to recruit ambitious youngsters with a successful academic record. Once on board, they are encouraged to continue studying while in employment.”

**Ends**

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**Photography:** From left, The Lettershop Group's production manager Mark Ward, and executive director, Simon Cooper.

**Notes to Editors:** The Lettershop Group has its origins in a modest stationery business, launched in 1886 by William Alfred Smith. His great grandson John Hornby is current CEO of the family firm and remains passionate about the business and print in general, being a prime mover in the Northern Direct Mail Association.