

# Fighting the recession

*Print & Paper Monthly* looks at how adapting to change is helping Lonsdale Print Solutions in Northants to fight the recession.

**A**dapt, change, and benefit are the watchwords that are helping Northants based Lonsdale Print Solutions to beat the downturn in the market and drive forward success.

Known locally as Perkins and Sons, this 100 year old local stationery printer got its name following its acquisition by the Lonsdale Universal Group in the 1960s. From here, the company rapidly began to expand into other markets, most notably the business forms sector, before it was again taken over in the early 1980s through a management buy out. At this time, the company was a specialist business forms and operational print supplier but had recognised that its customers were looking for a supplier that could handle more than just putting ink on paper. They were asking the company to handle direct mail in small to medium volumes, and by the mid 1990s, it was printing, storing and managing the flow of printed documents to some 200 locations across the UK.

Recognising that its customers wanted their print produced with shorter lead times, the company expanded into high volume, high quality monochrome and colour digital printing. The adoption of an Xralle web to print solution means that customers can now access an online web portal and produce their own fully customised and personalised printing. It is the early adoption of technologies such as Xralle that is helping the company to attract new business and win even larger contracts in the retail, leisure, education, insurance, and general manufacturing sectors.

## Ask the right questions

Lonsdale Print Solutions stands as shining example of a company that has grown its business on the strength of the fact that it isn't afraid to ask questions of both itself and, more importantly of its customers. Jonathan Marriott, commercial services manager, commented: 'As a business we have always managed to keep ahead of the times and buck the trends. We tend to concentrate more on giving our customers exactly what they want. We have never been shy of going the extra mile and asking our customers what it is that they want from us, or for what purpose they require a particular job. Asking simple and quite straightforward question such as this might sound odd to some, but we think that not enough printers bother to ask all that many questions of their customers, particularly about the print that they are being asked to produce. We listen to our customers and if we think that what they are trying to achieve is something that we can handle, we will work in conjunction with them to find a solution to their



*'We can now look at the most cost effective method of delivering a finished job to the customer in the most efficient method' – Jonathan Marriott.*

problems. And, it works! We win an awful lot of added value new business just from asking the right questions.'

Today, added value service commands some 50% of the company's attention and the business is consistently looking to add value to its customers either by kitting or fulfilling product into boxes or inserting letters into envelopes. Its print management centre and printing facility is spread over two locations, which makes it one of the largest print management centres in the Midlands.

## Analysing performance

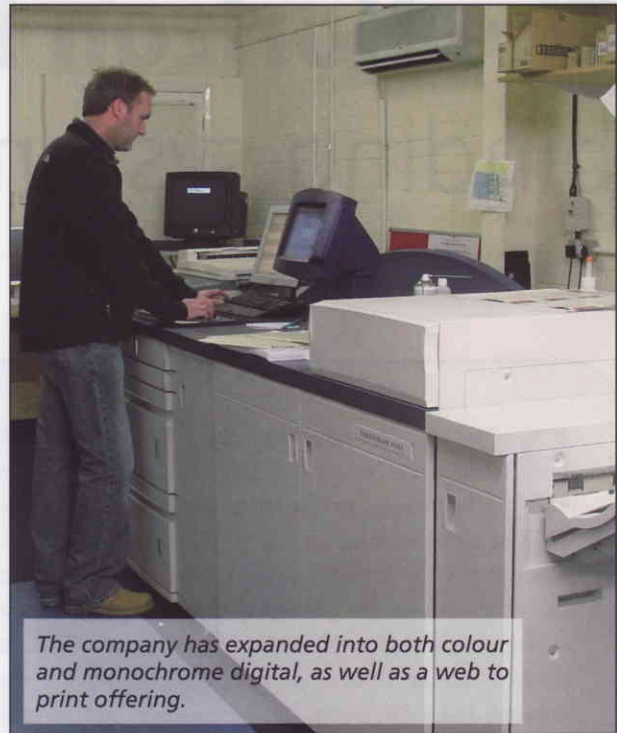
'Having the print management centre in a different location to our factory means that we can keep the two operations separate, but it is effectively linked by our fully networked Shuttleworth management information system. 'Shuttleworth's whole attitude of working with us is to help us run a better, more efficient business. It likes to work hand in hand with its customers and we really appreciate that,' he said.

One of the major benefits of the MIS at Lonsdale is that it gives the management the ability to analyse the sales

performance of its many and varied customers, allowing them to identify which of its customers are generating the most profit. By the same token, the MIS can also analyse the customers to see who is not providing the business with a profitable return.

'I cannot stress the importance of knowing what your costs actually are and not what you think they are,' said Mr Marriott. 'Since we have been using the MIS we have actually ceased trading with one or two accounts because we have been analysing customer performance data. We knew how much time some of our accounts were taking to service but until we had the Shuttleworth MIS we never really knew just how unprofitable one or two of them could be. It took about six months for us to reach the stage where our reporting was beginning to have this level of meaning but now we can monitor year on year to see where we have or have not improved as a business. We can also see where the added value business is coming from, and this type of costing information is invaluable.'

The MIS system has thus far enabled the company to investigate where it is headed as a business and has helped it to identify any inefficiencies and bottlenecks in production. Moving forward, the company is now beginning to use its MIS to analyse the accuracy of its deliveries, and to further develop the reporting of its shop floor data collection module and make better use of the CRM to bring its customer accounts team closer to its client base.



*The company has expanded into both colour and monochrome digital, as well as a web to print offering.*

'We can now look at the most cost effective method of delivering a finished job to the customer in the most efficient method. The MIS has become a core tool for us and as such we have been able to do more business management with it than ever,' concluded Mr Marriott. ■