

Abbot Print Ltd still going strong

Abbot Print Ltd has been “evolving” in one guise or another since 1920. Originally “Abbot Duplicate Book Company Ltd” the Hertfordshire based printer has undergone gentle changes over the years - in name, turnover and employee numbers. One consistency has been the focus on the trade-

only element for the manufacture of business stationery. “If we ever decided to go direct, it would mean not only changing most of our customers, but we would need some sales people



Abbot factory of yesteryear

too. It's not going to happen!” says Alasdair Browne, the MD that bought the company in a management buyout in July 2006.

Following the buyout, Abbot

moved location – not something Alasdair wants to go through again in a hurry. “It is not only a case of keeping production going as best as possible, but trying to establish a new building while clearing out the old.” The original building had the full 80 years of history in various corners or cellars. During the war, Abbot had switched production to aircraft parts, which also meant that the factory managed to get building modifications through the local council's planning department in indecently quick time. “Unfortunately, the building design was not exactly conducive to manufacturing business stationery in the 21st century. I'm not counting on the Germans kicking off again any time soon, so I made my first strategic decision - stick to print and move location!”

Abbot's evolution – as opposed to revolution – has resulted in the company maintaining some key features. “I'm not sure I would have had the imagination to staff up a Finishing Department with some of the skills that I have inherited, but I'm glad they are there. The dexterity of the women to gather and collate while paying attention to the detail of checking the numbering defies a job description.”



Abbot factory today

Another aspect of this continuity of experience within Abbot is that Alasdair could take over without having a print background. “I'm from the Army. I had to be sat down and explained what a continuous form was, what a register set was used for and how we manufactured a duplicate or triplicate book using our multi-web machine.”



Abbot's old finishing lines

In return, there have been no problems applying one or two simple army disciplines to Abbot and gradually getting a cultural shift within the staff's working practices. Re-introducing uniforms, working areas checked for cleanliness, and a relentless passion for paying attention to even the smallest detail has all been incorporated. However, not all army disciplines can be utilised. “Despite the enormous effort that the staff put in every day, I do miss the option of jailing people every now and then, or at least having a ‘show parade’ - where an individual would need to smartly turn up after work showing an offending item or action done correctly. Applied with the right humour, I think it would work wonders - but I'm not so sure any union would appreciate it!”



Abbot's finishing lines today

Antimicrobial label first for Advance Labels and Print Ltd

Based in Syston, near Leicester label printers Advance Labels & Print Ltd are now able to print on a self-adhesive label products with Biocote. Managing Director, David Gregory explains, ‘Biocote is already used on a wide range of products in the Healthcare Sector but is a first on self adhesive products’.

Biocote is based on silver ion technology which actively inhibits the growth of bacteria, minimising the risk of cross-contamination from handling. Silver, being a proven antimicrobial additive is widely used in the healthcare sector and is safe to use on humans and animals. David continues, ‘With the recent concerns over MRSA anything that helps reduce the risk of infections spreading has to be a good idea, and we believe this represents an excellent opportunity for business development’.

Advance Labels offer a wide portfolio of products and services; they print their own labels in sheet and roll form, offer commercial print, sell printers, printer software and consumables and are always developing new products. David says, ‘The success of Advance Labels and Print over the past twenty five years has been built by meeting clients' real needs. Real service means a great deal more than offering quality products and competitive pricing. It means being prepared to do whatever it takes, like working all night and weekends if necessary, to meet your deadlines’. Andrew Pearce IPIA Chief Executive comments, ‘Advance Labels demonstrate perfectly the kind of innovative, forward looking business that help move the industry forward and we are very pleased to have them amongst the IPIA Membership.’