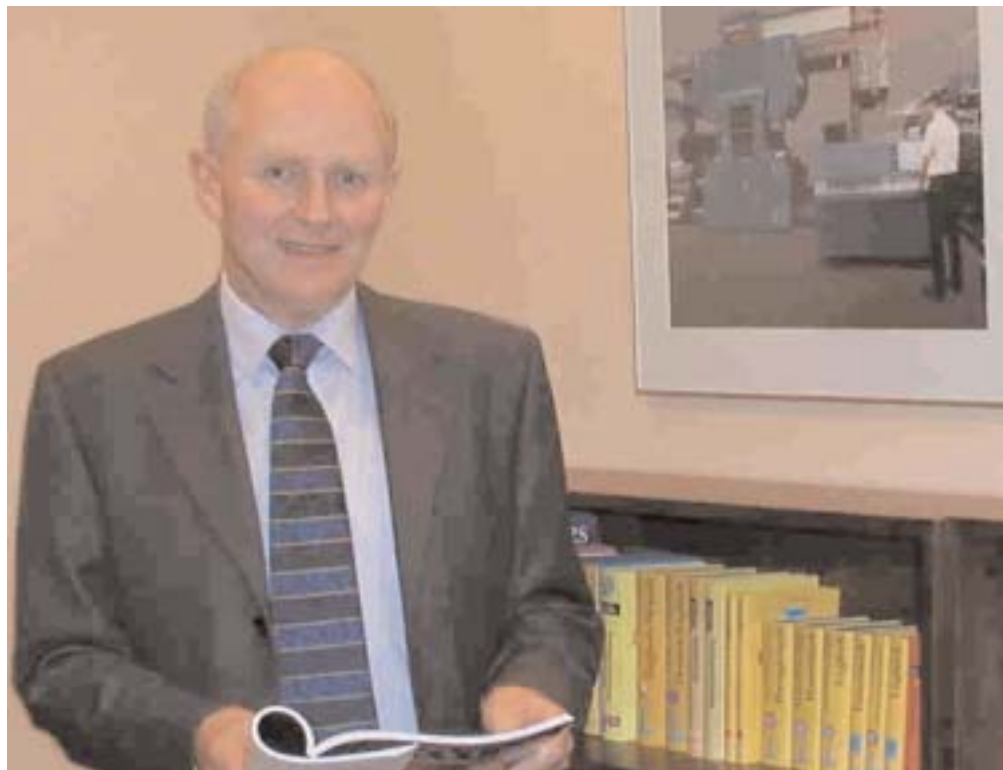


INNOVATE FOR SUCCESS



Peter Brown, managing director of Timsons, privately owned British press manufacturer tell Picon News the secret of the company's success at home and abroad.

Q. What does Timsons do?

We are one of Britain's few remaining printing press manufacturers and are still owned by (the third generation of) the Timson family. Our web presses are used in all five continents to produce printed and folded book sections for paperback and hardback novels, textbooks, dictionaries, and computer manuals in one or two colours. The presses are designed to handle paper stocks as low as 28gsm and paperback versions are capable of printing up to 750 pages per second - the equivalent of two standard size books or one new Harry Potter each second!

We invest a considerable amount of effort in designing presses for quick make ready and low waste so they are efficient for both short runs down to a few hundred copies as well as high speed, long run production.

Q. What makes you different from your competitors?

The book market is fragmented and there are many different book sizes. At Timsons we tailor our presses to produce the exact size that our customers require without any excess trim waste. Both cylinder circumference and web width are selected to optimise customer production requirements. Each press is different and is complemented by a full range of in-line folders.

In order to achieve this level of customisation we have a modern design facility in a purpose built office equipped with CAD. From there, production moves on to our own foundry. A £1 million investment in 1999 included a new building and two state-of-the art electric furnaces capable of melting up to 2.1/4 tonnes of cast iron.

Our machine shop is equipped with a comprehensive range of computer controlled machine tools capable of working to high accuracies. Print cylinders made from solid stainless steel up to 1.5 metres long and 500mm diameter are machined to an accuracy of 5 microns.

Each press is fully assembled and tested on site and our customers have the opportunity to check out the press and even send their printers for training prior to dispatch.

Q. Why has Timsons survived when many similar British companies no longer exist?

We invest in people and plant, we listen to our customers and we innovate. Each year we recruit up to six school leavers for a four year apprenticeship and sponsor local students studying engineering at University. Last year two of our ex-apprentices graduated with honours

degrees in mechanical engineering and have returned to the company on a training programme leading to Chartered Engineer status.

At Print 2001 we launched the latest version of our T48A book press which does not stop for make readies. One unit can be prepared whilst the other is printing. At the appropriate time the new unit is accelerated, matched to web speed and register, and then the first unit stops printing and the second starts. All at a web speed of over 400 metres per minute.

In November last year, we were one of 12 companies worldwide presented with the American Graphic Arts Technical Foundation Award for Innovation in Design in the printing industry.

Q. What percentage of your company's business is export?

We build between twelve and fifteen presses each year. Usually one or two of these are installed in the UK and the rest are exported. North America is our largest market but we are also successful in Italy, Spain, and France. We have a lower but significant penetration in the German market. Further afield; we have presses in South America, the Far East and Australia.

We have twice been honoured with the Queen's Award for International Trade, firstly in 1992 and then again last year.

Q. What are your company's plans for the future?

In this industry, to stand still is to die. We shall continue to innovate and produce presses that make money for our customers - perhaps somewhere along the way a little of it will stick with us!

Q. How long have you been a member of Picon and what do you get out of the membership?

Timsons has been a Picon member since just after Noah left the Ark after the flood! There are the obvious financial advantages to membership with a reduced price for space at IPEX, grants for training and help with expenses for certain overseas exhibitions. At the next level, there is the assistance provided when joining Picon groups at overseas exhibitions. Drupa is the most important but in recent years we have travelled with Picon members to exhibitions in Beijing and Singapore. Also of great importance is the opportunity to discuss items of mutual interest with other suppliers to the print industry.

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