

# Widasla engineers Lebone Litho for success

What is the one thing that Amazon, Disney, Microsoft, Apple and Google have in common? In spite of them being highly successful market leaders, did you know that they all started off in a garage? So too did Lebone Litho Printers, which was founded twenty one years ago in Keith Michael's garage.



Keith Michael - Lebone Litho ( left) with Dou Fourie - Widasla ( right)

**A**rmed with an “adapt or die” mindset as his company grew, and in order to differentiate himself as not being a typical commercial printer, Keith felt the need to continue to invest in print equipment and thus expand upon his offerings to his customers. Today, the company boasts a deliberate ethos that revolves around the value of processes and training.

‘We look at the value chain and we recognise the importance of understanding the data and the artwork of our clients, in order to identify what they want and thus offer solutions that will give them bang for their buck,’ Keith explained.

‘In order to provide the right print solutions, one needs the right printing equipment and in order for everything to run like a well-greased machine, one needs the right technical support,’ he continued.

‘I have known Dou Fourie from Widasla for many years and his service has always been a big selling point to me. Dou understands

the business; he provides quality and service excellence in the rebuilding, installation and after-service of equipment,’ he added. Keith uses Dou as a sounding board because of him being upfront and honest when offering advice – even when it means that it is not necessarily what he would like to hear.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebone Litho commissioned Widasla to remove, refurbish, install and recommission their 2006 SM 102-8 P and 2008 SM 102-8 P eight colour presses. They also purchased refurbished 2014 XL 75-8 P, 2012 CD 102-5 L and 2013 SX 102-8 P machines from Widasla.

The recently installed 2013 SX 102-8 P was sourced from Italy, where Dou personally went through to inspect it. Two engineers, Willem Slabbert (Widasla) and Shaun Matthews (Ellectrobility) then flew down to dismantle the machine and load it for shipping to South Africa. The machine then went to Widasla's rebuilding facility, where it was rebuilt. Thereafter, it was transported to Lebone Litho, where it was installed and recommissioned.



In the instance of the 2012 CD 102-5 L, Dou flew down to France so that he could do the inspection. He was followed by David Sedeane (Widasla) and Shaun Matthews (Ellectrobility), who dismantled and loaded it for shipping to this country. The machine was also delivered to Widasla's rebuilding facility and rebuilt, followed by its installation and recommissioning at Lebone Litho.

The XL 75-8 P also hails from France, but with all of the arrangements being made in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the machine was inspected, dismantled, loaded and packed by BBR Graphics, due to there being restrictions on international travel. It was once again rebuilt, installed and recommissioned by Widasla.

Lebone's 2006 and 2008 SM 102-8 P presses were dismantled and transported to Widasla's rebuilding facility, where they too were completely rebuilt and then installed and recommissioned at Lebone Litho's factory.

Lebone's three newly acquired presses were purchased at Dou's recommendation. 'I was able to appreciate and trust Dou's technical advice and expertise,' Keith began, 'he gave me the technical breakdown on the competencies and benefits of each machine,' he continued.

'I can see great value in buying the right machines at the right time and with the right mileage, and then rebuilding them,' added Dou. He proposed this idea to Keith and together they were able to

identify that he stood to gain an additional 5-7 years on the lifespan of the presses.

The colour management system that is currently being used didn't come with the equipment; they were recommended and supplied by Dou from Widasla.

'Costly as it was, I felt that the colour management system would be an invaluable investment for Lebone Litho to make because of it offering heightened print quality, improved make-ready times and it also having a press reporting system, which can give Keith information like printing speeds and what stock is being used,' explained Dou.

With Lebone taking the decision to acquire the equipment from Widasla right before the country went into the hard lockdown, it was necessary for Keith to rewrite his entire business strategy because of the way that it threw the printing industry off the cliff.

This led to the company having to reinvent itself and its impetus. The business model was changed, with aspects being accelerated and subsequently, some of their staff needed to be reskilled in order to bring the plan to fruition.

When asked if Widasla had met his expectations, Keith's response was, 'Dou always exceeds in everything that Widasla are engaged in. As a company, they supercede in service, knowledge and meeting

the client's expectations. Dou always gives honest advice and is an invaluable resource to his clients, especially when preventative maintenance is concerned – while he is not on the floor, I see him as an extension of my business.'

'Dou is always available and accessible at any time of the day,' he continued, 'Much as his company has grown exponentially over the past couple of years, he is always hands-on and accessible irrespective of him having a team that works for him. Dou hasn't removed himself from his clients – it's not just his business, but he is the business.'

As you are well aware, there are always issues during an installation of printing equipment – it is never an exact science. This rings true for what took place during Lebone's installation. 'While there may have been issues, Dou always comes up with a solution, which makes the experience better than it could be,' said Keith. 'There are always problems but how you solve them is the only thing that matters,' seconded Dou.

Lebone Litho consults Dou for anything that is print-related; he is their "go-to" regardless of whether it is about a press or if it is on the finishing side. Widasla offers a turnkey solution to their clients. Starting Widasla Finishing Systems, where they now have offerings on the finishing side, has enabled them to see remarkable growth over the past two years.

This has allowed them to offer services and solutions to a printing plant as a whole, whilst making them strong on the mechanical side.

'The local market has grown exceptionally during COVID-19,' Dou began, 'We have opened a Cape Town branch, which boasts four engineers.' He feels that being solely focused on the local market has led to their growth. 'I believe that when you invest in difficult times, you will prosper when times are good again,' he explained.

Fortunately, the pandemic didn't adversely impact Widasla because they were able to be listed as an essential service, due to their work in the packaging manufacturing industry.

Technology advances so rapidly that it can be a challenge for printers to keep up. Researching a piece of equipment before making a decision to purchase isn't always enough. Dou will do a site inspection in order to personally inspect the press and ensure that it will be a good fit for the company,' said Keith. 'Widasla manages a complete end-to-end process – from couriers and customs all the way through to the actual installation on the floor,' he continued.

'Think of a low cost airline – they only make money when they are flying. The same can be said for printing, where you are only able to make money while your printers are running. At Widasla, we do our utmost to ensure that your printers will run when the work comes in,' concluded Dou. Lebone Litho now boasts a substantially improved offering to their customers, especially with the XL press, which allows for quick, shorter print runs coupled with improved pricing.

Widasla assisted them to formulate an idea of how to use their newly acquired equipment in ways that will add value to their business and ultimately, that their clients are able to enjoy.



**Widasla Cape Town ( left to right )**  
Sean Blight, Dou Fourie and Henry Van Wyk



Heidelberg SX 102-8 P 2013



Heidelberg SM 102-8 P 2008



**Back row (left to right):** Jaco Grundlingh, Anthony Breddy, Des Oliver  
**Front row (left to right):** David Sedeane, Shaun Matthews (Ellectrobility), Victor Zukile, Dou Fourie, Kabelo Godden, Kelly Mojaki, Willem Slabber

They are a modern plant, where service and technology distinguishes them in the industry; with Widasla on their side, the world is their oyster. Widasla have identified a trend in the industry, where local customers are looking at their existing equipment and seeing value in having them rebuilt.

There are two local machines that will be going in to Widasla's rebuilding facility, where they will be rebuilt, followed by their installation and recommissioning. 'Dou is a good person to work with,' concluded Keith – he would know, since their relationship spans around 18-20 years. ■



Heidelberg SM 102-8 P 2006



Heidelberg CD 102-5 L 2012



Heidelberg XL 75-8 P 2014