

## DEKE DEMARCO – ARTISAN PRINT SERVICES



Deke quickly fell in love with the craft; “the smell of the ink, the machines, the process.” After completing his apprenticeship at Pinewood Studios and studying at Reading College, he ventured into the world of commercial print and eventually opened his own printing business.

In 2004, he launched Artisan Print Services, first in Hoo, then Beckenham, before settling in Gravesend, in Kent. “Gravesend offers the right blend of community and opportunity,” Deke says. On reaching Artisan’s 20th anniversary in August 2024, Deke reflected on the importance of local connections and being part of Gravesend’s evolving business landscape.

### DATA-LED PRINTING

While online marketing remains dominant, Deke has observed a renewed interest in print, particularly for targeted campaigns. “Data-driven marketing is becoming more personalised,” he says. With vast databases available, companies can tailor marketing materials to specific audiences, moving away from generic mass-marketing.

In a digital age, printing might seem like an industry in decline. Yet, for Deke Demarco, owner of Artisan Print Services, the craft of printing thrives through innovation, adaptation, and a commitment to high-quality service.

### CHANGING INDUSTRY

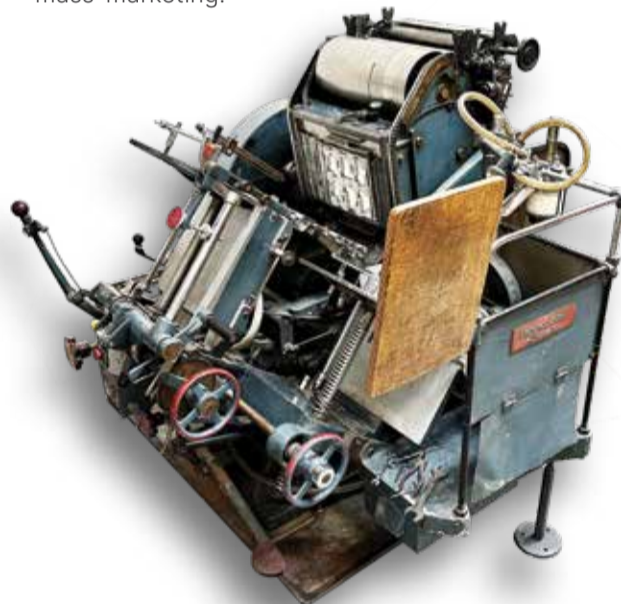
Artisan Printers is a family-run lithographic and digital print service based in Gravesend, Kent. Founded 20 years ago, it has witnessed the printing industry undergo significant changes.

Despite inflationary trends, Deke notes, “Costs of printing have gone down, but customer prices have dropped too.” Online printing platforms have driven lower prices, with technology making it possible to order smaller print runs of leaflets, brochures, and other materials. “Minimum orders have dropped significantly in the past decade thanks to digital machines,” Deke explains. This shift has allowed smaller businesses, artists, and individuals to access high-quality printed products without committing to large quantities.

However, while online printing has made the market more transparent around pricing and options, it has also removed a personal touch. “Online printing is faceless,” Deke points out. “If a client doesn’t like a leaflet, they can’t sell it on — it’s bespoke to them.” Managing these expectations is where Deke believes Artisan adds real value.

### UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET

Deke’s path into printing wasn’t straightforward. “I was a late starter,” he recalls, beginning his apprenticeship in his 20s, when most start at 16. Originally guided towards accounting or banking, Deke’s career pivoted when he applied for a role at Pinewood Studios. Instead of accounting, he was offered a position in the Xerox Department, producing scripts and stage plans for TV and film production.



### UNIQUE SELLING POINT

Deke explained that printers like Artisan stand apart from the wave of online print services by focusing on quality and personalised service. “We’re not competing with cheap online printers,” Deke says. “Our value comes from offering the right product and understanding the client’s needs. It’s not just printing; it’s about providing a service and ensuring the customer knows what they’re getting.”

Deke often advises clients on options they might not have considered. One of the challenges Deke regularly faces is explaining the technical differences in printing processes, such as coated vs. uncoated paper or the contrast between offset and digital printing. “What you asked for might not be what you expected,” he says, emphasising the importance of educating clients on the finer details of printing.

Not all printers specialise in the same things. “We rarely print fifty to one hundred thousand leaflets these days,” he says. “If I think a client can get a product



elsewhere that better suits their needs, I’ll tell them,” he continues. For instance, when asked to quote for Issue 1 of this newspaper, Deke recommended an alternative provider. This level of honesty and service keeps clients coming back to Artisan, even in a price-sensitive market.

### THE FUTURE OF PRINTING

Looking ahead, Deke foresees a shrinking print industry. “The industry as a whole will reduce,” he predicts. However, he believes printers like Artisan are well-positioned to adapt. Automation and data-driven solutions will play an increasing role, with companies like Amazon harnessing personalised marketing to create highly targeted campaigns. “Print will be used strategically, not broadly,” Deke explains.

Deke remains optimistic about the future. “In five years, I’ll still be here, offering the same level of service we’ve always prided ourselves on.”

As for the long-term outlook? “In 10 years, the industry will be smaller, but more focused. Print will still have its place, but it will be about using the right tools for the right purpose.” ■

[www.artisanprintservices.co.uk](http://www.artisanprintservices.co.uk)

