

Serve Yourself: Disc Makers Introduces CD Self Service

On October 21, Disc Makers launched CD Self Service, a new Web-based service that enables users to place CD duplication orders online. Disc Makers, in the headlines most recently with its Elite line of CD/DVD duplicators, has built its reputation in CD and DVD publishing circles as a commercial facility for optical disc duplication and replication. "What's new with our Self Service duplication program," according to sales and marketing VP Tony van Veen, "is that we use the Web as a sales channel."

CD Self Service, which offers CD-R duplication and printing for projects of up to 500 CDs with no minimum order size, includes free online CD asset storage, color inkjet disc-printing and jewel case inserts, 24/7 Web-based ordering, and a choice of five packaging options. Disc Makers promises a turnaround time of 48 hours for all CD Self Service orders.

"Whereas customers before had to send in a master and finished design (or have one of our designers do it for them)," van Veen says, "now they can upload their content and design their graphics entirely online—no design software needed. That convenience has simplified CD duplication services for corporate buyers and even musicians, who need just a few pieces quickly to serve as a demo or for sale at gigs."

With the local service bureau market booming for CD-R, and small shops seemingly popping up in every imaginable locale, Disc Makers hopes to distinguish CD Self Service by its Web-based model. "Our service is unique in that it allows orders to be transacted entirely online," says van Veen. "This unleashes the artist in everyone, whether you have experience with design software or not. The ordering process and Web interface are quite simple and intuitive." Van Veen also cites full-color disc printing as a differentiating factor, claiming that most CD duplication outposts offer only monochrome. Disc Makers plans to leverage its trade show visibility and other "offline vehicles" plus catalog, Web site, and email to market the service.

While Disc Makers has set 500 as the upper limit for disc runs, van Veen expects actual order sizes to range all over the map, based on Disc Makers' experience as a commercial facility in its pre-CD Self Service days. "Orders typically fall into two groups: between one and five discs, and 50 to 400 discs. What happens often is that customers buy one disc to see how it comes out—essentially as a 'test disc'—and then they place their order for 50, 100, or 250 discs."

Pricing varies with run size, and packaging format factors in as well. "All printing on the disc is full color," van Veen says, "so the amount of artwork is not really a factor." Small runs have a reputation for creating bottlenecks in larger replication outfits; not so with the setup at Disc Makers, according to van Veen. "The way the processes and equipment are configured allows for virtually

The home page for Disc Makers' CD Self Service Web site

that. Conversely, if a customer is interested in Self Service duplication, and replication or buying a duplicator makes more sense, we would recommend the right solution."

Regarding future plans for CD Self Service, van Veen says expansion is a possibility. "There currently is sufficient capacity for additional sales growth of this service, and we will continue to scale capacity to the market demand." And as for DVD having a place on the roadmap, "Absolutely. We're anxious to get DVD capacity online."

For more information on CD Self Service, visit <http://duplication.discmakers.com>.

—Stephan F. Nathens

no slowdown during short, one-off jobs, compared to longer runs of 100 or more." Beyond that, van Veen declined to comment specifically on the hardware they use on the back end, citing Disc Makers' policy of keeping "equipment and capacity information private" as a necessity in a market densely populated with competing facilities offering similar services.

Given the products/services duality of Disc Makers' business, van Veen sees the co-existence of duplication and duplicator divisions as synergistic in that they give Disc Makers the ability to direct customers to the approach best-suited to their needs. But they don't see either side as a way to grow the other—for example, CD Self Service acting as a sort of introductory inducement to investing in actual duplication equipment. "If a customer is considering a duplicator, but they're better off with the flexibility that Self Service duplication offers them," according to van Veen, "we'll recommend