



DVD

The Next Wave In Duplication

By Debbie Galante Block

Not uncommon to churches these days is the presence of audio CDs packed with sermons, music and other kinds of creative programming. What is becoming more desirable these days, and is likely to become a trend, according to some churches and their equipment suppliers is DVD. A visual society for sure, pastors often offer visuals in their messages. What better way to offer them than on DVD? Equipment suppliers say, if a church is deciding to buy audio duplication equipment at this point in time, perhaps it's time to look at DVD. Is it right for you? Read on.

Cassette duplication is surprisingly still strong, according to Farmingdale, New York's MF Digital's Eastern Sales Manager, John McGrath. "Last year the amount of cassette duplication in the church market was shockingly high, therefore the move to CD (rather than to DVD) is still a trend in some geographic areas.

Another surprise in 2005 for MF Digital came in the form of manual CD towers: computer towers loaded with manually operated CD drives. "In 2004, we were considering bowing out of doing manual towers. But, in 2005, our tower business has never been better. What makes our tower particularly compelling to churches is they are networkable. For example, a church can record a sermon live onto a digital audio workstation, then launch the job to 10 copiers," McGrath says.

While telephone calls for duplicators are probably two to one in favor of CD over DVD, says McGrath, he states consumers are getting more savvy and confident in DVD, so they want their new duplication equipment to have that capability as well. The difference in cost between a good CD duplicator and a DVD duplicator is only about \$200.00. As a result, "a lot of the churches that we are working with, that have always done cassette dupes, are skipping the CD duplicators and going

straight to DVD duplicators because the DVD duplicators will also do CDs'," says Donnie Haulk, president of Audio Ethics, Inc., Charlotte, North Carolina.

Primera Technology, Plymouth, Minnesota, is selling mostly DVD duplicators to churches, according to Mark Strobel, vice president, sales and marketing. "I think the reason isn't so much live video capture as it is other video. My church, for example, put out a video on our building expansion which was very professionally produced by one of the members, and very professionally duplicated on a shoe string budget."

Cost of producing a DVD in-house has all come down to the desktop at its most basic. "You need a DV camera which you can buy for well under \$3,000. You need a [computer with video editing software] to edit your video. Then you burn your DVD master right on your [computer] and you're ready to roll," says Tony

van Veen, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Disc Makers, a professional duplicator/replicator service in Pennsauken, New Jersey, which also manufactures and sells towers. "There are no technical barriers to making a DVD anymore. That's why there is probably two to three times the number of churches buying duplicators than buying the duplication or replication service."

Dual-layer Discs

DVD's potential is continually expanding. While initially the 4.7 gigabytes available on a single layer DVD will be more than enough for most people, DVD has the potential to store 50 gigabytes with the Blu-ray dual-layer discs that will soon be available.

Currently, there are dual-layer DVD's available that can hold 8.5 gigabytes, but the error rate is high, says Mike Weiss, COO, Video Labs, a duplicator in Landover, Maryland which does a lot of work for churches who are not set up to do it themselves.

"While dual-layer discs work well if they are replicated (most Hollywood movies are dual-layer DVD-9 discs), problems still exist on recordable discs at least when played on older players when the laser jumps from one layer to the next."

The way burning dual-layer discs works is the laser wave length is varied, with the first layer of the disc being transparent to one of the two laser wave-lengths that are used. Ryan Swerdloff, marketing manager, Vinpower Digital, Alhambra, California, explains. "One wave length penetrates to the second layer and you burn that layer. A different wave length will not be able to penetrate through the first layer and will just burn the first layer. So, it's a matter of manipulating the laser in order to burn on the two layers of a DVD-9 disc. That's what the newer drives do." However, he thinks price, not technology, is what will hold back dual-layer disc penetration. MF Digital's McGrath says, "right now, two DVD single-layer discs are cheaper than one dual-layer disc. Anyone needing capacity over 4.7 gigabytes is better off doing a two-disc set, price wise, than a one disc set.

Chuck Alcon Jr., general manager, Condre Technology, Eden Prairie, Minnesota, on the other hand, expects prices to come down just as digital equipment, like video cameras, has already come down. "Even small churches can afford a cost-effective digital video camera and a video editing platform. All of our DVD tower systems support dual-layer, so you can buy a seven-drive DVD tower duplication system for under well under \$1,500," he says.

McGrath still isn't convinced that DVD is best suited to churches right now. "The hot button for churches—on-demand DVD—still doesn't lend itself well for that. Couple that with the authoring of the content. Unless they are using a VCR-like recorder, they can't really do that much editing. The churches still like audio because they can hand out disc content right after the event."

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Alcon says it's all a matter of time.

"Companies like Sony and Pioneer are coming out with direct-to-disc DVD recorders which will be bundling with our DVD duplicators, and all of these systems will be supporting dual-layer capability as well."

Churches also still want CDs because the recorded disc is primarily used in the car as an audio disc, says Aaron Pratt, spokesperson for Microboards Technology, Chanhassen, Minnesota. "That will be the case for a long time."

As far as buying CD towers, there are fewer reasons every day since a DVD tower does virtually everything a CD tower does, including burn CDs. But there are a few reasons, and some are better than others," Pratt explains. A CD Tower is cheaper per drive. So the more drives, the more money you are saving by going to a CD duplicator instead of a DVD duplicator. CD towers boast a higher record speed. A DVD recorder burns CDs at 48X, where a CD recorder does it at 52X. However, "that difference calculates out to seconds, not minutes, of time saved in the duplication process."

There is one last reason churches may buy a CD tower instead of a DVD tower, and that is the perception that a tower designed only for CDs is better at the job of copying CDs. But it is just a perception, says Pratt.

As a freelance journalist based in New York for 14 years, Debbie has written for many trade publications, and is currently working on her first book dealing with the subject of surround sound.

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