



# A Simple Guide To CD ROM Authoring and Production

CD-ROMs are still an economical way of delivering information - especially if you have large volumes of video, audio, animations or graphics. Many companies now use CD ROMs and DVDs to replace paper catalogues, using install-to-system modules with updates via the internet or email. The information in this guide is valid for CDs and DVDs, however check with your production house before deciding what media to use.

## Uses for CD ROMs include:

- Software Delivery
- Promotional Give-aways
- Corporate Videos
- Training Courses
- Product Catalogues
- Product Demonstrations
- Presentations

## Capacity of CD ROMs and DVDs

Capacities vary but use 700Mb for planning purposes for a CD ROM. This is sufficient for almost 10,000 pages of text and thousands of colour photos (depending on resolution) Several hours of video and audio can be included on a standard CD ROM, however this depends on a variety of factors. See our website for a downloadable video incorporated into a presentation to get an indication of what can be achieved. (See the Presentation Section)

Similarly with DVDs, capacities vary from one to six gigabytes (or more) depending on type. Consult with your production house on what media is suitable for your application.

## **Authoring and Time Frames**

The process of creating an interactive multimedia CD-ROM is termed authoring. This involves assessing the client's needs, creating the content which may include text, video, graphics and animations, then determining how the product will be assembled.

Once all media is gathered and the client's requirements are fixed, the authoring process begins. This can take anything from a few days to several weeks, depending on the complexity and size of the production.

## **Testing is Vital**

Once authored, the production is then tested on all platforms that it is intended to function on, eg Windows 2000, XP, and Vista etc. Testing is essential and is intended to show up any anomalies or conflicts within the program. It's vital to understand this process, as some clients will assume that authoring and testing can be done as a last minute, rushed job. This can lead to errors that can result in the production of disks that are only suited for use as drink coasters!

## **Production of your CD-ROM in quantity**

Once authoring and testing has been completed, the next step in the production is to determine whether you will have the item stamped or "burned". A guideline for this is the quantity you wish to produce. Costs are directly linked to quantity and as a guideline, if you require more than 250 units, then the CD-ROM will be stamped.

### **Stamped CDs**

Stamped (also known as pressed) CD ROM - the authoring house provides you with a master which is a fully functional CD-ROM. From this the production house will produce its "stamping master" - sometimes referred to as a "glass master". This takes around a week to have prepared (this is an average turn-around time and can vary either way). Once this is made it's not possible to make changes to the product without remaking the stamping master - which costs approximately \$600. So make sure before you give the go-ahead, your authoring master is the correct version and all edits are completed.

Once the stamp master is ready the production run commences. Modern machines press out CDs at a rate of around 800 units or more an hour so the actual stamp-run is often the shortest part of the entire process.

### **Labelling and packaging**

Other items that must be considered during the process are:

- Disk Labelling - Usually silk screened in up to four colours
- Packaging - Plastic case, plastic or paper sleeves
- Inserts - Instruction manuals etc

### **Time frame for production**

A safe time period to plan on for the CD stamping process is a minimum of ten (10) working days. This can vary and you should consult with your production house on actual time requirements as they can vary during the year, depending on demand.

### **Small production runs**

Smaller runs use CD-Rs or “Burned” CDs. Most people are familiar with this production method. Basically suited for runs under 200, this can often be done in-house or by using a company that specializes in software duplication. Production time is usually much shorter as software duplication houses use multiple high speed burners and multi-colour labelling machines (often with direct to disk printing rather than paper labels)

Again packaging and accompanying literature must be taken into consideration and often this will be the critical item in the production timeline.

### **Benefits of CD ROMS**

As well as being cost competitive with “paper” productions, CD ROMs have a lifespan that is reported to be five times that of most “paper” productions. In addition they tend to be passed around to a much wider audience than printed materials. One advantage is having modules such as screensavers and pictorial or video catalogues that can be installed to user’s systems – this way the product spreads to a wide audience at no additional cost to you. They also save costs in mailing – usually a disk can be mailed for less than \$1, but a two hundred page paper catalogue can cost in excess of \$5 per unit.

CD-ROMS are now often authored with modules that can be installed to a user’s system. These might be product catalogues, parts lists, calculators – any programs or utility that might be useful to your clients. With broadband now common, many of these modules can also be delivered via the web – either from your website or by email (depending on size). You might choose to deliver the initial material via CD-ROM, which includes install-to-disk segments that can be upgraded in future using web delivered modules and from then on deliver updates electronically rather than re-issue replacement CDs.

Although gradually being replaced by web delivered media as the roll-out of broadband continues, CD-ROMS (and DVDs) will continue to have their uses for the foreseeable future.

The same authoring techniques are applicable to USB memory devices (Memory Sticks)

For more information visit our website or contact us.

Email: [info@kissmultimedia.com.au](mailto:info@kissmultimedia.com.au)

[www.kissmultimedia.com.au](http://www.kissmultimedia.com.au)