

I started my company, Realtime Duplication, back in '86 as an audio cassette duplicator.
A really small business.

Back in those days our primary clients were local bands and musicians, with a smattering of regional voice-talent and business types. My initial pile of consumer tape decks eventually expanded into a massive, semi-automated stack of 120 professional Nakamichi machines, racked-up vertically in a giant L shape in the basement. For amusement we would sometimes turn off the lights in the production room and watch all the pretty LEDs dance up and down as the Nirvana and Pearl Jam tapes hummed away.



Realtime rode the indie-music and dot-com industry bronco throughout the '90s, as demand for the five-inch CD and DVD exploded. Scads of local bands, media companies and record labels graced our humble doorstep: Sub Pop, The Presidents of the USA, the Opera and Symphony, Saltmine Creative, Fastrax, Popllama Records, Microsoft, Boeing. The Realtime Command Center buzzed like the control tower at SeaTac. The energy was formidable—and our lunchtimes were fabulous! Realtime was still a small business.



The new millennium brought an era of profound change and consolidation in the media industry. By the end of the decade, the wide-open Internet and lure of far away mega-operations took some work out-of-state. As its local competitors folded or got gobbled up by the Conglomerates, Realtime kept its head down and continued to nurse a nice local niche market. With the advent of The Great Recession the “less is better” mentality hit consumers like a ton of bricks. While challenging, the economic downturn hastened the demise of plastic packaging and the switch to eco-friendly boardstock sleeves and wallets. This has been a good thing!



I noticed something a few years ago: touring bands and musicians started flocking back to the small local guy. A rediscovered respect for local, community and region pervades the consumer mindset. Genuine homegrown cottage industry is irresistible to people tired of that impersonal big-box experience!

Looking back over the past 30 years of action-packed Realtime duplication and packaging, I am glad of one thing: that I always kept the company small, manageable and accessible to our clients. It's a strategy that has worked well over the long-term. Through technological change and industry upheaval, Realtime has maintained a vibrant operation, focused on its core Pacific Northwest clients.



As long as physical media and packaging remain viable in the marketplace, I expect to be here.
Maybe another 30 years?

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