

# THE TENNESSEAN

## MUSIC CITY FUTURE 50

### ★ NovaCopy

## NovaCopy makes it easier for business to get colorful

The company's 10 employees in Nashville offer customers new faces and personal service.

By **RANDY McCLAIN**  
Assistant Business Editor

Darren Metz and the NovaCopy digital copier company he owns could be the Nashville area's newest corporate citizens.

Metz's company moved its headquarters from Memphis to Nashville in August after a year and a half of Metz knocking on potential customers' doors here as a traveling copier salesman.

The company got started in Memphis in 1998 and quickly established a reputation there for quality service after the sale. In Nashville, it has quietly built a small staff of 10, with plans to add more sales personnel.

Metz and his family moved from Memphis to suburban Nashville in August, putting an official stamp on NovaCopy's corporate change of address.

But getting known in a new market where other better-entrenched copier companies have a tighter grip on sales has

been a challenge.

Metz, NovaCopy's president, approaches the job with an entrepreneur's fervor. He pitches what he sees as a new digital gospel of copy machines becoming peripheral equipment to computer networks, and not just printing machines shoved against a wall.

"It's not a bad time to expand. There's probably an opportunity here for an upstart company like ours," said Metz, whose company did \$10 million in sales last year. He projects sales of roughly \$14 million this year and \$16 million in 2005. NovaCopy operates in Memphis, Jackson, Tenn., and now Nashville. It is considering adding offices in Chattanooga and Atlanta, although that will probably wait until its Nashville operations are a bit stronger.

As Metz sees it, several local and national business trends have given his company a good chance to grow. Among them:

- Color copiers are becoming less expensive to lease and oper-

ate, and that boosts sales among customers looking for greater productivity on tight budgets. The cost differential, in monthly leasing charges, between black-and-white and color copiers has narrowed to no more than 30% from as much as 300% a few years ago, Metz said.

- Customers are beginning to see copiers as more of a computer peripheral these days — equipment that can be linked with IT networks to manage documents more efficiently. In NovaCopy's case, it sells a computer software package of its own design that archives scanned documents for fast retrieval.

"It's clearly a challenge competing (in Nashville) with several firmly entrenched competitors, though," Metz added. "We're trying to win customers one at a time.

"There's a lot to be said for approaching business with an entrepreneur's energy, where you come to work every day and your livelihood depends on it."

NovaCopy's mantra is personal service, Metz said. "We've gone back to fundamentals. Some bigger companies try to insulate

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— **Darren Metz,**  
president, NovaCopy

themselves from their customers by pushing them through layers of automated phone menus when they call. With us, whoever answers the phone handles the service call. Customers expect to hear a human voice."

Major accounts here include the Gaylord Entertainment Center and Shop at Home network, Metz said. NovaCopy handles Konica-Minolta and Panasonic copiers. Most customers lease equipment, he said.

The lower costs of color copiers are one factor driving business, he said. "Companies are able to do a lot more of their own printing in-house for business cards, brochures and mailers. There's less need to go to a print shop." ■



**METZ**

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