

# Call centres in growth mode

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## Contact centre employment nears historic highs, hiring continues

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After flirting with offshore  
call centres, the customer

contact industry is returning to its true love, New Brunswick.

After peaking at about 21,000 New Brunswick jobs in 2007 and then waning when foreign competition started boasting about low-wage, low-cost alternatives, companies looking to outsource customer contact functions are again turning to this province.

"That storm kind of came and passed a while ago," says Mike Bacon, executive director of Contact NB.

"We're pretty much getting back up to our peak numbers once again."

Many deserters of the New Brunswick contact centre camp found that defecting to foreign soil did not bring with it the intended benefits, for example language and cultural barriers, where in some cultures business conflicts can prove exceedingly difficult to overcome, or some countries' telecommunications infrastructure can prove problematic, or some clients have trouble understanding foreign accents over noisy trans-Atlantic phone lines.

Some of those returning companies brought back to New Brunswick more jobs than they sent overseas after seeing that the grass is not always greener on the other side of the ocean, Bacon notes.

Today, the industry accounts for more than 18,000 jobs and growing - an estimated one out of every 10 jobs in Metro Moncton. That's an increase of about 13 per cent since 2009, provincially. More than half of New Brunswick's contact centres have more employees than they did three years ago and 80 per cent say they have the same amount of employees or more.

And the nature of those jobs has also evolved as the industry is attracting a historically disproportionate number of inbound call centres which often offer more challenging positions, with better pay, better benefits, better career paths and improved work environments.

In Metro Moncton, the job numbers are on the grow in a big way.

ING Direct recently held a job fair as they seek to fill out their 350-worker roster for their new operation in Moncton.

A new bank contract has prompted Riverview's Aditya Birla Minacs contact centre to put out a call for at least 200 new employees. Minacs has also opened a new centre in Bathurst recently offering more than 100 jobs.

Sitel in the Moncton Industrial Development park is also looking for dozens of new people.

Once attracted to New Brunswick because of a cheap, ample workforce, nowadays the contact industry eyes the province for its low operating costs, low employee turnover, good IT infrastructure and workers that are comfortable working in the kind of high-tech environment so often demanded in the inbound call industry, which typically revolve around tech support, business processes, financial services and the like. And in New Brunswick, the workers speak the language and share the culture of most of the clients they serve.

On the Atlantic region's premiere jobs site Careerbeacon.com, there are literally hundreds of contact centre positions looking for candidates, most of them in New Brunswick, offering not merely jobs but careers that include regular training and chances to move up into more senior positions.

The wide variety of call centres in Metro Moncton - they offer positions that range from polling opinions to IT support - mean that whether you are fresh out of high school or a university graduate seasoned by actual experience in your field, there are careers in the industry that match your talents.

"We represent such a vast number of different types of employers, with all different types of companies," Bacon says. "Chances are that there are contact centres that fit you."

With so much hiring in the Metro Moncton contact centre scene today, even raw rookies in the industry have a great chance of landing a job, with their new employer footing the bill for their training. And if you have the specific skills that employer might be looking for, then you're holding most of the cards.

"It's an employee's market right now," Bacon says.

"In fact, you could even be seeing multiple job offers."

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