

Contact Centers Provide Successful Career Opportunities

By Joan LeBlanc

Gaining high level training while developing professional skills and the sense of playing an important role within a finely-honed team are just a few of the benefits that come with working in some of New Brunswick's successful contact centers. Indeed, many of the more than 18,000 individuals employed in contact centers in the province today will continue their careers there in the years to come. Others will move on to different professional opportunities, taking with them the knowledge, expertise and confidence gleaned through their contact centre experience.

Contact NB Executive Director Mike Bacon is one of those individuals.

Bacon began his career as an entry-level customer service representative at the Xerox Centre in January, 1995, providing service info to clients.

"I was in the first group of employees hired in Xerox's new 'National Call Centre' as it was called then," Bacon recalls. "I loved talking to customers and it was fun to be part of such a new and exciting workplace with 'waves' of new employees starting every few weeks. What was different and refreshing was that once I took that last call and my shift was over, I could walk away with nothing on my desk and start fresh the next day." After several months he was moved to the new Direct Marketing department, answering customer inquiries on products advertised in radio, print and television ads, and two years later became a manager of about 30 customer service agents.

"It was the first time I had ever managed more than a handful of people and I enjoyed mentoring people who had started their careers in the same position I had," he says. Working his way through various jobs in the contact centre, Bacon's last position there was as business operations manager where he managed support functions of the centre including scheduling, PC support and finance

"It was a very challenging and interesting position and I learned a lot about the business of running a contact centre. Somewhere along the way I got involved with ContactNB on the committee that organizes their annual conference. Xerox was a member of the association and its manager was president of ContactNB's board of directors and I eventually became a board member as well. After 13 years at Xerox the opportunity came to work at ContactNB full time and I was excited to have the opportunity to work for an industry that had provided me with such a rewarding career," Bacon says.

He credits the extensive, professional training he received along the way in the areas of customer service, direct marketing, coaching and mentoring of employees, computers and project management.

"I also earned a green belt in an industry program called 'Lean Six Sigma' which is a process and quality improvement program used extensively by major companies worldwide. Many of these skills I use each and every day," he adds.

Whether or not they are just entering the work force, or have already spent a number of years in one or more jobs, Bacon advises individuals to take every opportunity available to learn new things, have a career path in mind and to lay out a plan to move toward that career goal.

“As my manager used to tell every newly hired class at Xerox, ‘the skills you have today are not the skills that will make you successful tomorrow’. To be happy and successful in your chosen career, I believe that persons must be open to learning and always to be working toward gaining more employment skills,” he notes.

The companies operating contact centers are some of the best employers in New Brunswick today he adds.

“They offer very competitive wages and benefits and for those who are willing to invest the time in personal development, there are many opportunities for job advancement,” Bacon says.