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## Contact centres dialing dollars

By James Bowen

They use advanced IT and telecommunications, they are growing steadily and stealthily, and they are a major part of the economy. Call centres are here in abundance, and they are dialling up revenue.

We know them as call centres but in the industry they are also called contact centres because they are one of several ways that a customer can contact a company. Twenty-five years ago the contact centre industry barely existed in Ottawa, or even in Canada. Statistics don't always tell the whole story, but the contact centre industry numbers are surprising.

The **Contact Centre Canada** (CCC) board of directors, in collaboration with **Human Resources Development Canada** (HRDC), commissioned a study entitled *Canadian Contact Centre Industry: Strategy, Work Organization and Human Resource Management Report* (callcentres.org/Resources/Links.html). The report notes there are more than 14,000 contact centres in Canada, employing over half a million permanent and part-time staff. This means that almost one in every 25 employed Canadians works in a contact centre, which are

ringing in between \$36 billion and \$38 billion annually.

The number of call centres and related jobs are projected to increase by 7% a year in Canada. Why such re-

while the US rate has been reported in excess of 50%. Typically we think of low-paying jobs in developing Asia-Pacific countries when we think of call centres, but Canada is second only to India in attracting new centres. And salaries vary widely, depending on the region, type of work, level of responsibility, training, and which industry the centre serves. While an entry-level agent takes home around \$24,000 a year; a mid-level agent can make \$31,000 and a senior agent may pocket upwards of \$40,000. Scheduling and help desk people can earn more still.

The **Ottawa Regional Contact Centre Association** (ORCCA)

advocates on behalf of more than 250 members. It represents call centres and their workers in all manner of industry, from finance/banking to high tech and telecom; from the public sector to not-for-profit organizations, transportation and utilities, wholesale/retail, health care, travel and hospitality. The preponderance of its members, though, is in financial services and tech support. The industry association has partnered with **Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation**, which recognizes Ottawa's contact centres as a distinct cluster.

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markable growth? In part it's because our rate of employee turn-over is lower than in the US, making Canada

There are more than 14,000 contact centres in Canada, employing over half a million people.

a more attractive place to set up shop. The CCC/HRDC study estimates turn-over rates here are approximately 17%,

## Campaign cites 82000 reasons

The **Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation** (OCRI) announces the *82000reasons* promotion campaign hard on the release of its annual technology survey last month that showed a record 81,910 people are employed in Ottawa's tech sector.

The multi-media promotion campaign integrates traditional and social media to create a growing online record of tech Ottawa's success. At 82000reasons.com, Ottawa technology companies and employees can profile themselves via online blogs or YouTube videos.

The site provides templates for blogging and YouTube video uploads.

"With nearly 82000 tech workers in Ottawa, we know there are 82000 or more stories to tell the world about our success as Canada's innovation capital," says **Michael Darch**, executive director of OCRI's Ottawa Global Marketing. "In the era of user generated content, every one of those stories can be told, tagged and distributed online to a global audience. We believe that content will attract both businesses and individuals who will recognize Ottawa's lifestyle and technology strengths, then decide to locate either their companies or careers in this great city."

The 82000reasons web site offers participating companies and individuals a blogging platform for text-based profiles as well as directions on how to add YouTube video. Content templates are also provided. Already, several companies including **Enablence Technologies Inc.**, **Liquid Computing Corp.**, **Macadamian**, **March Networks Corp.**, **Fuel Industries**, **BelAir Networks Inc.**, and **QNX Software Systems** have added either blog profiles or YouTube videos to 82000reasons.com.

The 82000reasons campaign is being promoted to the Ottawa tech community by banner ads on **Facebook**, plus local print, banner ad and radio advertising. It was created by **market2world communications inc.** and **General Assembly Productions Center**.



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