



GreaterHalifax
PARTNERSHIP

'Head Offices are Precious Jewels'

What gets formed under high pressure and low temperatures, can withstand the toughest blow, possesses superlative intellectual qualities, resists breakage from forceful impact, shines brilliantly and derives its Greek name from "I overcome"?

Did you guess, head offices, the diamond of an economy?

Steve Parker, Chairman of CCL Group in Halifax, has spent his professional life creating and polishing business head offices in the rough, while cutting exact angles that make them sparkle. These days 100 percent locally-owned Blue Ocean Contact Centres, a customer support outsourcing business, is the centre of his focus.

"We look like a local business, but we are actually an international export business," says Steve.

Blue Ocean's unique export quality is not a physical product; it's intellect and experience. It exports customer service solutions including technical support, reservations and registrations, issue resolution, logistics support, and customer service over telephone lines and on digital signals. "That's our product. And it is generating economic activity from California, New York, Alberta, Ontario and it all flows back to Halifax."

Blue Ocean's bold pledge is to "represent our client's brand to their customers," says Steve. "We make their brand promise, their products and their culture our own," by dedicating staff members to their clients' portfolios. They do this so well that 98 percent of Blue Ocean's clients are some of the world's best brands based out of North America, which means Blue Ocean is serving customers throughout North and South America, in most of Europe and in East Asia. Only 2% of its business comes from Atlantic Canada.

To meet their customers' international needs, Blue Ocean, housed in two independent centres in Halifax, employs over 500 people and offers service in seven different languages. Its website boasts that it draws from "one of the best-educated, most motivated labour pools in North America."

"More than 80 percent of our workforce has post-secondary educations," says Steve. The average age is 31.4 years and 57 percent of Blue Ocean's employees are in their twenties.

Looking to locate or expand your business?

The Greater Halifax Partnership is the lead economic development organization for Halifax. We bring together industry, post-secondary and community partners, as well as all three levels of government, to create and nurture the relationships needed for business development. Contact us for help with your site selection process and relocation to Halifax.

Because Blue Ocean is a head office, about 55 people hold core management and administrative positions. To Steve, this is just one of the many reasons a head office is such a precious jewel.

First, head offices provide high paid career opportunities.

"In good times, head offices grow on the outside and this means they have to grow on the inside too," says Steve. "Where are the best, highest paying jobs and the most new career opportunities? Where do the best people from across their chain get transferred to? The head office."

Second, head offices offer job security.

"When times get tough, or you lose a contract, where do you shrink? You take your tentacles off. You don't shrink your core."

Third, head offices provide earnings.

"If you have a head office and it's also majority owned in the area, then a portion of the business's earnings stay here. It builds wealth here. Where are companies taxed? In their head office environments. This is good for all of Nova Scotia."



"My final point, and it's very important, is head offices build supplier communities. Many supplier businesses can't survive on branches, they can only survive on head offices – where the decision makers are."

If diamonds are a girl's best friend, head offices are Nova Scotia's dazzling gift to long-term growth and sustainability.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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