

# Richfield operation could yield 400 jobs

## Toronto call center to open doors here

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Plain Dealer Reporter

A growing call center business in Toronto appears ready to bring up to 400 jobs to Richfield.

SP Data LLC announced Thursday that its American headquarters will be in Ohio.

The company probably is headed to an office park near Interstates 77 and 271, said officials with TeamNEO, a regional business-attraction group.

SP Data would be the latest call center company to anchor in Northeast Ohio.

The customer-service and tele-marketing industry already employs thousands from Youngstown to Lorain, at companies like

InfoCision Management Corp. and TeleTech Holdings Inc.

SP Data likes the attributes of the region's labor, said the company's Chief Executive Dan Plashkes.

"We looked at the quality of labor force, the abundance of labor and the quality of infrastructure," Plashkes said.

The company expects to create 400 jobs within three years after opening, according to state development officials.

On Monday, the Ohio Tax Credit Authority approved tax breaks valued at \$311,000 over five years, with the company required to stay at the site for 10 years.

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The company also would receive income tax credits totaling \$50,000 over five years from Richfield, said Christine Nelson, director of business attraction for TeamNEO.

Jobs will pay an average of \$11

an hour plus benefits, Nelson said.

Team NEO was involved in attracting TeleTech to Amherst in Lorain County last year. Call center companies are benefiting from consumer backlash to off-shore call centers, Plashkes and TeamNEO officials said.

The weaker dollar and tighter employment market in India also are creating an upswing for North American operations, Plashkes said. Midwesterners have a plain-spoken dialect that's

easy to understand, officials said.

The industry is known for jobs that can be stressful and demanding. Plashkes acknowledged that turnover can be high.

"It is, if you don't manage it right," Plashkes said. "It's lower turnover than a store like a Best Buy. . . . I think it's a better job than retail. Some do [agree], some don't."

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