

MEDIA RELEASE

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PM reveals public service plans to Manchester company
Photographs available at www.unicomimages.co.uk

IMPROVING public services is a priority for Gordon Brown as election day looms.

In a letter to Manchester telecoms company Unicom, the prime minister spoke of consultation and customer insight being 'vitaly important' if improvements are to continue in public services.

Gordon Brown wrote to Unicom in recognition of the company achieving Customer Service Excellence standard following assessment of its customer insight, the culture of the organisation, information and access, delivery and timelines, and quality of service.

Unicom was only the second private company to have achieved the standard, following rigorous assessment.

Operations director Chris Earle said: "As the election comes closer, members of the public and businesses will be assessing the priorities of each political party.

"It is encouraging to see Gordon Brown is focused on communicating with small businesses across the UK and is putting improving public services at the forefront of his campaign.

"Being recognised for our attention to customer service demonstrates our ability to focus on delivering efficient and effective service."

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) was developed as a tool for public services to drive customer-focused change within organisations and ensure customers were at the heart of public service provision.

Unicom, which was founded in 1998, has helped more than 300,000 businesses save more than £500 million off their utility bills.

It currently employs 500 staff at its Manchester headquarters and offices in Birmingham, Crawley, Ipswich, Leeds, Milton Keynes, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Sheffield and Stoke-on-Trent.

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Notes to Editors

About Unicom

- Unicom, a trading name of Universal Utilities PLC, is a telecommunications service provider specialising in the small business market.
- Unicom has attracted its business customers by offering discounts of up to 60% off BT's prices, at the same time as keeping customers on the BT network. Unicom currently supplies in excess of 450 million minutes of call time to its customers each year. Unicom differentiates itself by offering a high standard of personal customer service, with no premium rate 0845 or 0870 numbers, no recorded messages or menus, and no overseas call centres. Unicom boasts one of the highest customer retention rates in the industry.
- Unicom has a directory enquiry service, 118 777. Based on calls from a BT or Unicom telephone line, 118 777 is 28% cheaper than 118 118, and 53% cheaper than 118 500. Calls from other networks may vary.
- Unicom was ranked 26th in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2006, 89th in the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 index in December 2006 and 96th in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2007. In September 2007 it achieved a ranking of 95th, and in September 2008 a ranking of 88th, in the Sunday Times Microsoft Tech Track 100 index.
- Unicom is a patron company of The Outward Bound Trust.
- In 2009 Unicom was awarded ISO 9001:2008, Customer Service Excellence, Customer First and Investors in People, all nationally recognised standards which are confirmed by outside experts who are used to judging standards on a daily basis in a wide variety of trades and industries.