

MEDIA RELEASE

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Telecom Provider Unicom recruits top students for graduate scheme

MANCHESTER-based telecoms provider Unicom offers talented students the chance to excel in telecoms as BT closes its graduate scheme.

The telecoms giant announced on Sunday it will be closing its graduate recruitment programme in a bid to cut costs during the downturn.

Unicom is continuing to invest in young talent and is helping keep high-quality graduates in the city thanks to its 2009 graduate management scheme.

With figures from inward investment agency Midas showing 70 per cent of graduates from the region's universities stay in the North West if they enter employment, Unicom is dedicated to keeping talent local.

Operations director Chris Earle said: "It's a tough business climate for students to be securing their first step on the career ladder and we're delighted to be offering graduates the opportunity to develop.

"The news from BT will send shockwaves through the student community as it is the first major UK employer to formally close its graduate recruitment programme.

"We have been running our graduate scheme since 2007 and will continue to do this to support and retain talent in this region.

"We had hundreds of high quality applicants this year, and we think it is a false economy not to employ such good candidates."

"Our previous schemes have been a fantastic success and we look forward to seeing how our latest recruits help shape Unicom for the future."

The graduate scheme lasts for 12 months, giving graduates the chance to spend time in each business department before taking on a permanent role, based on their skills set and experience.

This ensures the graduates have a complete understanding of the business, from grass roots to management level.

This year's recruits are Paddy McLaughlin, 24, who studied English language at the University of Manchester, Manchester Business School graduate Holly Almond, 22, and Chris Mullan, 21, who graduated from the University of Manchester in politics, philosophy and economics.

Wai Lee, who joined the original Unicom graduate scheme in 2007, said: "The key to being successful is hard work, perseverance and showing initiative.

"After I completed the scheme, I went into systems development and now have a team working for me and ownership of a new product."

"Graduates are well supported at Unicom and are given the chance to develop and progress."

Unicom specialises in telecom, broadband and website services for the small business market. It currently services 80,000 businesses across the UK. It has offices in Birmingham, Ipswich, Leeds, Milton Keynes, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stoke on Trent and Crawley.

Visit www.switchingon.com for further details.

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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. It currently provides telecom, broadband and website services to 80,000 small businesses throughout the UK. Unicom has an annual turnover of over £45m, and employs 500 people at its 10 regional offices situated around the UK.

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 44% 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. In October 2008 Unicom became ISO 9001 certified.

For the year ending April 2009, Unicom reported pre-tax profits of £11.2m on a turnover of £44.5m (with profits up 14.3% and turnover up 7% from April 2007). Unicom expects profits to be in excess of £12m on a turnover of more than £48m for the current year.

Unicom is a patron company of The Outward Bound Trust.

Photographs available at www.unicomimages.co.uk

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