

MEDIA RELEASE

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SMALL BUSINESSES VOW TO KEEP DOWN COSTS

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As UK inflation heads for an 18 month high, small UK businesses have vowed to keep costs down for customers.

A survey of SMEs by telecoms provider Unicom has found 45 per cent of small business owners are not going to increase prices in a bid to maintain profit margins. This is a stark contrast to many of the big UK companies as the nation faces rising food, clothing, travel and petrol costs.

Just over 18 per cent of owners surveyed said they were planning to increase their prices and 36 per cent were still unsure, opting to monitor the market over the next few months before making a decision.

Chris Earle, operations director at Unicom, said: "It's encouraging to see the owners of SMEs are committed to providing best value for their customers, even during the credit squeeze.

"In our own industry we have seen companies such as BT continue to hike up the costs of its services. Unicom has bucked this trend by providing our customers with competitive pricing and fixed rates for three years. We firmly believe this has contributed to our success, resulting in a 13.5 per cent rise in sales this year taking our annual turnover to more than £50 million."

Unicom currently offers fixed line, mobiles, broadband and data storage as well as its own directory enquiry service 118777.

Visit www.switchingon.com for further details.

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About Unicom

www.switchingon.com

Unicom, a trading name of Universal Utilities PLC, is a telecommunications service provider specialising in the small business market. It currently provides telecom, broadband, mobile and website services to 85,000 small businesses throughout the UK. Unicom has an annual turnover of over £50m, 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's mobile customers only pay for the calls and services they actually use, the package also offers one complete bill and one contact number for all telecoms services.

Unicom has a directory enquiry service, 118 777. Based on calls from a BT or Unicom telephone line, 118 777 is 35% 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 2009 Unicom became ISO 9001:2008 certified and in 2009 was also awarded the Customer Service Excellence, the Customer First and the Investors in People certification by independent assessors.

For the year ending April 2010, Unicom reported pre-tax profits of £12.7m on a turnover of £50.5m (with profits up 11.8% and turnover up 13.5% from April 2009). Unicom expects profits to be in excess of £15m on a turnover of more than £55m for the current year.

Unicom is a patron company of The Outward Bound Trust.

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