



**Press Release: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CULTURE CHANGE: IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE...IT'S HARDER THAN THAT SAYS UNIPART CHIEF**

Changing the culture of an organisation is more complex than rocket science. That was the view of Unipart Chairman and Group Chief Executive when he addressed guests at the University of Birmingham last night (November 28).

Neill told attendees at The Birmingham Business School Advisory Board Guest Lecture: "I have learned just how hard it is to bring about culture change, but I have also witnessed time and again the power of The Unipart Way to engage people and deliver transformational performance in quality, cost and delivery while, at the same time, bringing about culture change and inspiring innovation."

In his presentation John Neill told the Unipart story, which began in the mid Seventies building a foundation for success despite a deeply troubled parent company and then creating the conditions for a successful buy-out in 1987.

Over the years, Unipart pioneered a wide range of innovative ideas including:

- In the mid Seventies, before customer service was recognised as a vital drive of the automotive industry, Unipart introduced a guiding philosophy to understand the real and perceived needs of its customers better than anyone else.
- The company used television and radio advertising to turn replacement car parts and accessories into one of Britain's best known and most trusted brands.
- At the buy-out, the company used a three hour theatrical show to launch an employee share ownership scheme that was then massively oversubscribed.

*(more follows)*

- The development of one of Britain's first corporate universities led to Unipart becoming recognised globally as a model for 'learning' companies, and gave rise to the creation of a massive knowledge management system and innovative approach to electronic coaching.
- Unipart has become a benchmark for employee engagement and has extended this engagement culture to its operational locations across the globe.
- A programme that recognises outstanding personal customer service has celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary to make it one of the longest running employee programmes in the UK with more than 2,600 award winners.
- The company's customer base has grown from two automotive clients in the Eighties to now include many of the global blue chip companies from multiple sectors such as automotive, mobile communication, media, rail, retail, health and financial services.
- Unipart has developed one of the country's largest consulting arms, Unipart Expert Practices, which is teaching the company's proprietary approach to business improvement to clients in the public and private sectors.

As John Neill chronicled the company's development over the past 25 years, he discussed the development of The Unipart Way which he described as 'a philosophy of working that is underpinned by tools and techniques' that drive continuous improvement.

"We know now that to become proficient in the Unipart Way requires unambiguous leadership from the top coupled with the willingness to engage in deliberate practice and painful hard work over many years," he said.

Neill also talked about the challenges facing the NHS and said: "The solution is not another series of top down initiatives. What is needed is a radical change in culture. That is not rocket science; it is actually harder than that. It is a culture that inspires all the stakeholders in the system to focus on the needs of the end user and to be passionate about getting better every day."

After the presentation, Simon Collinson, Dean of Birmingham Business School, commented: "Based on Unipart's thirty year cultural transformation journey, and the work the company has done introducing The Unipart Way into so many clients, I'm convinced that it has a unique set of experience and a body of knowledge that can be transformative for other companies".

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## **Editors' Notes:**

### **About The Unipart Group**

The Unipart Group, which is based in Oxford in the UK, employs more than 10,000 personnel worldwide and has an annual turnover of more than £1billion. It is a leading UK manufacturer, full service logistics provider and consultant in operational excellence.

Operating across a range of market sectors, including automotive, manufacturing, mobile telecoms, media, rail, retail and technology, Unipart offers a wide breadth of capabilities that have been tailored to meet the specific needs of blue chip customers around the world.

All Unipart sites operate according to the Group's proprietary business system known as The Unipart Way. This is a philosophy of working underpinned by tools and techniques that inspires efficiency, flexibility and outstanding customer service in any process.

For more information visit: [www.unipart.com](http://www.unipart.com) and [www.theunipartway.com](http://www.theunipartway.com).