

## Chandler firm now at Gilbert's Rome Towers

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**Thomas Boggan, Tribune**

A Chandler software consulting services firm took a big bite out of the empty space of Gilbert's Rome Towers.

Unicon, which caters primarily to the education sector, leased 10,000 square feet on the east side of the building's fourth floor, making it the seventh occupant in Gilbert's tallest building



Contractor Lamorre Hobbs, front, installs door hardware while Unicon CEO John Blakley, left, and Jason Lacy, vice president of sales, look over the company's new office in Gilbert's Rome Towers. Unicon has leased 10,000 square feet on the fourth floor

"We should be on the ground there Monday most of the way done," said John Blakley, Unicon CEO.

The company is relocating from the home it occupied since the mid-1990s near Elliot Road and Arizona Avenue, just north of downtown Chandler.

Blakley said he was pleased with the old facilities, but the downturn in the commercial real estate market presented a good opportunity to upgrade at a reduced rate. The firm's lease ended in May.

"That was kind of a confluence of events that made this really an opportune time for us to make this move," he said.

The company brings with it 85 highly skilled workers making an average of \$50,000 a year.

Rome Towers, a retail and office project near Val Vista Drive and Pecos Road, saw its first tenant in early 2008. It's currently 35 to 40 percent leased, said Mark Gustin, a broker with Cushman & Wakefield.

Gustin said he doesn't know how many companies the building will eventually house.

"We could sell or lease multiple floors to one tenant, so I don't know how many will end up eventually being there at the end when it's completed," he said.

Dan Henderson, Gilbert business development manager, said in a press release that Unicon complements Gilbert's industry base.

The town is making a push to land bioscience, aerospace and aviation, clean and renewable energy and high-tech manufacturing jobs.

Unicon, a privately held firm, caters primarily to the education sector with open-source software consulting, support and related services.

Open-source software is different from the commercial sort created and sold by companies like Microsoft and Oracle Corp.

"Open-source is typically built by the groups of people who use the software. So, for instance, a platform called uPortal (was) built by collections of higher education institutions to solve a problem they all collectively have," Blakley said. "In each of those cases, there is involvement and support from commercial organizations such as mine."

The company has had more than 175 community colleges and universities, Fortune 100 companies and publishers on its client roster.

"We have a couple of clients in the United Kingdom, but in general we focus on the domestic market," Blakley said

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