

Message

From: Tim McCormack [GRO]
on behalf of Tim McCormack [GRO]
Sent: 10/12/2014 18:45:40
To: Paula Vennells [GRO]
Subject: RE: Second Sight - Horizon Errors - Media Coverage

Thanks for the reply Paula.

We agree that all systems have issues from time to time. I agree that systemic errors need to be fixed and they are. However systemic errors are completely different from intermittent random problems which I hope I explained in some detail.

I have told you about one but there are more. The point is though that I knew about this problem and you did not. I know for certain there are intermittent errors in Horizon while you have been led to believe that there are none so you believe it to be true. You cannot prove your assertion while I can prove mine.

By a quirk of fate yesterday could easily have resulted in tragic consequences. I would have been beside myself in grief as well as shame for not having tackled this problem earlier.

I would hope then that you now accept that there are indeed undetected errors within Horizon that do occur at random and have the potential to inflict financial losses on a SPMR.

I have to generalise. I have no access to the Second Sight cases and the detail of them. But the probability of 10% of them being caused by such intermittent errors is very high. (for what it is worth I would guess that 80% are counter theft by trusted colleagues whose integrity the SPMRs would not challenge and the other 10% are pure chancers)

The problem you face is determining each case beyond reasonable doubt and you cannot do that because you cannot and never will be able to say that the system is entirely free of these types of errors.

Forget for a moment the chancers. Forget for a moment the contract that they signed. Is it fair that the 90% ultimately take responsibility for theft that they cannot insure against because they don't have the investigative powers to track down the culprit nor the will to challenge their loved ones? 90% of the claimants certainly did not profit from their alleged crime yet POL's investigation stopped at their door. It is unfair and unreasonable that they should suffer. What needs to be shown now is compassion.

I will gladly assist your team to sort this one out but I am sure you are aware that I have no access to Horizon anymore.

You too have a great festive season. Agi and I are relaxing this year free from the madding crowds.

Cheers, Tim

PS this is a copy of the post from last night ... If you would like to know who it was best contact Mark Baker as it was on the CWU Facebook page and I am no longer a member of that organisation and I shouldn't really have access to it.

Would Second Sight or Shoosmiths be interested in this? It's only small but it proves flaws in Horizon. I asked for 8 labels but only got 6, one of which is shown below. The last digit on the bottom right is actually three digits printed together i.e. three labels in one. Helpline said it was a printer problem - not a horizon fault - and that my office would have to stand the loss. I was so angry that my heartrate went sky high and my ICD (internal defibrillator) gave me a shock. Had to be taken to hospital. Found the faulty label when I got back just before postie took them all away. Kept the faulty label and sent the other three official postage!!

PPS It is not overprinting i.e. putting a printed label back in the printer although that does occur occasionally too.

You learn more from one criticism than from ten compliments

From: paula.vennell [GRO]
To: timandag [GRO]
CC: gavin.lambert [GRO]; angela.van-den-bogerd [GRO] rod.ismay [GRO]
lesley.j.sewell [GRO] kevin.gilliland [GRO]
Subject: RE: Second Sight - Horizon Errors - Media Coverage
Date: Wed, 10 Dec 2014 13:47:32 +0000

Tim, hi.

If there is one thing you should know about me is that I do listen.

But please be careful that you don't over generalise or conflate different points.

We are not defending the indefensible - all systems have issues from time to time. And they need to be (and are) fixed when they occur. We have records of when that has happened, of alerting users and then putting in place an appropriate fix. We operate in a dynamic market and Horizon, like all epos systems is constantly updated.

To your challenges. I listen and I'm therefore concerned at what you say. I'm copying three people who I expect to get to the bottom of it. And who I trust to do so: Gavin Lambert who works directly for me, Angela van den Bogerd, and Rod Ismay. I am also copying Lesley Sewell (CIO) and Kevin Gilliland. I want Lesley and Kevin to be in the loop - they are the directors responsible for ensuring our branches have the appropriate service.

Angela will be in touch with you directly.

In the meantime, I wish you a happy Christmas when it comes.

Paula

Ps. If the colleague you mentioned needs support, please let Kevin know.

From: Tim McCormack [GRO]
Sent: 10 December 2014 08:00

To: Paula Vennells
Subject: FW: Second Sight - Horizon Errors - Media Coverage

Angela ...

I think you should make sure that Paula gets to read the message below.

In an absolutely bizarre coincidence shortly after sending the email I was made aware that yesterday, as a result of the stress caused by an occurrence of this problem and the subsequent refusal by NBSC to acknowledge that it could happen, a Subpostmaster was rushed to hospital with stress related heart problems. He had the presence of mind to record details of the incident as proof that it had happened which for the first time gave me an indication of what might be happening to cause it.

This could well make the news today or at the weekend as a follow up to yesterday's events. Paula should be prepared to answer the obvious questions.

Cheers, Tim

PS I have never in my life come across such an amazing coincidence - if I was in the least bit religious and knowing of Paula's faith I would declare it a divine intervention.

You learn more from one criticism than from ten compliments

From: timandagi **GRO**
To: paula.vennells **GRO**
Subject: Second Sight - Horizon Errors - Media Coverage
Date: Wed, 10 Dec 2014 00:04:28 +0000
Dear Paula

Yet again today Mark Davies, speaking on behalf of POL, relied on the defence that there are no systemic errors in Horizon and this is proved because we deal with so many customers per day in so many branches. I think Mark and yourself might like to review the periodic Message to Branches that are sent out via Horizon. There are a catalogue of systemic errors that arise from time to time and are fixed. Some involving automatic transaction corrections.

Paula, as I keep saying, you are surrounded by people in your office that tell you all is well. You have no personal knowledge of operating Horizon nor probably any in depth technical knowledge. What if the people that are telling you all is well have the same attributes?

So forget systemic errors for the moment and consider 'intermittent' errors which by and large are caused by communication problems.

I know of more than one but one in particular:

It exists.

It occurs at different times in different branches.

It is noticed.

They are reported to NBSC (I would really like to see the number of times this has been reported to NBSC)

It causes a financial loss to the SPMR.

They are not fixed BUT the wise SPMR knows how to get his money back so you don't hear many complaints. You would from the Audit team if they caught someone doing it though.

So why haven't these intermittent errors been fixed. To put it simply - because they are intermittent. There is no known sequence of events that can cause this error to re-occur in any particular branch. How can you fix something if you don't know what caused it in the first place? You have to throw the whole thing out and start all over - the only way.

On our 'chat' forums, there are documented reports over the years of the same error repeating itself randomly in a wide number of branches, including at Duns and my previous PO.

I am pretty sure I can arrange for the error to be replicated though by asking a large sample of offices to repeat the process until the error occurs - and I am also sure that I can obtain transaction logs and associated CCTV coverage of the error manifesting itself.

I can show you it happening. I can explain the financial consequences but neither I nor your best technical team will be closer to fixing the underlying problem. You cannot make it go away.

I would also be happy to stand up in court and declare that Horizon has intermittent faults, probably caused through communication errors, provide clear and undeniable evidence as well as bring along a fair number of your most trusted SPMRs to bear witness that it has happened to them too.

I hope you get my point - I can show one error occurring that you can't fix nor can you explain - if you could explain it then you could probably fix it - so how many other intermittent errors like this are in the system that cause unexplainable financial losses to SPMRs?

I am trying to help you but the hole you are digging for yourself is getting deeper by the day. Please stop trying to defend the indefensible.

Cheers, Tim

You learn more from one criticism than from ten compliments

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