

Message

From: Mark R Davies
on behalf of Mark R Davies
Sent: 10/12/2014 12:27:09
To: Paula Vennells
CC: Gavin Lambert
Subject: Re: Second Sight - Horizon Errors - Media Coverage

GRO

GRO

Hi Paula

I would tone it back a little : some of the points would be taken out of context by the kinds of journalists we are dealing with. I doubt it would find its way into the wrong hands but it is possible.

Happy to have a go for you if helpful?

Mark

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director
Mobile: **GRO**

Sent from my iPhone

On 10 Dec 2014, at 09:10, "Paula Vennells" <**GRO**> wrote:

Hi both, I'd like to send this reply. Read bottom up and then could you advise?
Thx

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 bugs from time to time. And they need to be 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.

And as you will be aware from various communications over the last two years, we are changing our IT. But we are doing it in a responsible and phased way. Our IT architecture and software is being updated, we began with the separation of systems from Royal Mail. Horizon is part of planned changes over the next few years. IT transformation is expensive and a significant undertaking: we can't "just throw the whole thing out and start over".

Now, 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.

Gavin or Angela will be in touch.

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.

Paula Vennells
Chief Executive
Post Office Ltd

T GRO
Paula.vennells GRO

Sent from my iPad

On 10 Dec 2014, at 07:59, Tim McCormack GRO > wrote:

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