

Message

From: Melanie Corfield [GRO]
on behalf of Melanie Corfield [GRO]
Sent: 23/01/2015 21:56:50
To: Mark R Davies [GRO]; Jane Hill [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; Tom Wechsler [GRO]; Rodric Williams [GRO]
Subject: Re: Horizon

It nails how it is. We should not lose sight of "the conspiracy that never was" story. The more I think about our Q and A responses the more convinced I am we have to illustrate our narrative with examples to bring it alive and tell the story in a human way from the other side. We need to find a way to do that (without a breach of confidentiality) - maybe use examples like the case with the letter but also an example in a case where there is genuine grievance and we are mediating. So we remain fair and cannot be accused of being selective. Not sure how far we can go with detail though. The situation with SS is a distraction - SS are highly paid consultants with a vested interest in extending their work - we need to make that clear in our answers and move on! None of our attackers are suggesting what we should do beyond mediating all cases with a view to paying large sums to applicants. Or even missing out the mediation part and just moving straight to the large sums bit. We need the question asked of them because we can take their answers apart. I feel better now too!
 Me!

Mel Corfield
 Communications Team
 Mobile [GRO]

----- Original Message -----

From: Mark R Davies
Sent: Friday, January 23, 2015 08:28 PM
To: Jane Hill; Patrick Bourke; Tom Wechsler; Melanie Corfield; Rodric Williams
Subject: Horizon

Hi

I've written the below for no reason other than it made me feel better. See what you think.

Mark

It's fascinating to be part of a conspiracy. To be at the heart of a corporate cover up. But frustrating too, when the reality is a hard story to tell, and some distance from the picture painted by a determined band of adversaries.

In our case, we are up against a campaign group, a few journalists (mainly from the BBC) and some MPs. And you have to hand it to them: they know what they are doing in terms of mounting a campaign. It's just that - whisper it quietly - all is not what it seems.

Yes there has been a parliamentary debate. True, earnest journalists have presented breathless exposes on TV and radio. And indeed, the campaign group are nothing if not determined.

But you know, we've looked and we've looked. And looked again. We've had legal teams look. We've turned ourselves inside out trying to see if somehow, somewhere we've got things fundamentally wrong. We've questioned ourselves, prepared and open minded to find scandal, error, systemic failure. I sometimes wish we had: it would all be water under the bridge by now.

The issue is our computer system, the one we use to record six million transactions every day. Around 140 people think that it - or the associated processes around it - have caused them to experience financial loss in their branch.

Bear in mind that almost half a million people have used the system since we introduced it more than a decade ago. Without problems (and we know that because if there were problems our subpostmasters, and the Federation which represents them, are rightly quick to tell us when we get things wrong).

But we take the complaints we've had seriously. So we set up an inquiry. When that found no systemic problems, but suggested that our training and support had failed at times, we set up a mediation scheme to give people with complaints a chance to highlight issues. We invited people to come forward and xxx did so. We then paid for them to get professional advice on making their case.

Each of those cases has been reinvestigated. A minority, xx to be exact, were cases where people had been convicted.

In some of the cases we have taken part in mediation, and in some we have reached an agreement: admitted that in training and support we didn't do enough.

But in others we are standing firm. I've read many of the investigations. And we are right to stand firm. I'm sorry if that sounds unpleasant but it is just, I am afraid, the right thing to do.

Of course it is really sad when people have faced challenges in their lives. Some of those with complaints have lost homes, gone bankrupt. But it doesn't follow that the Post Office is responsible for those situations. As one complainant acknowledged in a letter he sent us for publication following conviction, urging others not to do what he did. He's since changed his position and blames the losses he faced on our system.

I can't, though, provide more details. Each case is confidential - not a unilateral decision but an agreed position with those representing the individuals who have brought cases.

This amounts, according to some of those who are as certain as they can be of our culpability, to secrecy. Despite our having shared literally thousands of pages of details of each case. None of which, by the way, has suggested any systemic problem.

That hasn't stopped MPs and journalists presenting the picture as they see it. That is their right of course. It's just that it is only part of the picture. And the missing bits tell a very different story.

A story, as I said at the beginning that, because we are doing the right thing, we can't tell. Which is hard.

But that's how it is at the heart of this corporate cover up.

Mark Davies
Communications and Corporate Affairs Director

Mobile: GRO

Sent from my iPhone