

PC NW 06 01

TELEFAX MESSAGE

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FROM: COLIN BAKER, General Secretary

TO: BRUCE McNIVEN, General Manager

OF: Horizon Programme

DATE: 17 April 1996

FAX NO: **GRO**

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**PLEASE CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY IF THIS MESSAGE IS
NOT RECEIVED CORRECTLY**

Please see attached as per our telephone conversation today.

SENT 1445 pm

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**COMMENTS MADE BY SUBPOSTMASTERS RE: HORIZON RELAYED BY PAM JERVIS
OVER THE TELEPHONE ON 30TH APRIL 1999.**

1. TRAINING

The first day of training is OK, but the second day is bad, because it is rushed. They are not finishing on time, but are rushing to finish before 3.30pm, because otherwise they have to buy lunch. Why did they use the most expensive hotels?

Many SubPostmasters have not received assessment or certificates on completion of the course.

In every training session, nobody had done a main balance, snapshot balances only. Nobody had been trained to do a full balance.

The trainers are people who have only received the same training that they are giving out. It's too narrow a field, and no-one can answer questions such as "do we use the same form?".

There were a lot of computer problems which were blamed on the fact that computers had to be ferried in and out of vans a lot.

2. MIGRATION

You are given a set day to close your branch, and get a visit from two engineers to install hardware, Horizon field workers and someone from ICL pathways. A number of subpostmasters voiced their complaints.

- Horizon service officers arrived at 3.30pm, ICL installers and 4pm. Closed. They said it wasn't a fit, because the processor was 2.5 inches bigger than previous and they would have to cut a bit of the counter, but they didn't have a saw. The Subpostmaster offered to do it for them but was told he couldn't. Had to wait an hour for a joiner. Taken out download. Migrated cash and stock completed 9.45pm
- 4pm close, 6.45 aborted. Two engineers and HSO arrived, nobody was told it was aborted.
- 4.30 closed. HSO did not arrive.
- 2pm HSO arrived. Did processor, migrated with a £600 error, 9pm finished.
- 4pm closed. On the phone to ICL Pathways. Couldn't do anything until 6pm. Every piece of equipment replaced (part of earlier Horizon trial). 8.40pm began to migrate. Snapshot of serving unit OK, run to office balance and everything was duplicated. Numerous phonecalls were made, and the subpostmaster was told it was impossible for the system to duplicate the 2 stock. Went home at 11.50pm. Balance not migrated, currently but able to do transactions, was told to continue as normal and balance at lunchtime at it would be all right. Balanced incorrectly. ICL Pathways Lab has now managed to simulate the error. No balance completed at 4.45 pm, and was told to forget cash account. Approximately 40 to 50 phone calls were made but nobody offered a solution. No cash account and it automatically migrates into next week's cash account.

- The staff doing the training itself are brilliant but they are as frustrated as the Subpostmasters.
- There appears to be on-one who can make a final decision, neither at Pathways or at the Post Office.
- On Wednesday supposed to migrate 8 offices. 6 out of 8 offices aborted. Programme couldn't cope with the postage upgrade.
- Ten offices failed to submit a cash account in week 5.
- Closed 4pm Tuesday, completed at 10.45pm. No cash account on Wednesday, finished 8pm.
- Trainers using Subpostmasters land phone for about three hours, and the subpostmaster would like to know whether he can get a refund.
- Closed 4pm Thursday, finished 8.30pm.
- Closed 12.30pm Wednesday, completed at 4pm, balance. Happy with Horizon.
- Left the Horizon Service Officer to do the office balance and he finished at midnight, different set of problems.

In general, subpostmasters are extremely happy, they think it's a great, sophisticated system. But, it is being pushed out quickly, and the people doing the training know no more than the subpostmasters.

There is no managerial back-up, no definitive answers are given.

What is needed is a system Helpline. At present there are three helplines. The BA one refers only to the benefit agency, a Post Office one where they know nothing about Horizon, and a Horizon Helpline where they know nothing about the Post Office. There needs to be a single helpline that can provide definite answers to all types of questions.

Subpostmasters said that "businesses cannot afford to have these kind of problems because if you alienate just one customer than it's ruined itself".

Everyone stressed that all subpostmasters must be told to complete a manual balance if there are problems, or even do a double check. They are told that the balance goes down the line to Horizon, but once that happens, if there is a query, then subpostmasters have no proof of any work that's been done.

Bar coding on the books is still not working correctly, although that problem was supposed to have been solved last November.

On Tuesday the system was down from 9am to 11.30am. A subpostmaster who couldn't pay a child benefit without telephone authority couldn't actually get through because so many others were also trying to get through to get authority the lines were jammed.

Finally, Pam was told it takes 45 to 90 minutes to print the balance.