


File - 3rd Sup. Agreement -

31 JAN 2000
-2357**Electronic memo****THE POST OFFICE**


To: Keith K Baines/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE
cc: Graeme Seedall/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE
Hard Copy To
Hard Copy cc
From Min Burdett/POCL/POSTOFFICE
Date 31/01/2000 15:30
Subject: Fwd: Receipts Not Equal to Payments 

Keith

For information, see below. I'm not sure that my advice on the Acceptance aspect was accurately represented. I asked Dave Pye, to help any commercial discussions, to try to differentiate between where there was a deficiency in service (which seems to be the case with the migration tool) and where there is a change in POCL requirements.

I have briefed Graeme that you want to be aware of commercial issues before entrenched positions are established. He is also going to contact you to arrange the meeting around closure of AI376/TIP checking. As Martin was also at the AI211 meeting, you might want to tack this onto your agenda.

Min

To: Min Burdett/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE, Graeme Seedall/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE
cc:
Hard Copy To
Hard Copy cc
From Mark Burley/POCL/POSTOFFICE
Date 31/01/2000 15:11
Subject: Fwd: Receipts Not Equal to Payments 

Graeme / Min

Please see the attached output from our meeting on Wednesday which gives the proposed way forward to finally close this AI once and for all.

Happy to discuss

Mark

To: David R Stevenson/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE, julie dart, phil turnock, dave pye, martin o'toole
cc: Martin Box/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE, Ann A Clarke/POCL/POSTOFFICE@POSTOFFICE, sue m harding
Hard Copy To
Hard Copy cc
From Mark Burley/POCL/POSTOFFICE
Date 26/01/2000 04:06 PM
Subject: Receipts Not Equal to Payments

All,

Marton O'Toole, Dave Pye and myself have just finished our meeting with Pathway who were represented by John Pope, Steve Warwick, Phil Hemmingway and for the first hour of the meeting by Martin Taylor.

We started out by expressing our requirements to Pathway as decided at the meeting held in Chesterfield on Monday 24th January 2000. In summary these were stated as:

1) The miman tool to be enhanced such that for each stock unit, the HFSO also enters the balance brought forward. This is compared to the derived balance and if there is a difference the HFSO is presented with a warning. The HFSO then has the option of changing any of the details entered OR accepting the error. In the latter scenario where the HFSO chooses to accept the error, the balance brought forward to be used would be that entered by the HFSO. The existing office check of balance brought forward would also continue. (Note it was agreed that there was no requirement to change the MiECCO tool as these checks are effectively already managed via the ECCO software - the process with MiECCO is, from this point on, the same as with Miman)

Steve Warwick advised that conceptually this was a straight forward change to action and implement. The only concern raised was around the fact that HFSO's may deliberately force a balance by entering spurious data. Whilst it was agreed there was a slight risk from this, there were controls in place, namely that users have to accept the migrated data from HFSOs.

2) For any receipt and payment mis-balances, including those from migration, we would like the value to be posted to a discrete line on the appropriate receipt or payment table but that this must be controlled such that users cannot influence the value and that the ability to create the entry can only be achieved via authorisation or input of some type of PIN number from the Helpdesk. We would therefore require the warning currently presented when there is a Receipts and Payments misbalance to be extended to say 'please contact the NBSC on xxxx yyyyyy'.

Firstly, there was a suggestion from Pathway that this was significantly different to the suggestion that had been made two weeks ago when it was suggested that we would want the office to be prevented from completing the problem until the root cause was identified and resolved such that the error could be corrected before the cash account was completed and rolled over. I informed them that this was not our requirement as there would be no guarantee that all the errors would be resolved in time for the following cash account to be completed and we would therefore risk outlets being out of alignment.

Based on our stated requirement, Steve Warwick advised that the current design does not have the necessary security features to provide a facility to only give access to certain buttons via a password. This would be a major system change. The ability to restrict access to a system calculated value was however a feature that could be introduced. He added that the posting of a Receipts and Payments discrepancy to a discrete line was 'relatively straight forward' if the error occurred at stock unit level. However at cash account level, he suggested this would be considerably more difficult because of how these differences are identified. At stock unit level, the error would be identified during the compilation of the figures to be printed and therefore the value could easily be posted to an agreed line. At cash account level, a receipt not equalling payment error is only identified when actually printing the trial cash account. This is because the system calculates all the individual lines as part of the preparation time to printing but only calculates the Receipt and Payment totals when actually printing. As a result, to force the error onto discrete lines would need the system to force the user to re-start the cash account process which could result in the user incurring an additional 15 minutes (approx) of balancing time.

Note that any Receipt equal Payment errors from the stock units that had posted to a line as part of the stock unit balance would feed through onto discrete cash account lines in the same way as all other transactions. It is only for problems encountered at office level where this problem arises; however it is not possible to identify the likelihood of either, nor understand from the results to date, where the errors have occurred although intuitively the larger proportion are likely to be identified in

Steve
Warwick

stock units.

If we were to proceed with this proposal, POCL would be required to develop relevant products with the correct cash account mappings and correct attributes.

Steve did suggest that there could be an alternative to the 15 minutes, namely that as part of the cash account preparation, the system also calculates the table totals and performs the check before printing. He suggested this would take about 2 minutes of additional time. However the risk with this is that it would apply to all outlets not just those with the errors and based on the current error rate of 3% - the overall impact to the Business would be less going with the 15 minute option (i.e. 3 times 15 is less than 100 times 2). John Pope stated that there is no way they could guarantee actual time impacts without doing a paid study which would be necessary as part of any CR raised. Steve admitted that the real impact could be anywhere from a few seconds to longer than those suggested. Indeed he added that we may never truly know until it is out in the network as only there do they have 'real message stores and other activity to contend with'.

Steve suggested that the invasiveness of the change, i.e. the risk to other areas, was relatively high, for example they would have to make changes to the new Reconciliation software which currently identifies a Receipt and Payments misbalance from the fact that the lines have different totals, whereas with this proposal it would need to pick them up from the discrete lines. Pathway agreed that their responsibilities to investigate errors and their 'correction obligations' would not alter as a result of any changes suggested.

We then talked about the warning that is presented to the User where there is a Receipt and Payments difference. Steve explained that this is the same warning at both stock unit and office level and basically said something along the lines of:

WARNING
You have a receipts and payments misbalance.

You may be able to correct this.
OK

The user being required to select OK to continue. Steve agreed that this message could be changed to include something along the lines suggested and said this was not an intrusive change.

The question was raised about lead times for the delivery of any changes given John Dicks had previously suggested 10 weeks. John Pope stated that this could only be fully identified from a paid study.

Conclusion & Recommendation

1)The proposed change to the Miran tool should be pursued and Martin has agreed to raised the CR for this. However, as Min Burdett has suggested that this should be delivered as part of the outstanding Acceptance Incident 211, he would re-affirm this view with her and also with Horizon Commercial. Martin agreed to circulate the draft CR before submission.

2)On the proposal that any errors are posted to a discrete cash account line, I suggest we no longer proceed with this for the following reasons:

- a) there is likely to be an adverse impact in terms of time to some OR all outlets;
- b) the invasiveness of change is quite high and therefore there is a risk that we could gain additional problems as a result. (Whilst I acknowledge this should be resolved through testing, experience has shown this to not always be the case).
- c) we could opt to just have those errors from stock units posted to a discrete line (which intuitively is likely to be the largest percentage). However I recommend against this as it is likely to cause

confusion if we deal with the same problem in different ways.

d) from the meeting on Monday, there was only a marginal preference for this option and the main issues were around the need to demonstrate that the Business (TP) was managing the errors and the 'neatness' of the solution. I would suggest that posting to a discrete line does improve neatness but does nothing to enhance or prove that the errors are being managed. Even if in the future we have an increased number of these errors, posting them to a discrete line will not help TP to manage them.

e) the cost of any change is likely to be quite high (with a paid study and the actual change to be paid for). It is highly likely based on Min Burdett's advice that PONU will have to bear these costs.

f) the introduction of these lines would need to be explained to users and in reality may not be seen by them as any better than the current situation.

3) The change to the warning message is requested and included in the CR to be raised by Martin.

4) The advice given out by the NBSC to be reviewed and changed if required.

The Way Forward

1. As empowered individuals, we need to agree, (or otherwise), the recommendations set out above. (I believe that after already discussing these with you over the phone, these are already agreed. However please reply to this e-mail for formal confirmation.)

2. Martin to raise the Change request covering recommendations 1 and 3 and to make any necessary internal changes, e.g. HFSO training.

3. Phil to detail exactly what is said by the helpline and all to propose any changes. Phil to then circulate any revision to the advice given for agreement.

4. Julie to continue monitoring within TP.

That's about all I think. I await any comments.

Mark

GRO