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## **UK Post Office Scandal:** A Wake-up Call for Leaders on Quality, Risk, Governance in the AI era

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# Introducing:



**planit**  
an NRI company

**Russ Ewart**  
GM Central,  
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**Lee Mauger**  
Director,  
Second Sight Investigations A/NZ

# Could your organisation withstand impacts like these?

These impacts weren't inevitable – they were preventable!



- ⚠ Over **900** prosecutions
- ⚠ Nearly **1,000** people **wrongfully convicted**, many imprisoned, some bankrupted
- ⚠ Compensation paid so far **exceeds £1.2bn**, paid to more than 9,100 sub postmasters
- ⚠ At least **13** individuals took their own lives
- ⚠ Post Office has **spent over £250 million** in legal fees



# How it Unfolded

## TIMELINE

1999

- The Horizon IT System is rolled out across UK Post Office branches.

Early  
2000's

- Subpostmasters report issues, including false balance shortfalls, but are largely ignored.

2009

- Sir Alan Bates galvanises Subpostmasters to form an action group, Computer Weekly reports on issues for first time.

2009-15

- Hundreds of Subpostmasters are prosecuted with criminal charges, based on Horizon's faulty data.
- 2013 – Second Sight Interim Report published, highlighting serious issues

2017

- 555 Subpostmasters, led by Sir Alan Bates, launch a legal case against the UK Post Office.

2019

- High Court acknowledges issues with Horizon, including "bugs, errors, and defects"
- Post Office pays £58m compensation to the 555 Subpostmasters, much goes to legal fees

2020-21

- UK Government launches a public inquiry into the scandal.
- Court of Appeal turns over 39 wrongful convictions.

2024-25

- ITV drama "Mr Bates vs The Post Office" galvanises the public worldwide.
- UK Legislation is passed to quash the convictions of (most) subpostmasters.
- The public inquiry publishes first report, highlighting the widespread human impact.

# What Everyone Wants to Know

The Story Behind  
the Headlines

Protecting Your Organisation  
from a Horizon Moment

How accurate is the  
TV dramatisation?

Was this just a  
software problem?

How could this  
happen, and could  
it happen in A/NZ?

Where was the  
independent oversight?

Will anyone be  
held to account?

How could this scale of  
failure go undetected  
for so long?

Why weren't early  
warnings acted on?

What happened to  
all the money  
subpostmasters paid?

# The Devastating Human Impact:

Public Inquiry Report  
Volume 1



"Bullying, anorexia,  
trauma - how the  
Post Office scandal  
hurt children"

BBC News



# Lessons in Risk, Quality, and Leadership

## What We Can Learn



“This won’t age well” – how to think about risk and prioritise appropriate action



Understanding the quality of your computer systems is critical, otherwise you can’t respond appropriately to issues



Governance needs a circuit breaker.

Internal Audit, escalation paths, culture and whistleblowing all need strengthening



Don’t underestimate how a bad incentive scheme can drive bad behaviour at all levels

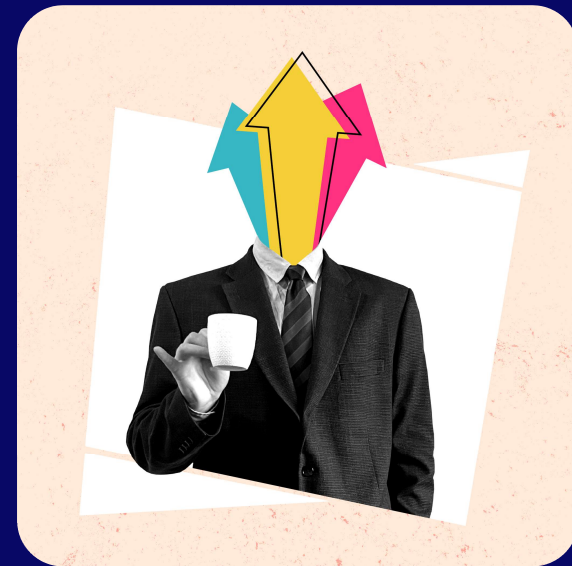


# Trends in the market

## Artificial Intelligence



“DOING”  
to  
“DECISION MAKING”



“RISK MANAGEMENT”  
to  
“BELIEF MANAGEMENT”

# Turning Lessons into Action

## How Planit Has Responded



### Organisational Risk Intelligence:

Helping orgs assess risk, embed mitigation, and deliver real-time executive reporting.



### Quality Design & Assurance:

Enduring quality that keeps pace with rapidly-changing business & tech



### AI & The Golden Truth

**A continuous journey:**  
Embed business into AI, Automation and AI to test AI.



### Accelerators:

Factual insights.  
Lesser costs. AI as a companion.

Amplify | Aurora | QRI



### Partnerships:

Stronger together,  
with clients and best-in-breed tech partners.

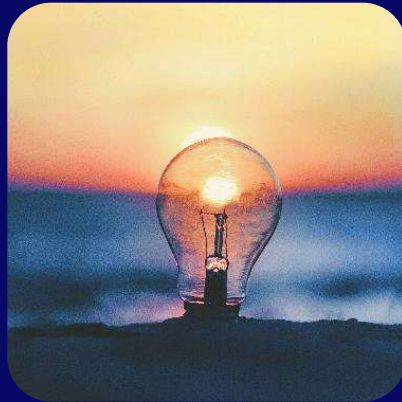
# Our Commitment to Prevention

## How Second Sight Has Responded



### Truth above all:

Exposed UK Post Office scandal with the mantra “Seeking the truth, regardless of the consequences.”



### Sharing lessons:

Partnered with UK leaders to avoid same failures in AU & NZ, inspired by resilience of subpostmasters



### Guidance:

Guided execs on risk posture.  
Built guardrails across tech, governance, and incentives.



### Our mission:

Ensure lessons are acted on promptly. And stop history from repeating.

# What Every Leader Should Take Away



There is now **no excuse for not understanding the quality of your software**, including at the board level.



**Mature your culture & governance** to support internal audit, whistleblowing and speaking up at every level.



**Identify and prioritise risks** which won't age well, esp. those that may snowball or signal deeper, hidden problems.



**Review your incentive schemes** (at every level) to ensure they include managing outsourced or 3rd-party risks well.

**Reminder:** You can't outsource responsibility.

# Questions Every Leader Should Ask Before It's Too Late



How confident am I in the accuracy of my core systems?



Artificial Intelligence: Is there independent oversight in QA?



Do we have escalation pathways that bypass politics?



Are risks prioritised before they snowball?



Are incentive schemes aligned to transparency?



## Next Steps:



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# Questions?

The logo for planit, featuring the word "planit" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

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