Post Office Horizon scandal: A stark reminder to prioritise people over systems

The recent Post Office Horizon scandal, given further exposure by the related TV drama, provides a cautionary tale about the perils of overlooking the human impact of technology decisions.

The Post Office's Horizon accounting system erroneously implicated postmasters in financial irregularities and led to severe consequences, including loss of reputation and even imprisonment, for innocent individuals.

These mistakes have underscored the importance of emphasising the human element in decision-making processes and the danger of relying too heavily on technology. This is a particularly pertinent reminder in view of the increased use of AI in business processes.

For business owners keen to avoid a similar pitfall, it would be prudent to give adequate thought to key questions such as:

- What safeguards and oversight mechanisms do we have in place to prevent unintended consequences that could harm individuals or communities?

- Before implementing new technologies or systems, have we done thorough due diligence to assess the potential consequences on individuals, customers, and employees?

- Do we conduct a reasonableness check before accepting a conclusion direct from a technology source?

- Are we so reliant on technology that we would not be able to tell whether a mistake has been made?

Looking at the ramifications and costs of the scandal, placing people at the forefront of decision-making processes is not just ethically sound but could be vital for the ongoing success and sustainability of the business.