

TOP STORIES #109

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!

It is now more than 2 years since we have been publishing weekly.

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you're receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more. I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" below to see if you missed something coming to End of Support (EoS) that may impact your business. **Note a new addition about Publisher.**

Reminder that you can access [TOP STORIES AI \("TSAI"\)](#) to search for anything in the archive. You can read more about TSAI in [TOP STORIES #108](#)

You will need an MS ID to sign in, and if you are using your corporate ID, this might require organisational permission.

Check out the **official movie release dates** in South Africa for all studios at the end of this email. The schedule has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #108 is here](#)

If you would like to invite other colleagues to join this newsletter (even if it is just for the movie release dates), they can [click here](#).

If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link right at the bottom of the mail.

[NAB](#), is now open, and will end 9 April. [AI is playing a huge role at the show](#). You can follow what is happening at the show on publications like [tvtech](#) and [others](#)..

The Show Daily - [Day 1 is available here](#). Check back for a new edition every day. There are numerous YouTube videos on what is being released - just search for what interests you.

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Hardware

Bad Audio = Bad Meetings = Bad Outcomes

This may appear obvious, but bad audio is a major issue contributing to bad outcomes, whether a job interview or a meeting to make a strategic decision that can affect people's careers.

A cognitive Scientist at Yale University has done a study to quantify the effect that Microphone quality (which is affected by room quality) has on people's perceptions.

Furthermore, your OWN perception of your voice quality is not good at all (it's not your fault)! You need somebody else to **honestly** tell you how they perceive you based on your audio quality.

All these problems are magnified when you add a hearing deficit to this! This subject was covered in [TOP STORIES #104](#) *"In the case of hiring, for example, people said they were much more likely to want to hire the person when they heard the recording with a very clear microphone."*

You can [read more about this study here](#).

It is **REALLY REALLY** important to make sure the person on the other side of the call can hear you clearly!

FTG has multiple divisions with teams that do meeting room and boardroom installations and help recommend headsets, Microphones and earpieces for companies. First Technology Group teams are different - they have all been exposed to broadcast studio facilities - they KNOW what good sound is like, and they know how to make it work for you.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our teams to see how they can help you sound more relevant to your customers or staff through better audio quality.

Microsoft

Microsoft Turns 50 - The Good, Bad and the Future

I have been covering Microsoft for more than 40 years, and Directions on Microsoft has been doing the same for 30 years with the most experienced and highly regarded Microsoft analysts in the world in one company.

Each of the analysts has contributed to the article, [which you can read here](#), and I really recommend that you read it.

In particular read what Mary Jo Foley has to say right at the end. **Note carefully what she says!** Each one of the analysts has good advice. I recommend you read what each one has to say, particularly the "your tip" sections.

There are decades of experience talking here, which I highly recommend that you ponder!

If you would like to discuss how all this advice can be applied in your business or with your next round of negotiations, please contact your First Technology account manager to set up a time to chat and maybe go down memory lane a bit!

Windows 11 Roadmap - well, maybe.....

Microsoft has created a roadmap site to help you try and keep up with all the changed being made to the operating system and when to expect them. It's a good idea, but REALLY incomplete. Directions on Microsoft [has published an article about this website here, which makes for interesting reading.](#)

I recommend that you contact your First Technology account manager to arrange to meet with our deployment specialists to help unpack what features will affect you or be useful, as some of these features are not relevant to all companies.

CoPilot finally gets a memory (and more brains)

Microsoft has launched some important new features for CoPilot which allows it to remember details of your previous conversations (which ChatGPT has had for awhile), it also has "Vision" and a deep research tool. You can [read more about this here](#) and [here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Copilot specialists to see what training is available to update your users on these features to get more value from CoPilot.

Azure Site Recovery Calculator updated

Microsoft has updated the calculator that helps you calculate ASR costs for your environment. The [announcement with the calculator is here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help with the calculations for your business.

Security

Phishing emails with PDF's on the rise.

At least one in five phishing emails has a (nasty) PDF attachment.

You can no longer safely assume that the PDF is safe. PDF's are used as part of a social engineering attack to get you to click on a link that starts an attack. [You can read more here.](#)

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our training partners to ensure that your users are being kept up to date with being able to spot these latest tricks. You can never stop staying alert for the next trick!

Cloud & AI

OpenAI adjusts roadmap for a better GPT-5

OpenAI announced that it will be delaying it's GPT-5 launch to ensure that it can select the best model for the task you have given it. [You can read more here.](#)

More powerful models are being released weekly, and [here is the Meta announcement of Llama 4 Behemoth](#) that takes the crown over all other models so far.

First Technology AI teams are continuously working with the latest models and putting them into practice, like with [ai.firsttech.news](#), which you can play with to see what the AI can tell you about the TOP STORIES archive. We are really keen to hear from you about whether you liked it or not, so please email help@firsttech.digital to detail your experience.

If you have a lot of data that could be of use to your customers or employees, and the TOP STORIES AI looks interesting, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to talk to you about what they can do for you with YOUR data!

Don't Forget

This new section is dedicated to reminding you about important dates or events in IT.

Note that this list is not complete.

The Microsoft Product Lifecycle Page

[Here is where you can find out when ANY product is ending](#) mainstream or extended support.

Of course, the list of products is huge, and it's easy to miss important dates and their implications. Even though you can access the list yourself, I'll highlight important dates.....

Microsoft Office

There is a long list of Office EOL dates, including when Publisher will be discontinued (13 October 2026), **Outlook "Classic" EOL (at least 2029)**, and more.

Outlook Classic for Enterprise switches to "Opt-in" April 2026 (removed from Office install)

The [complete list of Office EoS is maintained here](#).

It is important to remember that Office 2019/6 and Exchange Server 2016/9 Extended support, along with Windows 10, will end on 14 October 2025.

Microsoft Publisher

Publisher will reach end of Life in October 2026, after which **M365 Subscribers will no longer be able to open or edit Publisher files**. You have until then to save the files in other formats. The perpetual version of Publisher will continue to work (without support). [You can read more detail here](#).

Microsoft notes that "*documents may not be a one-to-one replication of your original Publisher file. If your document has a lot of graphics, you may see significant changes.*"

Unlicensed OneDrive accounts to lose data

As advised in [TOP STORIES #95](#), as of now, OneDrive accounts will be archived after 93 days. After another 93 days, they get PERMANENTLY deleted. Up until then, you can still re-activate the accounts. You can [read about how all this is working here](#). **THE FINAL DEADLINE (for a price) is before 29 July 2025!**

(disclaimer - Microsoft can change the rules anytime - so get your data out FAST!!!)

Windows 10 - End of Support (EoS) October 2025

Everyone should be aware of this, but it is important to remember that Extended Support is available if you cannot get rid of Windows 10 in time, albeit very expensive.

It will only protect you from vulnerabilities Microsoft chooses to protect you from. You can get more information on [the program here](#).

Plan "C" comes from a company called [Upatch](#).

NOTE!!!!!! ALL support for any product, INCLUDING O365 running on Windows 10, also ends.

The exception - Windows 10 LTSC 2019 is supported till 2029.

Note the use case for LTSC is very narrow (POS, Medical Devices, ATM's etc.) and not recommended for general use.

Windows 11 - End of Support (EoS)

It is essential to track the builds, and as you can see, it is very important to make sure you are trying to deploy Win 11 24H2 and NOT earlier builds.....

Win 11 22H2 October 2025 (**Note: Microsoft will force upgrade this version**)

Win 11 23H2 November 2026

Win 11 24H2 October 2027

Win 11 Ent. LTSC 2029

Windows Server End of Support

Windows Server 2012 ESU ends October 2026 - **that's 100% the end of the line.**

Windows Server 2016 Support ends Jan 2027, ESU ends Jan 2029

SQL Server End of Support

2012 SP4 ESU July 2025

2014 SP3 ESU July 2027

2016 SP3 July 2026 (this is your next big one to worry about)

2017 Oct 2027

Azure AD and MSOnline End of Support

Both these services come to [end of support on 30 March 2025](#)
Microsoft has posted detailed information about this [here](#).

What's up at FTG

FT-KZN Upgrades Senate Chambers

The chambers at Mangosuthu University have been completely upgraded with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate how modern meetings and presentations are conducted. This is one of many examples of what the team in KZN is able to achieve. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you think your installation might be a bit complicated and needs integration across many different vendors, contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with this team that will be able to help.

The Umbrella for FinOps

First Technology Group is stepping up your cloud financial management game with Umbrella (formerly Anodot Cost) — our preferred platform for FinOps and Cloud Cost Management. Umbrella unlocks faster innovation, deeper insights, and robust cost optimisation, empowering you to proactively manage your cloud spend and enhance financial efficiency.

As a Platinum preferred partner across Africa, FTG brings you unmatched expertise and tailored support, ensuring a smooth integration of Umbrella into your current systems with minimal operational disruption.

Here's what [Umbrella](#) means:

- **Enhanced Cost Management:** Full visibility of your cloud expenses to pinpoint savings.
- **Improved Financial Efficiency:** Powerful analytics to guide smarter cloud investments.
- **Seamless Integration:** Effortlessly combines with your existing infrastructure.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our SAM or FinOps teams to see how they can help you optimise your cloud costs. Even if you may think you have your costs under control there is no harm in asking somebody else to take a look.... just in case!

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRMTeam, of First Technology Group [have published a document on ITWeb](#) about avoiding the pitfalls of a D365 Customer engagement implementation. If you are looking to dive down the D365 rabbit hole, this is a good article to read. Then, contact our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

CoPilot Security Demo

BUI, FTG's security division, can present CoPilot for Security information-sharing sessions, workshops and demos.

In light of ongoing attacks that will only get sneakier, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to arrange to attend a session. You can also [request a session here](#).

What does a World Class SoC look like, and how does it work?

You are invited to book a tour of one of our SoC (Security Operations Center) nodes (and there are still parts we can't show you). You can [book for the tour here](#).

BUI blog - 5th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, is now in its fifth edition, [available here](#). This edition focuses on security news from Microsoft for February. If you work with the Microsoft security stack, this is a handy video to watch—it's only five minutes long.

BUI Open 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

BUI was announced as a Diversity in Security award finalist in the Microsoft Security Excellence Awards. The company was honoured among a global field of industry leaders who demonstrated success across the security landscape during the past 12 months. You can [read more about this award here](#), where on the 28th April Microsoft will recognise the finalists in 9 categories.

Movies

Grp 2 Pvt School Holidays 05-APR-25 until 05-MAY-25

In a blow for Disney, Jason Statham's movie, A Working Man, beat Snow White for the highest box-office revenue in the opening week. This is not what Disney was hoping for, but with all the negative press, I suppose it is unsurprising. You can [read more about this here](#).

I think the negative press overshadowed a movie that was not THAT bad.....

Now Playing: [Locked](#)

Now Playing: [A Minecraft Movie](#)

NOT Playing: [Riff Raff](#) - postponed to 2nd May

11 April: [The Amateur](#)

11 April: [A Kind of Madness](#)

11 April: [Drop](#)

11 April: [Warfare](#)

18 April: [Old Guy](#)

18 April: [Sneaks](#)

18 April: [Sinners](#)

18 April: [King of Kings](#)

18 April: [Hunting Jessica Brok](#)

25 April: [Until Dawn](#)

25 April: [The Penguin Lessons](#)

25 April: [The Accountant 2](#)

25 April: [Jungle Beat 2: The Past](#)

02 May: [Thunderbolts](#)

02 May: [Fight or Flight](#)

02 May: [Die KwikSilwers](#)

02 May: [Riff Raff](#)

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