

TOP STORIES #46

Now that the excitement of CES is dying down, we have a lot of other news bubbling, in particular quite a lot from Microsoft where you are also going to learn about a new performance specification called "TOPS" - it's not that new really, but now that Microsoft is quoting it, we are now all hearing about it!

If you would like colleagues to join this newsletter, [they can click here to subscribe](#).

Hardware

Microsoft to set 16Gig RAM minimum and 40 "TOPS" for AI PC's

For those who have seen the FTG technology roadmap presentations, I have been predicting this change for quite a while and recommending that you adjust your minimum criteria for when you prepare your RFQ for the next hardware refresh. **Actually, 32Gig RAM should be regarded as a minimum.** You can read more about how this [new minimum requirement has come about here](#).

What is "TOPS"?

This is a measure of AI computing performance in "Terra (Trillions) Operations Per Second" which is quite vague as there does not seem to be a very specific set of operations that must be performed to come up with this measurement. Venturebeat is [offering some commentary on this here](#). It is interesting that Microsoft is setting a minimum of 40 TOPS for an AI computer, when Meteor Lake comes in at 35 and AMD Ryzen 8000 is rumoured to come in at 39-40.

It is however predicted that TOPS performance could increase by 9-fold year on year, so this "minimum" could be easily achievable in a year from now, and thus this "high" limit could become easily achievable by everybody making new AI processors really soon.

Microsoft

Microsoft Product Terms updated 16 Jan 2024

Microsoft has made [new changes to its product terms](#) to list CoPilots availability under the different types of licensing agreements.

Microsoft is also listing the prerequisites for Microsoft Copilot for Microsoft 365:

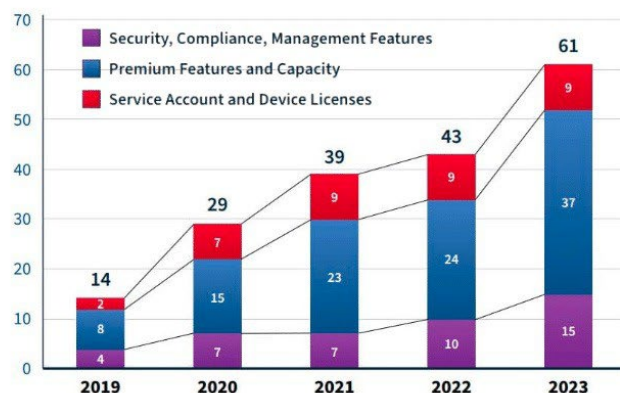
Microsoft 365 Business Standard/Business Premium/E3/A3/E5/A5; **Office 365 E3/A3/E5/A5**

It's important to note that you can buy CoPilot even if you just have O365 as shown above. F series SKU are not "supported".

I've bought a car with no Seats!

The Register and Directions on Microsoft have highlighted a growing problem. The number of billable add-ons has ballooned from 14 in 2021 to 61 by the end of 2023!

COUNT OF COMPONENTS NOT IN MICROSOFT 365 SUITES



www.directionsonmicrosoft.com

This is potentially leading to ballooning costs where you may be persuaded to buy suites and add-ons that are not really appropriate for your business, leaving these expensive licenses wasted. **Or, you may be buying what you think is the full suite, only to discover later that**

you need add-ons you did not budget for!

More than ever, it is so important to have a licensing and technical solutions specialist who can really help you navigate this complexity and only purchase the licenses that will truly add value and help you get more value from what you are already paying for. In First Technology, we have been doing this for more than 25 years and have a lot of experience so we can really help with this.

You can read more about this flurry of add-ons from [The Register here](#) and [Directions on Microsoft here](#). It's not just about paying for the licenses, it's about getting them to work properly as well, and with that, [First Technology has ALL the engineering capability across all of Microsoft's competencies](#) to get anything that Microsoft can sell to work!

Windows 12, Windows AI or Windows 11 24H2?

The rumour mill is grinding away furiously as to what we can expect from Microsoft in the latter half of 2024, but what we can be sure of no matter what name the next iteration of Windows gets, Microsoft is doubling down on AI - and it is important to heed the change in minimum hardware specifications - more powerful computers with new AI processing capability will be required no matter what new name Windows gets.

Even if you think AI is not important today, remember that any new PC you buy will be around for at least three years, so a bit of future-proofing (if you can afford it) will be a good idea. [You can read more about what we can expect in 2024 here](#). There is [more discussion about Windows 24H2 here](#).

Cloud & AI

Microsoft Launches CoPilot Pro

This new service is at \$20 per month (which happens to be the same price as ChatGPT) but also brings AI to Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. Note the prerequisites in the product terms above. You can [read more detail about CoPilot Pro here](#).

Sam Altman and Bill Gates talk about AI

This is a really interesting summary of the discussion between these two famous people. This is part of the Bill Gates Unconfuse Me podcast series - well worth listening to. [A summary of the discussion and a link to the podcasts can be found here](#).

Security

SCAM Alert! It might look legitimate, but it's not!

Check this website out: <https://kitchenwarehouse.co.za/>

It is a professional-looking domain, and on the face of it, it looks professional, and the deals look amazing (1st red flag). When shopping online, unless it is a REALLY well known site like Takelot, Amazon, FirstShop, etc... pay very close attention to what is going on with the site. It has no information about the company, and the address is very dodgy, does the credit card vendor name match the site? have you searched the web to see if it is a scam, [like here](#)? Is the offer too good to be true? (probably is).

70 Million credentials leaked.

You can never let up in trying to make sure your passwords are as secure as possible, and that you do not use the same password across different online accounts. [Read more here](#) about this massive leak, and how to check if your credentials have leaked.

Your computer's BIOS is not safe either!

All the top BIOS vendors are releasing patches and in turn these are being rolled out by all major hardware vendors. It is important to make sure that your devices are fully patched even at firmware level. [Read more here](#).

What's up at FTG

[With the ability to now buy one CoPilot license at a time](#), getting ready for CoPilot is very important, as utilising AI in your business will become increasingly important - especially when the AI can use your own data to support you.

BUI is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Poor Things](#)

26 January: [All of us Strangers](#)

26 January: [Beautiful Wedding](#)

26 January: [Color Purple](#)

26 January: [The Beekeeper](#) (Action Jason Stratham style - reviews out already)

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40 Years on

On reflecting that **First Technology is 40 years old this year**, I thought back to the early days of the internet when exactly 20 years ago I started sending out “Top Stories” about Technology developments and news in the IT industry that I felt might be relevant to you because many people were still challenged with accessing and searching the internet reliably for news. I think many found it useful to see at a glance what was interesting and then to click on the link to the website that allowed them to read more.

I stopped sending it out as the internet became more directly accessible to everybody and Google became more “searchable” allowing you to find ways to get the news you were interested in yourself.

What’s Changed

In Short – there’s too much changing – Moore’s Law is back big time (there are some that don’t agree), and the amount of news pouring out on the internet is simply too much to process to try and filter out what is relevant to us in IT in South Africa and what is noise from the rest of the world.

In a couple of years, maybe less, we will have an AI that will do it for us, and every day present us with news that is relevant to our jobs, hobbies and family interests.

It will do a better job than what I will try to do, but until that time comes, **I’ll try to pick out news that might be worthwhile reading.**

I have been watching news feeds for 20 years, and have gotten ok at picking out news that might be a good idea to read (with my personal perspective).

You are all in different industries, so some stories may not be relevant to you, but will be to others, as I’m trying to share what is relevant to everybody with some specifics.

But I’m not going to get it right all the time, and will miss important stuff, so unlike 20 years ago, I need to hear from you what stories that are important that I may have missed, or even publications that I’m not monitoring.

I use a “pool” of around 15 publications, where some of them also act as news aggregators, and of course The Register!

There are many ways to distribute this, but for now, I’ll stick to email and see how we do with “TOP STORIES”, the reboot.

Oh, last thing, suggestions on doing it better so it is of more value will be most welcome!

TOP STORIES #1 (The Reboot)

It is divided into sections:

Hardware Tech, Microsoft, Security, AI, Movies

Microsoft will have more stories than others!

Hardware

PCIe 5 Going mainstream

Soon you will be able to buy Gen 5 NVMe SSD’s that will be hitting transfer rates of 14Gigabytes a SECOND and they will be inside your new notebook or PC later this year.

Read [here](#). Clearly, gamers will be happy with their games loading even faster.

Read more [here](#).

Great Website to check out reviews of many computer products, especially monitors.

<https://www.rtings.com/>

Microsoft

Chat GPT4 coming Soon

ChatGPT 4.0 will be able to interact with you in a humanlike way to edit and create pictures and videos – and it is weeks away from being released. Read [here](#). A colleague of mine, Ryan, M.D. of [BUI](#) that is part of the FirstTech Group, shared this demo with me [here](#) – **you REALLY should take a look!**

Annoying File copy bug squashed in Windows 11

On Patch Tuesday, 16th of March the bug is officially removed. This was annoyingly slow file copy speeds of large files. Read more [here](#)

A good workaround is/was [TeraCopy](#) – worth looking at!

BIG News! The Shortcut we all wanted for Word, is HERE!!

It's "Paste Text Only" Read about it [here](#). I tried, it's not working for me in Office 2021, so guess it's for O365 for now.

How to use Live Captions in Windows 11: add subtitles to any audio automatically

Live Captions are a great way to better understand audio, whether it's a film, a new song, or a conversation with a friend. [Here's how to enable Live Captions.](#)

Outlook for MAC is now Free

Read all about it [here](#).

Microsoft may soon be testing Windows 12 code

It's early days, but it looks like Microsoft is going to be releasing Windows 12 code to testers. Read more [here](#)

Microsoft Previews ChatGPT in Azure

Microsoft announced on Thursday that its Azure OpenAI service now offers a preview of ChatGPT, the OpenAI-based chat engine. Read [here](#).

Microsoft is holding a 'future of work' AI event on March 16th

Microsoft isn't saying much about what the news will entail, CEO Satya Nadella and Microsoft 365 lead Jared Spataro are hosting the presentation. Read more [here](#)

Security

How the FBI proved a remote admin tool was actually malware

A lesson in that you can never be too careful or too suspicious!
Read the story here about [NetWire](#).

AI

Discord is taking ChatGPT out of your browser and into your server

Discord is joining the ChatGPT revolution by implementing its Clyde chatbot with AI features. Read [here](#)

Grammarly's ChatGPT upgrade won't just improve your writing, it'll do it for you.

As we have already seen, the AI will most certainly need human intervention. Read [here](#)

Parallax Depth Effects powered by AI are coming to Windows

This is giving us a big hint that Windows 12 will be a fully AI-enabled operating system. This "tweak" in Windows 11 is giving us a hint of what is coming for Windows 12. Read [here](#).

Movies

Movies in theatres this coming week are:

- Now Playing: [65 Million Years](#) – It's a good movie and only 90mins – go enjoy it! Great performance by Adam Driver
- Now Playing: [Scream 6](#) – more screams and more blood – quite good!
- Now Playing: [The Son](#) (Also Streaming)
- Now Playing: [Wandering Earth II](#) (Only in selected cinemas)
- 17 March: [Shazam! Fury of the gods](#).
- 17 March: [The Inspection](#)
- 17 March: [Mrs Chatterjee v. Norway](#)

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Well, this is the 2nd TOP STORIES, and the sheer amount of news flooding out is so overwhelming, I think I'm sure there is value in bubbling some of this to the top making it easier to pick out what is important to you.

This will not last long, AI will take over this job from me in maybe a year from now, and I'm sure giving it a lot of history to get trained on, so it might be quite good at it!

I'm not worried about losing my job just yet as long as I'm able to come up with the next good or useful idea, something AI's will need a few more years before AI's can start doing that too.

So... I asked ChatGPT to rewrite that paragraph above more humorously, and this is what it gave me:

"Welcome back to the second instalment of TOP STORIES, folks! The volume of news pouring in is simply overwhelming, so I think it's important to highlight the most critical pieces and make it easier for you to sift through the noise.

But let's be real here: my days are numbered. AI is set to take over my job within a year or so, and with all the data I'm feeding it, I'm sure it'll become a news-highlighting master in no time. I'm not too worried, though - I'll be safe as long as I keep coming up with fresh and innovative ideas. After all, that's one area where the robots can't quite compete...yet!"

It reads quite well! Did you think you could do that 6 months ago?

Hardware

Intel & AMD Ahead of schedule

It is starting to look like the roadmap to achieve 20A fabrication in 2024 might happen when is sooner than expected, This means we could see a doubling in compute capabilities in only a year from now and not 2 years. [Read more about what is going on in the rumour mill](#) - where there is smoke.....

Microsoft

Microsoft CoPilot - AI Everywhere All At Once!

in just one week, ChatGPT 4 is now available, and Bing Chat (a variant of ChatGPT 4) is available to everybody, but the really interesting news is Microsoft announcing how ChatGPT is going to be present in everything you do across the entire M365 Suite. This is called CoPilot, and you can read more about it [here](#), and there is VERY good summary [here](#) which I urge you to **Read**.

Even Team Premium's meeting recap feature has been enhanced, now Teams received a brand-new "Meeting Recap" feature that **allows you to see a summary of the meeting that you weren't able to attend**. Microsoft 365 Copilot highlights the important parts and takes notes of the event if you simply press the "Follow" button beforehand.

What is Important to note is that Microsoft 365 Copilot is currently undergoing limited private testing, with plans for a wider rollout in the future, according to statements made by Microsoft's Jared Spataro.

The pricing and licensing details for the new service have yet to be announced.

It remains to be seen how the introduction of Microsoft 365 Copilot will impact the Teams Premium SKU, which was recently launched and already includes ChatGPT integrations.

The Teams Premium SKU is currently available as an **add-on for E3 and E5 subscribers.**

DO NOT think that Microsoft is going to include it in E3 or E5 - it may become an "E6" or yet another add-on which seems to becoming the preferred option.

Microsoft Starting to Test Windows 12?

It seems there is some tangible evidence that Windows 12 is going to be going out to testers soon, read the story about it [here](#).

Microsoft changes from a 5-year to 3-year development cycle.

This is very big news, and Microsoft might change its mind, but this time with an accelerated silicon roadmap of AMD and Intel ahead of schedule, I think this time it will stick. This is a very clear message that fundamentally hardware and Software refresh cycles are getting shorter. Read more about it [here](#)

Microsoft Outsourcing Licensing Management brief March 2023

you can find the brief [here](#) in the Licensing Briefs section on the Microsoft website. **This is a very**

important document to study if you are looking at any type of hybrid cloud strategy that involves Microsoft Licensing.

It deals with How you use licenses with Listed Providers, Authorised Outsourcers ([something that needs careful consideration and discussion](#)) and a slew of other "benefits"

Virtual Desktop Licensing Brief March 2023

This is a new brief which you can also find [here](#), and it now addresses the Windows 365 And Flexible Virtualisation Benefit and all other options

Intune Suite and Intune Plan 2

Microsoft announced in October 2022 that Intune would be rebranded as a family name, and a new suite would be introduced. These changes will come into effect from 1 March 2023. The original Intune User SL will now be known as Intune Plan 1.

You will have the option to add on Intune Plan 2 or the Intune Suite, depending on their additional functionality requirements. The pricing for Intune Plan 1 will be \$8 per user per month, with Plan 2 and the Suite priced at \$4 and \$10 respectively. [It's important to note that if you have an existing license that includes the original Intune you can also opt to add-on either Plan 2 or the Suite.](#)

[You can find the product Terms updated here](#)

The announcement from Microsoft is [here](#), and also gives you a run-down of the features

Microsoft Viva Comparison Table updated

[The Microsoft Viva brand aims to enhance the employee experience, and there are currently 8 different apps available for purchase.](#) These apps can be obtained in various ways, such as being included in a Microsoft 365 plan, as part of the Viva Suite, or as an individual add-on. To determine which apps are included where and their corresponding costs, you can [download a helpful comparison table.](#)

Security

Ransomware posing as a Windows antivirus update will just empty your wallet

This story is a lesson in you can never be too careful. This one is particularly nasty as it bypasses User Access Control. Read the story [here](#).

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT 4 now available - 5 ways it is smarter than ChatGPT 3.5

It is scary to think that in November 2022, AI was not really seen that accessible to be used by us "mere mortals".

Not only has ChatGPT proven that it can make a huge difference in our lives, it has already received a big upgrade.

Read more about it [here](#)

Google is behind, but working like crazy!

Google is also bringing AI to its ecosystem to compete with co-pilot, but for now it looks like Microsoft is leading the race. Read the story [here](#)

Movies

- [Shazam! Fury of the gods.](#)
- [The Inspection](#)
- [Mrs Chatterjee v. Norway](#)
- 24 March: [Demon Slayer: To the SwordSmith Village](#)
- 24 March: [John Wick 4](#) (This is apparently very good)
- 24 March: [The Lost King](#) (Already Streaming)

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TOP STORIES #3

AI is coming at us from all sides with all sorts of new tools and "assistants" to help us in so many different ways, and I'll highlight a few that have popped up just this week.

Beware of getting sucked in too quickly as this is becoming the next bubble with which Billions will be made and lost.

Overall, the pace of change is accelerating driven by increasingly rapid changes in processing systems from AMD, Intel and NVIDIA

P.S. in case you miss it, right at the bottom of this mail is a summary of the movies on the circuit and what's coming in South Africa

Hardware

AMD's New 96-Core CPU to break world records

AMD is about to release a server processor that can practically put a data centre in a single box! In the past you would have needed racks of servers, now you only need ONE single server.

Read more [here](#)

Microsoft

Microsoft changes to the Unified Update Platform servicing scheme.

This is a bit technical, but it is really important that you share this with your colleagues responsible for keeping your premise-based systems up to date. They should know about this, but just in case, [here](#) is a great article that takes you through the detail. **Note this facilitates the updates of air-gapped windows systems**

Microsoft To test Loop and CoPilot

This will allow AI to be incorporated into the creative process.

Read about "Loop" [here](#)

In Loop, Copilot will save a history of submitted prompts so they can be refined to produce better results, and allow generated work to be saved as a "component" (essentially a document) in a Loop workspace to be collaborated on or shared within other **Microsoft 365** apps, such as **Teams** or Outlook.

Microsoft Teams Rooms Users Get Tool To Help Comply with July Licensing Deadline

Microsoft has changed the licensing for Microsoft Teams Rooms devices, no longer allowing them to be used with "Shared Devices" licenses or "Per User" licenses. The new licensing is "per device," with two plans - Microsoft Teams Rooms Pro and Microsoft Teams Rooms Basic - introduced in September 2021 to replace the previous "Standard" and "Premium" offerings from 2020. Read more detail about this change [here](#)

Security

Beware of GPT fakes.

This fake ChatGPT Chrome Extension could compromise your Facebook account

This is a heads-up to be super suspicious of GPT or AI add-ons - they could severely compromise you. [Here is a story](#) about one of those fake add-ons.

You can't be careful enough!

Assessing Azure Security: Protecting yourself from being breached

Breaches of environments are happening a LOT!

You might not even know that your environment is misconfigured allowing hackers to compromise it to run up epic bills on your account for nefarious purposes.

BUI, Azure and Security specialists of the **First Technology group** have released a series of tools for you to assess your environment on the **Azure marketplace**.

- The first assessment, assesses, who is and who is not enabled for MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication), for Legacy, Baseline, and Conditional Access, which can be hard to figure out at times.
- The second assessment, assesses, access to Network interfaces from the Internet to the customers' environments in Azure, i.e., can you make a remote desktop connection into the environment?

Both these attack vectors are heavily exploited and are the main cause of many breaches in Azure. Both assessments provide the user with a report displayed in Red, Yellow and Green for

easy reading.

In 99% of the cases, if these two areas are locked down and they are correctly configured, a breach is greatly mitigated.

Cloud & AI

Guides on how to use GPT

There are going to be many, and some of them could be particularly handy. [Here](#) is a nice concise guide on how to get GPT to write your resume, of course, you can just ask GPT what it needs from you to write a good resume! Try it, it might surprise you!

The Cloud Backlash is starting

For almost a decade companies have been exhorted by the cloud providers like AWS, Alibaba, etc...to "Lift and Shift" to the cloud, and that worked for a while, but the tables are turning, and NIVIDA is one of the companies suggesting that the tide may be turning suggesting that moving large ML and AI workloads on-premise can yield big savings. Read more [here](#).

I cannot stress more how important it is to have a multi-cloud and hybrid cloud strategy where you use the cloud on "best fit for purpose" basis.

Adobe launches generative AI tools for marketers

[Here is a detailed article](#) on what Adobe is releasing, Adobe is far from the first:

[Movio](#), [Copysmith](#), [Copy.ai](#), [Sellscale](#), [Jasper](#), [Omneky](#) and [Regie.ai](#) are using generative AI to create (ostensibly) better marketing copy, imagery and even video for ads, websites and emails.

And both [Google](#) and [Microsoft](#) recently launched generative AI capabilities aimed at business customers, including copy- and image-generating tools.

Uptake has been swift — Statista [reports](#) that 87% of current AI adopters are already using, or are considering using, AI for improving their email marketing. Another [report](#) projects that the market for generative AI will be worth more than \$110 billion by 2030.

Movies

Now Playing: [Demon Slayer: To the SwordSmith Village](#)

Now Playing: [John Wick 4](#) (This is apparently very good)

Now Playing: [The Lost King](#) (Already Streaming)

31 March: [The Honeymoon](#) (Comedy)

31 March: [Dungeons and Dragons](#) (Looks like it's going to be very good)

31 March: [Marlowe](#) (Already Streaming)

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TOP STORIES #4

Every week there is something new about AI, and it will of course feature prominently in the weekly highlights, but of course, it's not only about AI, there are also a lot of other things going on in a very busy industry.

This week the News has a lot of Microsoft, just worked out that way.

Hardware

Intel Server CPU Roadmap updated

Not to be outdone by AMD, Intel has announced it's roadmap to 2025, suggesting that it will skip the 20A node and produce CPU's with the 18A Node.

All this suggests that the overall roadmap for AMD and Intel is ahead of schedule, and we will be seeing major increases, by orders of magnitude in the next couple of years. I think GPT-5 will arrive very soon powered by these new systems, which NVIDIA is also working on.

Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 12 System Requirements

It seems more stuff is starting to leak out about Windows 12, and it seems my prediction about the system requirements might be right.

The most important news is that the minimum RAM requirement is 8Gig whereas Windows 11 was 4Gig - this translates to the minimum real-life requirement for Windows 11 being 16 Gig, and thus of course, 32 Gig for Windows 12. It is of course all still rumour, but you can read more [here](#).

It is important to note that upgrading machines from Windows 11 to 12 might run into trouble, if your Windows 11 machines are still be deployed with 8Gig - I urge you to reconsider if that is the case. Read more [here](#).

A screenshot of Windows 12 might have [leaked as well](#).

Enabling Microsoft Loop

First, if you do not know what Loop is, read [this](#) - which explains what it does by comparing it with its competitor, Notion. Once you feel this may be useful, read [this to guide](#) you on how to enable this.

New Teams, Smaller, Faster and Smarter

Microsoft has launched the new Teams for public preview, and it is a big deal promising to run at twice the speed in half the memory (something zoom has always done). You can read about this new version of Teams [here](#).

Microsoft is also starting to show how CoPilot will be integrating with Teams as well. Maybe Teams will run our meetings without us having to be present, it already allows you to catch up if you are late. Read more [here](#).

EXCEL just got updated!

Microsoft has just updated Excel to improve your ability to collaborate with @mentions, including how images are handled in spreadsheets.

Read more [here](#).

Security

Microsoft will block emails from Vulnerable servers

Important to note that Microsoft will proactively start blocking emails from servers that remain persistently unpatched. Read [here](#).

Microsoft Releases CoPilot for security.

This is just the beginning, and already CoPilot will enable admins to respond to and deal with threats in minutes and not days (but don't forget the bad guys are onto this too). read more [here](#). Of course, The Register has [something to say as well](#).

OFFICE 2016 and 2019 CONNECTION TO O365 END DATE

Microsoft has issued a reminder of a **very important Servicing Milestone**, where after October 023 connections to O365 might become "iffy". It is important to read this document [here](#). You also will not be able to use Configuration Manager to migrate.

Cloud and AI

AI Helping the bad guys

Unfortunately, it is only to be expected that as much as AI helps us good guys work more intelligently and efficiently, it also helps bad guys that are not so clever commit really clever crimes with the aid of an AI, more on this [here](#). I truly think we need to proactive and already work on stepping up our defences and our education of users who could be be deceived by "next level" phishing attempts.

GPT-5 is coming

It is possible that GPT 5 will achieve Artificial General Intelligence (**AGI**) in 2024, which has many in the world, including Musk very worried.

I asked GPT what it thinks about reaching AGI with GPT-5, and it has this to say:

"As an AI language model, GPT-5 or any future artificial general intelligence (AGI) would be capable of understanding and processing human language at a level similar to or surpassing that of humans. This would allow for more advanced and sophisticated interactions between humans and the AI.

If and when GPT-5 is developed, it may be able to provide more personalized and tailored responses to specific user needs and preferences, making it even more helpful in assisting with tasks and providing information. It may also be able to learn and adapt to new information and situations more quickly and effectively than previous AI models. However, it is important to note that the development of AGI is still speculative and it is unclear when or if it will become a reality. Additionally, ethical and safety concerns will need to be addressed as AI becomes more advanced and potentially more powerful."

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

Maybe it's time to watch the movie "[Her](#)" a little more carefully, and wonder just what our future holds for us.

GPT-4 shows it's power

Here is a nice summary of some amazing things that GPT-4 can do. Read [here](#)

Summarising Meetings - A perfect AI Use case

It is not just Zoom and Microsoft coming up with great ways to summarise meetings. [here is a story of a startup](#), Read, that has figured out how to summarise meetings into a 2min Clip.

Movies

John Wick 4 was such an unexpected success, the producers are already trying to see how to bring him back for No. 5 - read the story [here](#).

Now Playing : [The Honeymoon](#) (Comedy)

Now Playing : [Dungeons and Dragons](#) (getting good reviews)

Now Playing : [Marlowe](#) (Already Streaming)

7 April: [The Pope's Exorcist](#) - Russell Crowe has the leading role - not for the fainthearted!

7 April: [One True Loves](#)

7 April: [Mario Bros.](#) for kids of all ages!

7 April: [AIR](#) - the story of how Nike landed Michael Jordan

7 April: [The Thorn](#)

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TOP STORIES #5

Well, because of the long weekend, Monday became my Sunday, which is why you are getting the Top Stories now.....It has been a slow week for news anyway....

Hardware

Older GPU's are not that bad

If you are a gamer and are looking sadly at the latest GPU cards and wondering if the prices will ever come down, maybe take a look at the older cards that you can pick up for a song for all the retired crypto miners. Look at [this article](#) that might cheer you up.

Notebooks getting Fried (overheating) when you least expect it

A colleague of mine recently complained that his notebook mysteriously cooked itself overnight never to restart. This problem he encountered is not going away, so I thought I would share the solution.

I have also recently encountered a notebook that completely fried it's insides because of this problem.

Mostly the notebook just drains it's battery overnight while lying in your notebook bag, so when you open it in the morning the battery is flat. There are the unlucky ones where it dies in it's sleep!

The problem is Modern Standby - [Here is a Linus Tech Tips Video](#) on the problem and some workarounds.

My solution..... (with a notebook with NVMe Storage) is to hibernate, NEVER sleep.

Microsoft

Tracking Cloud Permissions Report (getting hacked)

Microsoft has released a report dealing with a problem that is becoming very serious across all cloud platforms.

We are not being careful enough with our passwords and our MFA and are getting badly compromised.

You can get the summary and the PDF report [here](#).

Signature Teams Rooms Design From Microsoft

Microsoft has released a design for Teams Rooms that [looks amazing](#), now all we need to be able to do is to afford it!

I think our Integration division in First Technology (that also supports Zoom) would be able to come up with more cost-effective designs. You can find them [here](#).

Security

You can never be too Careful

[Here is a story](#) about a browser extension that hides itself on your computer to cleverly steal your cash.

Cloud and AI

How to make a deepfake for a novice

AI is coming at us way too fast, and [here is an example](#) of how you can make a deepfake video with almost no computer expertise at all!

AI Startups by the hundreds!

It is the new Tech bubble and the Industrial Revolution rolled into one. Look at all these AI startups looking for a reason to exist (and some will).

[Take a look](#) you might find a gem!

Movies

Mario Bros has broken some major Box office records in spite of the critics not liking it. Read [here](#).

Now Playing: [The Pope's Exorcist](#) - Russell Crowe has the leading role!

Now Playing: [One True Loves](#)

Now Playing: [Mario Bros.](#) for kids of all ages!

Now Playing: [AIR](#) - the story of how Nike landed Michael Jordan

Now Playing: [The Thorn](#)

14 April: [Suzme](#)

14 April: [A Good Person](#)

14 April: [Renfield](#) (Promises to be very entertaining)

14 April: [Spinning Gold](#)

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TOP STORIES #6

This week is still slow on the news front.

Hardware

Intel 14th Generation might be released in 2023

Don't hold back on your 13th Generation orders though. 13th Generation will give you all the processing power you need for quite a while, whereas 14th Gen (Meteor Lake) will focus on power efficiency. Read more about the (lukewarm) news [here](#). There is also news that Meteor Lake needs some changes to the kernel. Read [here](#).

AMD Releasing Zen 6 on 20 Angstrom process

It seems it is not just Intel ahead of schedule. Read [here](#).

Microsoft

After 30 years the PrtScn Key will get a new job

I suppose this is only big news for us dinosaurs that have been using Windows for 30 years, finally that venerable old key is replaced with the snipping tool. Read [here](#).

Security

You are never safe. Patch now

A critical flaw in Windows Server and Desktop operating systems is being active exploited. Read [here](#).

Fraudulent Activity on the rise

Thanks to AI the amount of activity is increasing at an accelerating rate, read more [here](#).

Travelling? Need free Charge? Don't!

It is getting very dangerous to plug your phone into a public charging station. Read [here](#).

Cloud and AI

Don't Forget about Bard

Google is playing catch-up from far behind, but [here is some news](#) about some improvements.

AI is getting better at Password cracking

This is another reason to ensure that your passwords are secure, and if you have to have passwords enable MFA. Read [here](#) as to how quickly AI can crack your favourite password.

The Dark Side of GPT

It's a good idea to be aware of some of the more nefarious things AI can be persuaded to do. Read [here](#).

Movies

A very Slow week at the movies I'm afraid. The next big one is [Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3](#) only in May.

Now Playing: [Suzme](#)

Now Playing: [A Good Person](#)

Now Playing: [Renfield](#)

Now Playing: [Spinning Gold](#)

21 April: [Beautiful Disaster](#)

21 April: [KISI KA BHAJ KISI](#)

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TOP STORIES #7

Quite a lot on the Microsoft front this week. I'm very pleased to see that my prediction about Windows 12 more than a year ago is starting to come true, and it may even be sooner in 2024!

There are **rumours** that Microsoft is reducing the release cycle between new versions from 5 years to 3.

If this turns out to be true, this is huge, because then we will see Windows 13 (maybe they pick a different name) in 2027 and Windows 14 in 2030 which underscores how fast things are changing.

Hardware

Microsoft is Building it's own AI processor

Microsoft has not only invested in OpenAI and NVIDIA but is also building its own chip to allow it to scale even faster read [here](#).

Intel working on 2000W Coolers for CPU's

It is incredible to think that Intel (and that would be AMD and NVIDIA as well) are working on technologies to cool CPU's that emit 2000W in heat when today we think 500W is a lot for one CPU. [Read here - even Intel talks about Science Fiction!](#)

Microsoft

Leaked: Windows 11 gets an AI-like feature

It looks like Microsoft has "leaked" a new feature that allows you to snap you windows the way you like them on your desktop and then remember them to restore them with one click - ie "snap assist" - read [here](#) and more detail [here](#)

Sharepoint 2013 Workflow coming to an end

Microsoft is wanting you to prepare to switch to systems like Power Automate though there are functional challenges for some.

If you are running Sharepoint and have concerns about it's roadmap, it maybe be a good plan to speak to our experts in [First Digital](#) (your account manager can help connect you with the right person) to help you figure out what to do next.

Sharepoint 2013 is already out of Support. Read the detailed story [here](#).

RIP Office 2013, Office 2016 and 2019 soon

Like with Sharepoint 2013, Office 2013 is no longer supported, and it is a good time to remind you that Office 2016 and 2019 support ends at the same time in **October 2025**.

Read the story in more detail [here](#).

Windows 12 testing starting soon

It seems that Microsoft is getting ready to start testing Windows 12 in the wild. There are some hints that this may be a reality, read [here](#). If this is true, then we are definitely on track for October 2025.

New Microsoft 365 Plan Comparison Table

It is available [here](#). This one is updated to show the Intune Suite and Intune Plan 2

Universal Print Capacity Allocations increased

This is a cloud-based printing solution operating exclusively on Microsoft Azure, removing the necessity for conventional on-premises print servers or printer driver installation. Clients with Windows 10 Enterprise E3, E5, A3, and A5, or Microsoft 365 A3, A5, F3, and Business Premium licenses receive a pooled allotment of 5 print jobs per license each month at the tenant level.

Starting May 1st, 2023, Microsoft 365 E3 and E5 users will receive 100 print jobs per license.

Add-ons can be purchased to provide an additional 500 print jobs monthly if more capacity is required. You can read the announcement from Microsoft [here](#), and some licensing information [here](#).

Security

SQL Servers getting hacked

You cannot relax, ever. [Here](#) is a story about a new attack on SQL servers, which if encrypted

can lead to devastating damage in companies, especially ones running older SQL databases.

Cloud and AI

AI coming to photographs and video editing

Adobe is starting to release a slew of AI products and features. [Here is one](#) that photographers will find interesting - a denoise feature for photos shot in dim conditions. Adobe is building a system to make video editing super simple by using AI. Read the first news about [Firefly](#).

Google's BARD is catching up

Google has announced some new features giving BARD capability similar to ChatGPT with maybe some better integration, see [here](#).

Movies

Nothing big this coming week, I think we are all waiting for [Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3](#)

Now Playing: [Beautiful Disaster](#)

Now Playing: [KISI KA BHAII KISI](#)

28 April: [Big George Foreman](#)

28 April: [Black Demon](#)

28 April: [Epic Tails](#)

28 April: [Polite Society](#)

28 April: [To Catch a Killer](#)

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TOP STORIES #8

This has been a very busy week, especially with Microsoft making a flurry of announcements as it drives towards its financial year end in June 2023. **Note there are quite a number of licensing-related announcements.**

Hardware

Intel Ramping production on Meteor Lake

Don't cancel your order for your new 13th Gen computer! This is just a "Tick" on the way to Nova Lake, but it does confirm that Intel is on track (and so is AMD) for the new fabrication processes that will lead to mindblowing computing power being unleashed in the next 3-5 years. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

No more Windows 10 Updates

Windows 10 is reaching the end of its life, and a reminder that you need to start ensuring you are standardised on Windows 11 while at the same time planning the removal of hardware that cannot be upgraded to Windows 11. Read more [here](#). Don't panic, security updates will continue until October 2025.

Windows 11 LTSC announced

Along with end of Windows 10 updates, Microsoft has announced Windows 11 LTSC which will be released in 2024 with support probably up to 2029, read more [here](#). Between now and then I'm sure we will hear a lot more about Windows 12, and even Windows 13!

Teams getting a Spatial Audio upgrade

There is lots of news.. along with spatial audio there is a rumour that Microsoft is preparing to unbundle Teams from Office because of a complaint by Slack to the EU which is being taken seriously.

Spatial Audio as a technology actually goes back 25 years originally intended for the Cinema industry, starting out as IOSONO which then morphed into Auro and Atmos.

Read more about the Teams announcement [here](#). It remains to be seen how effectively it will be implemented as you typically need a high-quality stereo source, not mono as most of our computer systems are today for conferencing.

Microsoft may unbundle Teams from Office

This is a result of Slack complaining to the EU that it can't compete fairly. Let's see if this actually happens, and if it does it may actually play into Microsoft's hands in the long run. You can read more [here](#).

Microsoft to stop selling peripherals (except for Surface)

Microsoft is going only to sell Surface-branded products in the future meaning that it will drop a lot of its gadgets. More detail [here](#).

Microsoft Tweaks (improves) Windows Server Licensing

In April 2023, Microsoft implemented several alterations to Windows Server 2022 licensing.

Firstly, **the obligation for a minimum of 16 Windows Server Core licences to access virtual machine licensing or Azure Hybrid Benefit has been eliminated.** Secondly, the **Azure Hybrid Benefit no longer necessitates maintaining groups of 8 Core licences for virtual machines with over 8 cores.** Consequently, a 20-core virtual machine now requires only 20 licences instead of 24.

Furthermore, when obtaining Windows Server licences as Software Subscriptions via CSP, customers can now utilise Standard licences with Windows Server Datacenter virtual machines, applicable both on-premises and with Authorized Outsourcers.

Lastly, when a CSP-Hoster partner offers Windows Server Software Subscription licences as part of a hosted and managed solution, **there is no need for Windows Server CALs or External Connector licences,** and the right to use Standard licences with Datacenter images is also granted. You can read more about this [here](#).

Microsoft Windows 365 Frontline in Preview

This is designed for shift workers, each Frontline licence enables businesses to create three Cloud PCs for 24-hour coverage. **The number of concurrent users must not exceed the**

purchased licences; for example, 110 licences would allow 330 Cloud PCs with a maximum of 110 users at any given time. The announcement can be found [here](#), and how to join the preview is [here](#) with a video about it [here](#).

Defender for Endpoint P1 and P2 can be mixed

Microsoft now allows you to mix P1 and P2 for the same tenant. The official Microsoft announcement is [here](#). Note it is still in preview. Examples of some different scenarios can be found [here](#).

Microsoft enforcing Teams Room Device Licensing

In September 2022, Teams Rooms licensing was updated with the introduction of Teams Rooms Basic and Pro licences. **Microsoft informed everybody that from July 1, 2023, Teams Rooms devices must use device licences instead of user licences.** [This article is a useful reminder](#), providing tips on identifying Teams Rooms devices with unsupported licences.

Security

New Gmail scam

May of us including family members use gmail for our personal mail, so this is a reminder to be vigilant and suspicious of any mail. [Read here](#).

Cloud and AI

The difference between ChatGPT 3.5 & 4

[Here](#) is a short guide on the differences if you are thinking of forking out \$20 per month for the premiums service. Short answer... it's a good investment. ChatGPT moving forward - just for fun, give [Annie a Call](#).

How to chat with GPT in private

If you want to have a secret chat with GPT, [here](#) is how you do it.

Movies

Now Playing: [Big George Foreman](#)

Now Playing: [Black Demon](#)

Now Playing: [Epic Tails](#)

Now Playing: [Polite Society](#)

Now Playing: [To Catch a Killer](#)

5 May: [Guardians of the Galaxy Vol.3](#) - the 1st reviews are in, and they are good

5 May: [The unlikely pilgrimage of Harold Fry](#)

5 May: [Beau is Afraid](#)

5 May: [Assassin](#) (also streaming)

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TOP STORIES #9

This is a pretty mixed news week, I think the most dramatic news here is a glimpse at what ChatGPT is going to do next. Google still has a lot of catching up to do.

Hardware

Slim, Sleek, High-performance Laptops

AMD has released a new lineup of processors that will give the Apple M2 and hard time and dent NVIDIA's dominance of gaming laptops having discrete GPU's. This is a great example of the accelerating processor roadmap bringing us incredible performance in sleek slim devices. See the story [here](#).

Microsoft

New Outlook for Windows

You might be noticing in the top-right corner of your Outlook which says "Try the New Outlook". This has been around since May 2022, but Microsoft is now opening it up for more people to try. Yes, it IS a new outlook, **but it has limitations that you need to check before taking the leap**. Look [here](#) and scroll down to the Table headed "Support for key Outlook Features". A very important one to look out for is that it currently does not support PST files. Also, if you are using plugins you will find they do not work either anymore. [Here](#) is a more detailed story about the new Outlook and it's features.

Microsoft Testing a Private Version of ChatGPT

Many companies such as banks, Medical companies, Security Companies etc... would be very reluctant to expose their data to a public AI, so **Microsoft may soon announce a version of ChatGPT for private use** - read more [here](#).

OneDrive is getting easier to use.

Microsoft has announced a preview of the new features coming for OneDrive, and it looks pretty cool focusing on different views and ways to find important files. Read about the changes [here](#).

Microsoft Announces CoPilot for Sharepoint and many other services

Microsoft has announced multiple features for Sharepoint, OneDrive, Stream and many more. [Read about what is in all these releases](#) - it is a long but very well-written article.

Paying Extra for Teams

[This is another episode](#) in the ongoing saga between Microsoft and EU where it is reportedly trying to stay off an anti-trust case. It is looking like Microsoft might be separating Teams from Office, and charging extra for it and an add-on. Microsoft might just end up being the winner here.

Security

Reminder to use Strong Password

[Here is a story](#) about an AI password cracker that can crack many apparently strong passwords in seconds. This is a reminder to make sure your passwords are strong and that you have MFA enabled!

Cloud and AI

Comparing Bing Chat, Bard Chat and ChatGPT

CNET has a [great video](#) comparing the three AI's focusing on the free aspects.

Hollywood vs. AI

[This is one of many examples](#) that are coming down the line where industries are trying to come to terms with how AI is impacting careers and industries in profound ways.

ChatGPT breaks out!

[Here is an example](#) of what we can expect from ChatGPT when it is given access to the internet - the next upgrade!

And it is SCARY!

Seems my prediction was correct, it just going to get here sooner.....

I suspect that not long after ChatGPT gets "set free" onto the internet, it will be writing these

stories for you every week instead of me writing them.
Guess I better find something else to do that ChatGPT can't do (yet)!

Movies

Not much of a line up, but Hypnotic looks promising.

Now Playing: [Guardians of the Galaxy Vol.3](#) - Awesome movie! Go watch it!!

Now Playing: [The unlikely pilgrimage of Harold Fry](#)

Now Playing: [Beau is Afraid](#)

Now Playing: [Assassin](#) (also streaming)

12 May: [Love Again](#)

12 May: [Book Club: The Next Chapter](#)

12 May: [Hypnotic](#)

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TOP STORIES #10

Even though the week was dominated by the Google I/O conference, there are still a few interesting stories this week with IBM launching Watsonx platform to help enterprises use AI to cut back on employees (it seems IBM employees are being motivated in the same way). Our experience with AI is only just starting. It will get more exciting and scary every week! Also, there is a dangerous phishing attack you need to be on the alert for with South Africa getting a mention.

Hardware

New Chips from Intel to Beat the Apple M2

Not to be outdone by AMD, Intel has announced it too will be introducing CPU's with improved integrated GPU performance, and this could start causing trouble for NVIDIA removing the need for separate GPUs in computers for many applications. Read more on this story [here](#).

A very cool monitor from Philips

[This is a very interesting monitor](#) with a companion E-paper Panel hooked up on the side. I do not know when it will be available in SA, but it is a very cool idea...

What is HDR for displays?

This is referred to more and more, but what is it and should you get it for your monitor? [This article](#) helps demystify some of the hype.

Microsoft

Windows 10 coming to an end

The beginning of the end is that [21H2 is coming to the end of support on June 13](#), so you will be forced to upgrade to 22H2 soon. Read more detail [here](#),

Windows 11 "Moment 3" coming soon - probably June

This is the next "major" update of the operating system which looks like it will be "minor". Read more about it [here](#).

Microsoft Enabling "Everything" with CoPilot

[Here is a story from The Register](#) as to how Microsoft is going to be enabling every component of its M365E3 and E5 stack with digital assistants.

Security

Dangerous Phishing attack

This is dangerous as it is offered as PhaaS (Phishing as a service) bypassing MFA. [South Africa is mentioned](#). As always keep trying to educate your users from acting on suspicious emails, which are looking less suspicious all the time! Read more [here](#).

Outlook flaw patched

It is important to keep you patches up to date. This vulnerability affects all versions of outlook. Read more [here](#).

Teams to get more productive

There are new features rolling out in Teams. One that I will find especially useful is "howling detection", read about that feature and others [here](#).

PLEASE patch your exchange servers!

Or better yet, try to switch them off. Teams appear to be slow to be patching servers, and that at is not good - [read here](#).

[We have multiple teams in the First Technology Group to help you with Patching and Migrating the servers to the cloud. Please talk to your AM to see what is the best assistance we can give you for your specific challenges.](#)

Cloud & AI

IBM Launches Watsonx

IBM has very tough competition in the AI space already and has not done well with Watson, so let's see if IBM has better luck this time around as an [AI development platform](#). Read more

[here](#). [The Register](#) has some interesting comments about Watsonx, and also about IBM's idea that it will be used to replace workers. Read even more [here](#).

Google makes Bard available in 180 countries

As part of the Google I/O conference, Google announced that they are opening up Bard to more countries. I find it funny, because of a difficult start in Google's compute with Microsoft, it is still labelled as an "experiment". Read more [here](#).

ChatGPT gets Internet Access

It is early days, but [here is how you can join the waitlist](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Love Again](#)

Now Playing: [Book Club: The Next Chapter](#)

Now Playing: [Hypnotic](#)

19 May: [Fast and Furious 10](#) - with competition like this, this is the only release for the week!

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TOP STORIES #11

Not a very exciting news week, except that the bad news around Security never stops. Can never stop being vigilant, and also be ready for nasty malware to appear where you would least expect it.

It seems a new trend is malware finding itself in the supply chains of companies making new devices - you get malware straight from the factory!

Hardware

Smaller TKL 60 & 65 Keyboards worth considering

Computer keyboards have been around for a long time, the most memorable keyboard being the IBM PC keyboard so heavy it could serve as a ship anchor! If you yearn for a modernised version of the original IBM keyboard from 1981, you can buy one [here](#), or even get an [original](#). However the world has moved on, and there are smaller and more elegant keyboards that take up less desk space and allow you to work more comfortably.

Read [here about some modern keyboards that you can consider](#). Of course, if you really want to dive down the rabbit hole of keyboards and types of keys, you can read up [here with a guide](#) on what types of key switches to buy. [Finding a keyboard that is "just right" for you, can make a huge difference to your productivity!](#)

Intel 14th Gen Meteor Lake CPU's start to appear

It looks like we are on schedule to see Meteor Lake CPU's in notebooks still for 2023. Just when you thought 13th' Gen was leading edge! Read more [here](#).

Meteor Lake is likely to bring big improvements for the battery life of your notebook.

Microsoft

Pressure to upgrade to Windows 11 is heating up

We only have a couple of years of Windows 10 support left, so Microsoft is upping pressure for users to upgrade to Windows 11, and it does serve as a reminder that we really DO need to think about upgrading. Better to plan it now than to worry about it when you have less than year left.

Read more [here](#). It does seem that there will still be some minor feature updates for Windows 10 after all, [read more here](#).

Phone-Link for iOS is available

The ability to hook up your iPhone with Windows 11 is now available. Read [here](#).

Security

Cheap Android phones bundled with malware

This is a concerning article about brand new phones being shipped with nasties right from the factory. Stick with well-known brands. Read [here](#).

Ransomware corrupts data, so backups can be faster and cheaper

This article positions an interesting thought that investing in recovery from backups is better than trying to get your data back by paying a ransom. Read an interesting perspective [here](#).

Cloud and AI

TomsHardware launches an AI Chatbot

This is part of the new trend of how Tech websites are using AI to make all their research, reviews and analysis of the tech world more accessible to you to help you get answers. Try it out [here](#).

GPT Chat for iOS released

Read up on the App [here](#).

Movies

We are now in Hollywood Summer Season - so expect a lot of big movies in the coming months.

Now Playing: [Fast and Furious 10](#) - it is a blockbuster!

26 May: [The Little Mermaid](#)

26 May: [About my Father](#)

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TOP STORIES #12

Quite a lot of news on the Microsoft side of things with new licensing guides, and a bunch of Azure Dashboards to view and manage savings better.

Hardware

Rollable Displays

In the near future, we may start seeing notebooks that are much smaller than what we are used to today, because the display can be rolled up and tucked away when not in use. you can see one that [Samsung presented at a recent show](#).

AMD and Intel Battle to Lead AI in Windows

This is another hint that the upcoming release of Windows (12) will be the first operating system to enable AI throughout it's architecture, but in the meantime, even with Windows 11 the battle is heating up. Read [here](#)

Microsoft

Azure Linux Generally available

It is now finally available - read the story [here](#).

New Features Coming to Windows

A preview of Windows 11 Moment 3 has already been pushed out by Microsoft, and you can enable the features now if you like, see [here](#). Over and above this Microsoft announced a lot of new features coming to Windows 11, more [here](#). A nice summary of just what is coming in moment 3 can be found [here](#).

New Azure Savings Dashboard and custom lookback advisor & EASavings Plans

If you're interested in tracking the savings you've accrued in Azure by buying Reservations or Savings Plans, you can use the Power BI dashboard. To get more details and download the Power BI file, [including setup instructions](#).

Further, the Azure Advisor provides cost-saving advice by analyzing VM usage and identifying idle/underutilized machines. The default review period is 7 days, now adjustable to 14, 21, 30, 60, or 90 days. Read [here](#).

If you're an EA customer looking to manually calculate your **savings from Azure Savings Plans**, there's a helpful article [here](#). It provides complete instructions for downloading the amortized usage and charges file, preparing an Excel spreadsheet, and conducting the necessary calculations to figure out the savings.

Power Platform Licensing guide updated

The Power Platform Licensing Guide, updated in May 2023, now includes tiered pricing for AI Builder credit packs. Refer to page 20 of the guide for details [here](#) (AI Builder rate card).

Windows 11 Guide

Microsoft has published an updated guide on the [Licensing Guides portal](#) for Windows 11 dated April. It covers all the different editions, plus downgrade rights and VL activations.

Microsoft Announces App Governance in Defender

As of 1 June, the App governance add-on will be included in any license that includes Defender for Cloud Apps which of course means it's included in M365E5 and E5 Security. Read more [here](#).

SQL Server Centrally managed Azure Hybrid benefit available

Microsoft has launched the centrally managed Azure Hybrid Benefit for SQL Server. Now, you can easily apply eligible licenses to your SQL Server resources in Azure at a Subscription or Billing Profile level, rather than to individual resources, simplifying management.

You can find the announcement [here](#), and useful learn documentation [here](#)

Security

D-Link and Zyxel release patches

This is a reminder that our Routers, AP's and firewalls need to be kept up to date, and old units that are not supported get removed. Both D-Link and Zyxel have announced patches that you

best check out if you are using any of the listed products. See D-Link [here](#) and Zyxel [here](#).

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT now uses Bing AI Search data

Slowly ChatGPT is being released into the wild, read more [here](#).

Photoshop tool could bring AI magic to your images

Adobe has introduced a new tool in Photoshop that can make mind-blowing changes to your pictures. See the story [here](#).

Movies

We are now in peak summer blockbuster Season!

Now Playing: [The Little Mermaid](#) (Kids love it)

Now Playing: [About my Father](#)

02 June: [The boogeyman](#)

02 June: [Spiderman: Across the Spiderverse](#)

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TOP STORIES #13

This is a hectic week for technology announcements as COMPUTEX has just drawn to a close, so you will find the internet awash with keynotes, product announcements and thousands of youtube videos of experts giving their opinions.

COMPUTEX is the second big show of the 2023 Calendar first kicked off by CES in January.

Some of the announcements at Computex are highlighted below.

TomsHardware has a very good "Wrap-up" of all the big news from Computex [here](#).

This is followed by InfoComm 10-14 June

And many more for the rest of the year- now that covid is behind us.

Hardware

Intel Meteor Lake "in the wild"

There were two "accidental" reveals of the 14th Generation CPU from Intel at the [MSI stand](#) and then at [Asus](#).

Meteor Lake is a very significant release as it is the first CPU to include a NPU/VPU AI processor on board to help offload certain gaming and AI tasks. This will actually appear as supported in the task manager of Windows 11. Read more [here](#) and more detail [here](#).

In reality, it is unlikely that we will get notebooks we can actually buy with Meteor Lake CPU's until late this year. Don't pause your plans to buy Gen 13 CPU's. If you feel a little lost with the Generations - Wikipedia has a nice summary [here](#).

NVIDIA announces a whole new Ethernet

The problem with AI workloads is that you need to move vast amount of data really quickly, and to allow that a new class of Ethernet networking has been developed. Imagine one switch capable of handling 51Tb/sec?

Read more about the incredible scale of this new technology [here](#).

5K 49" 1000nits OLED Gaming Goodness from Asus

Asus showed their new gaming monitor at CES and it [looks incredible](#). I still prefer the [SAMSUNG NEO G9](#) for its 1000R curve.

New Solid State Cooling Technology

This is a new way of cooling devices using vibrating membranes. It's very "cool"!

Read more [here](#). Linus Tech tips have done a [review of the technology](#) - the most interesting part of it is that because of the high static pressure, your notebook getting clogged with dust will be a thing of the past as you can have a removable air filter that you can clean without impacting air flow.

Coollest Notebook to make it to production. YogaBook 9i

This was first shown off at CES as a prototype, and has now debuted at COMPUTEX as a production unit. This is a dual-screen hybrid tablet notebook that really makes sense. Read the review [here](#).

Microsoft

With Teams you could miss meetings!

Imagine missing a meeting without missing it?

The meeting Recap Feature in Teams Premium is rolling out with EU users due to get it in August (maybe in SA we will get lucky as part of EU rollout). This feature now includes GPT notes which will be able to give you a full overview of the meeting. Read more [here](#).

Will this allow you to miss a meeting but still get what you need from it for your role? Is this a good thing?

There are some new collaboration features for the free version of Teams as well. Read more [here](#).

AVATAR's for Teams rolling out

This is supposed to bring a fresh experience to meetings. I'm not so sure, don't quite get it. Read more [here](#). You will also read about the new Immersive Mesh platform that will be rolling out later in the year.

New Teams 2.0 will be the Default later this year

The new, faster Teams is currently in preview and still missing some features, but

notwithstanding Microsoft will release when they have achieved parity with the old Teams. **It is important to move to the new Teams because it is WAY more efficient on systems resources than the old one.** Read more [here](#).

Security

Gigabyte BackDoor

This is an interesting vulnerability that was hardcoded into the BIOS (that has been patched) that allowed your device to download a patch from Gigabytes servers, but it was not secure and could have been compromised. This has been the case since 2020. Read more [here](#)

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT- 6 months in, how did we get here?

It is quite scary to think that ChatGPT appeared on November 2022 to a world that really did not expect what would happen next. [Here is a nice summary of how we got here](#) . It is really early days, and look where we are now!

Video Content Creation with AI

If you struggle to edit videos (I do), here is an AI tool that trims your video for you by removing all the fluff, ums and breaks automatically. Read more [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [The boogeyman](#)

Now Playing: [Spiderman: Across the Spideverse](#)

9 June: [Transformers: Rise of the Beasts](#)

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TOP STORIES #14

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The big news of the week is the Apple WWDC. And what a bunch of announcements! Apple seems to have pulled quite a few rabbits out of the hat!! You can get high-level summary of all the highlights from the WWDC [here](#). The internet is flooded with news about the Apple products, so I will not focus on Apple for this "top stories". Reading about the [Vision-Pro](#) is unavoidable!

Hardware

The new Apple M2 Ultra keeps the pressure on Intel and AMD

The New Apple CPU has incredible specs, but it has not been built for extreme performance. This is not a bad thing as Apple's design philosophy is different. TomsHardware has an [interesting article about this](#).

Intel 11th Generation Tiger Lake End of Life

Even though you can still buy brand-new computers with Tiger Lake CPU's this generation is new and completely end-of-life. It is astonishing to think that this was leading-edge technology 3 years ago, and is now obsolete. This of course sets the stage for the 14th gen. Meteor Lake with AI enablement using VPU's will be entering the market Q4 2023. Read more [here](#).

There are STILL computers available with 11th Generation CPU's and you will find them now available for remarkably low prices. **An 11th Gen. notebook with an NVIDIA 3060 will still be an impressive computer, but be warned - it could struggle with Windows 12 when it is released.**

Microsoft

Search Improvements In Word, Excel and Powerpoint

It is easy to miss this and could be very useful for some to know. Microsoft has expanded the search capability beyond just the document you are working on, and can expand the results to be viewed in a side pane. Read about all the changes [here](#).

Windows 23H2 is on it's way

Microsoft has unveiled a bunch of new features coming in the next update of Windows 11, the most interesting being "Windows CoPilot". Windows Cloud Backup looks interesting as well. Read more [here](#).

Security

FBI warns of increasing use of AI-generated deepfakes in sextortion schemes

This is an extremely worrying development that is only going to get worse. This can lead to tragedy. We need to be educating everybody, especially our youth not only to be careful but also how to handle situations like this. Read more [here](#).

You can never be too careful!

Scammers keep resorting to tricks to get you to click on malicious links to download nasty malware. Instead of then sending you an email asking you to do something they just send you a picture. Check the latest trick [here](#).

Cloud & AI

Microsoft Floats AI Customer commitments

It is very early days, but Microsoft has made the first set of general statements regarding the use of AI. Read more [here](#).

Zoom has new AI tools for meetings

Zoom has introduced a service called Zoom IQ to be able to provide you with a summary of a meeting. This will expand to more tools for emails and even whiteboard summaries. Read more [here](#).

Movies

Because the 16th is Youth Day, most movies will be released on Thursday afternoon, so check your schedules for the cinema near you.

Now Playing: **Transformers: Rise of the Beasts**

16 June: **Elemental**

16 June: **Greatest Days**

16 June: **Astroid City**

16 June: **The Flash**

16 June: **Adipurush**

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TOP STORIES #15

With Infocomm, Apple WWDC and Computex behind us, the news this week is a bit slow. What we are seeing is more and more evidence (rumours) that Windows 12 may be released sooner than October 2025... things are speeding up!

If you want to give this mail to others so they can also join the maillist, [they can click on this link](#).

Hardware

Sales are falling - time to buy

Sales of computer hardware are not doing very well, and with an accelerated release cycle from AMD and Intel, there are still 10, 11, and 12th generation computers in the channel desperately wanting to be sold. With all this going on, now is an excellent time to look for a really good deal. Read more [here](#).

Demand should start picking up as companies realise that they HAVE to replace their old Windows 10 machines that cannot upgrade to Windows 11, so really good deals will not last for more than 8-12 months.

Note! I'm making reference to the global market, not specifically South Africa.

PCIe 7 Standard released - 512GB/s transfer rates

It will still be a few years before we see this in laptops, as this is first headed for bandwidth-hungry data centers, but it is nice to see 1TB/s is in range in less than 10 years. Read more [here](#).

Intel Rebrands CPU's

In preparation for the launch of Meteor Lake, Intel is dropping the "I" and adding an "ultra" variant. You can read more about the name change [here](#).

Intel Raptor Lake Refresh Launching Q4

Raptor Lake Refresh is still considered part of the 13th Gen series of CPU's from Intel, and we will see these launching Q4 of 2023 as well. You can read more [here](#). You can [check out Wikipedia](#) as it will help you get your Meteors and Raptors unconfused.

Microsoft

More hints about Windows 12 leak

There are rumours afoot that Microsoft is planning to build AI into the fabric of the new operating system, and when we look at the new [Meteor Lake](#) that is coming Q4 2023, it is certain that this will be the case.

That we will see Windows 12 in 2024 is becoming increasingly real!

Read more [here](#).

Windows 21H2 is dead

Microsoft is asking you to move on, which is a good idea, and maybe use it as an excuse to move on to Windows 11. Read more [here](#).

Security

How hackers steal passwords and how you make them safer

To have an idea of how to create a better password, it is good to understand how passwords get cracked. Scientific American has an interesting article about this [here](#).

Cloud & AI

AI is being used to create the final Beatles song

A very interesting use of AI, that will definitely not be the last - where this rabbit hole goes is just plain scary! Read more [here](#).

Accenture Declares AI to be Mature and Delivers Value

Accenture is planning to grow its AI workforce to 80 000 people (after cutting 19 000 Jobs). The Register has its own opinion on this. Read more [here](#).

Movies

It's a slow week at the movies as well.....

23 June: [No Hard Feelings](#)

23 June: [Rally Road Racers](#)

23 June: [Dark Beauty](#)

Now Playing: [Elemental](#)

Now Playing: [Greatest Days](#)

Now Playing: [Astroid City](#)

Now Playing: [The Flash](#)

Now Playing: [Adipurush](#)

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TOP STORIES #16

It is a slow week for news because many companies, including Microsoft, are chasing their financial year-end, and we are now entering their summer holiday season as well. If you want to forward this mail to others for them to join the list, they can click [here](#) to subscribe.

Hardware

Intel Raptor Lake Refresh is official

This is a modest "bump" in performance before we get to Meteor Lake, which is the next big increment in processing capability. Don't wait for Raptor Lake if you are already in the process of buying current 13th Gen CPU's. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 moment 3

This is coming in July with the cumulative update whether you like it or not! You can read a recap of what's coming [here](#).

Don't touch me on my Explorer!

It seems Microsoft's idea of removing some legacy features got quite a strong reaction, and they have wisely decided to leave these features well alone. Read [here](#).

Security

New Malware spreading by USB

There is some pretty nasty malware starting to spread rapidly around the world. Never take your eye off all those USB sticks floating around your business! Read more about this nasty one [here](#).

Most of us use "bad" passwords

We still tend to use weak passwords, [which we need to work on to improve security](#) . Additionally, we need to at least have MFA enabled, or even better use solutions not needing old-fashioned passwords!

Cloud & AI

Adobe Photoshop is getting Generative fill

Look at how Adobe is adding AI to Photoshop, and it is [amazing!](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [No Hard Feelings](#)

Now Playing: [Rally Road Racers](#)

Now Playing: [Dark Beauty](#)

30 June: [Indiana Jones: Dial of Destiny](#)

30 June: [Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken](#)

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TOP STORIES #17

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Hardware

Intel 14th Gen Meteor Lake - more information leaks

It is now quite clear that we will start seeing some 14th Gen CPU's being released late 2023 to early 2024. Intel is also moving over to the new "Core" naming convention that kicks off AI-focused 14th Gen technology. You can read up on a lot more confusing detail [here](#)!

Microsoft

Windows 11 moment 3

With Windows 11 Moment 3 being [trickled out](#), [here](#) is a nice YouTube video from Linus Tech that summarises some of the "awesome" new features.

Windows CoPilot information starts leaking

It's starting to look like CoPilot is going to be some type of re-purposed [Bing Chat in Microsoft Edge](#), but from what is leaking out about it, it is still far from ready to impressive AI magic! More on the subject [here](#).

CoPilot for Windows has also been released to the Dev Channel, so if you feeling brave you can [try it out](#). There is a guide on how to enable it [here](#).

Requirements for M365 CoPilot (early information)

[Here](#) is a detailed story about what we can expect from M365 CoPilot. At a high level it looks like the AI functionality will be an add-on to E3 and E5 licenses. It also looks like there will be requirements relating to Information Governance in addition to a Microsoft Loop account. Microsoft has a lot of hoops to get through before it can be released including making sure they are not breaking European Data Boundary rules.

Security

There is always a new way to hack you!

[A bug has been found in Teams](#) that can allow malware to be delivered bypassing all your current security measures. It still depends on tricking you to click on a link that you think came from within your company.

It is a good example that you can never be careful enough, ever!

Cloud & AI

Meet the Huddly Crew.

This revolutionary AI-powered system transforms your meetings into engaging and dynamic conversations. The Huddly Crew uses three cameras mounted on the sides and top of the screen to track the speakers and cut between them seamlessly, just like a professional TV show. You can see the facial expressions and gestures of everyone in the room, making you feel more connected and involved. The Huddly Crew won the "best of Infocomm" award from [RaVe Publications](#), a leading AV news source in the USA, for its innovative and practical application of AI.

Watch this video to see the Huddly Crew in action and discover why it's one of the top 23 products featured at Infocomm.

[Here is a summary](#) of the Rave top 23 products featured at Infocomm.

[Go to the 36:38 time stop](#) to see how [Huddly Crew](#) works.

There is no doubt that the big players in the industry like Logitek, Poly, etc.....will release products like this in the near future as all of us rush to upgrade our boardrooms to accommodate the AI-enabled technologies that will be appearing in the next 2 years starting NOW.

VERY few of our boardrooms are actually "modern", and if you are looking to upgrade, First Technology Group has ALL the skills you would need to license, design and implement these new types of rooms for Teams, Zoom and Google Meet.

I recommend you contact your account manager to introduce you to the experts to help with this!

Movies

Now Playing: [Indiana Jones: Dial of Destiny](#) for those that grew up with Indiana Jones, you will

love it for it's nostalgia!

Now Playing: **Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken**

7 July: **Insidious: The Red Door**

7 July: **Joy Ride**

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TOP STORIES #18

With the Northern Hemisphere baking in a [really hot summer](#), the Financial year ends have passed, and many are on holiday, so the big news is a bit lacking, but as always there is still News!

If this mail has been forwarded to you, you can subscribe to it [here](#).

Hardware

The Ultimate Immersive "Screen"

The massive Dome in Las Vegas has started testing it's "display". It sure gives me a whole new reason to visit Las Vegas! Read more [here](#).

Intel 14th Gen Meteor Lake on Track Q4 2023

The latest leaks about the 14th Gen CPU's from Intel appear to confirm the first wave will release in Q4 of 2023 for mobile processors. These are the first AI-enabled CPU's. However, it looks like these CPU's are too far away for you to delay your purchasing plans. If these CPU's release at the end of 2023 or the beginning 2024, you will only get them in notebooks at the beginning of Q2 2024 from the big brands. [Here is the article](#) that summarises where we are with Meteor Lake and confirms that 15th Generation Arrow Lake is on track with [Lunar Lake coming a year early in 2024](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft Releases Windows 365 Frontline

This is a version of W365 targeted at frontline workers where the license is only used when logged on. When they log off the license is returned to the pool. This is only applicable in specific use cases but does establish the principle of one license shared by more than one user in a shift worker-type scenario. Read more [here](#).

Security

We know what SaaS is, but what about DaaS and RaaS?

The bad guys keep getting more clever, which of course means we always need to remain vigilant as the sophistication behind these attacks keeps getting better. A trend is that as a not-so-clever "baddie" you can actually buy a subscription to a really nasty service to steal data and cause general mayhem. You are now able to subscribe to Dropper as a Service (Daas) or Ransomware as a Service (Raas) for very low fees. Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

We are in an Industrial Revolution - outcomes are always unexpected

AI is going to irrevocably change the world in ways that only science fiction writers have probably been the best equipped to imagine. OpenAI has announced that it is forming a new team to "steer" superintelligent AI systems that will probably be "running" in less than 10 years.

Personally, I think it will be in less than 5 years. The question - how do you supervise an intelligence that is a lot more intelligent than the supervisor?

Read more [here](#).

I think this comment:

"Currently, we don't have a solution for steering or controlling a potentially superintelligent AI, and preventing it from going rogue," they write. "Our current techniques for aligning AI, such as reinforcement learning from human feedback, rely on humans' ability to supervise AI. But humans won't be able to reliably supervise AI systems much smarter than us."

.....makes me wonder if we humans are opening Pandora's box too quickly (and we will, that is human nature).

I asked Bard instead of Open AI what it thinks about all this, and it gave me a very long answer, but it ended with this conclusion (remember, this is "Bard talking"):

"I believe that it is important to have a open and honest discussion about the future of AI. We need to be aware of the potential risks, but we also need to be optimistic about the potential benefits. By working together, we can ensure that AI is a force for good in the world."

I wonder what the future holds for us.....

especially when you read a [Gartner research paper on how many analysts think AI](#) and analytics are critical to the success of companies.

Movies

Mission Impossible is destined to break attendance records. Let's see how it plays out. It sure looks like it is going to be amazing.

Now Playing: [Insidious: The Red Door](#)

Now Playing: [Joy Ride](#)

14 July: [Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning: Part 1](#)

14 July: [Boonie Bears Guardians Code: You're Next](#)

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TOP STORIES #19

Microsoft has been surprisingly busy, with some more information about CoPilot leaking out. If you have been forwarded this mail and would like to subscribe, click [here](#).

Hardware

PC Sales are still slowing, so good time to look for deals

Now may be a good time for deals for both Intel 12th and 13th Generation computers. 14th Generation Meteor Lake is coming, but you can get the same performance from the older generation computers by making sure you are getting a powerful GPU with the computer for AI-based tasks (and gaming of course). Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 23H2 Coming Soon

[Here is quite a lot of detail](#) on what to expect with Win 11 23H2 which will be released as an enablement package and will be "underwhelming". Microsoft is urging users to upgrade to Windows 11 Now rather than wait. This is possibly laying the ground for an [early release of Windows 12](#).

An interesting change is that Windows 10 IoT will now be available through volume licensing from the 1st of August, but do not expect any price benefits vs. the OEM channel. It is essential to check with your First Tech. AM to confirm applicability as well.

Office getting a new Default font

Last updated in 2007, Microsoft has decided to [change to a new more modern font](#). This is actually a big deal as choosing the right font has a big impact on readability. [Here is an interesting paper](#) on the different types of fonts and how you should apply them. Personally, I like Neo-Grotesque for Headings and Humanist for Body.

Will I have to Pay extra for CoPilot?

Probably yes.....

Microsoft held an "Ask me Anything" event for CoPilot and has shed some more light on what to expect. One thing was confirmed is as follows:

"Microsoft 365 Copilot will be an *add-on license available for Microsoft E3, E5, Business Standard, and Business Premium customers to begin*".

When it comes to using it with Outlook, Microsoft commented:

"Copilot works in the Web apps." However, when using it with Outlook, organizations will need to use "the New Outlook or the web app"

Hopefully, this will change as many organisations have invested in the standard Outlook with many add-ins and add-ons.

There is a lot more [detail to be found here](#).

Microsoft Continues to Improve Teams

Microsoft has announced new tweaks to Teams coming soon that will make it even easier to use with conferencing calls.

Azure AD changes name

Microsoft has changed the name to Entra ID. Read more [here](#). You can find an extremely useful map that provides an overview of the Microsoft Entra identity and access management platform. Read more [here](#). Note it is 2 pages.

Security

USB Malware on the rise

There appears to be a spike in USB-based malware incidents, [so watch out!](#)

Cloud & AI

Is the ChatGPT Honeymoon over?

It seems that the use of GPT-4 is starting to decline as the initial thrill of talking to an AI starts wearing off, along with reports of GPT-4 [losing some of its intelligence](#). The bigger picture is that there are many other AI tools and bots coming to the market along with Bard steadily growing up and [even finding a voice!](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning: Part 1](#)

Now Playing: [Boonie Bears Guardians Code: You're Next](#)

21 July: [Oppenheimer](#)

21 July: [Barbie](#)

21 July: [Resident Evil: Death Island](#)

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TOP STORIES #20

It's quite a busy week, especially for Microsoft which had its annual Inspire event where it made many announcements for its new financial year, and of course, it was all about AI!

Hardware

Intel Arrow Lake could beat Macbook Air

Meteor Lake is not even released to OEM's in production and already we are hearing about the 15th generation Arrow Lake CPU's that will have a massive improvement over what we are seeing today. These CPU's will be 1st generation of fully enabled AI CPUs.

You can read more [here](#).

Microsoft

CoPilot gets a price!

Along with the annual [Inspire event](#) of Microsoft where we saw impressive demos of what to expect in CoPilot, we also got an idea of the price! **\$30 per user per month Microsoft 365 E3, E5, Business Standard and Business Premium customers.**

This could almost double your Microsoft bill!

We need to consider why this appears to be so expensive, and maybe we will have no choice to take evaluating CoPilot seriously because of the efficiencies it may bring to our businesses. If a competitor adopts it, and can end up doing more with less, that can be a problem.....

I think we need to jump down this rabbit hole ASAP, but consider the [VentureBeat article](#) below. [Read more here](#).

AI for Execs. Some thoughts

VentureBeat [has published an interesting article](#) on how you should start testing AI in your business. Start small, and never forget human oversight!

Bing Chat now Enterprise Ready.

Microsoft has announced that this is now ready for enterprise with appropriate privacy and governance controls. [Read more here](#).

AI CoPilot products are shown off at Inspire.

Microsoft showed off AI capabilities being added to many product lines in Power BI, Sales, Dynamics, Security, Bing Chat and Power Automate. You can read a lot more [here](#).

Teams can put your makeup on for you.

This must be one of the strangest features yet! With the Maybelline Beauty App. you can apply the necessary beauty features to suit your style. [Read more here!](#)

Microsoft 365 Backup and Archive announced

Microsoft 365 Backup and Microsoft 365 Archive are two data backup solutions for the Microsoft Cloud that were announced at Inspire this week. [Read more here](#).

Microsoft Teams is rolling out a major security update to keep your data safe.

Teams has up to now been a weak spot when it comes to security allowing the bad guys to bypass most existing security measures. This is now getting more secure with these now updates rolling out. [Read more here](#).

Security

WormGPT - the dark side of AI

This is a serious "heads-up" that you need to be aware of the bad side of AI. [Deepfakes](#) are just a part of the problem. Read [this article](#) to remind you that you cannot, EVER let down your guard.

Hackers pretending to be the good guys can catch you out

[Here is a story about a new way of attacking you](#) pretending to be a reputable cybersecurity company. The lesson is to always ALWAYS be alert and suspicious.

Microsoft opens security logs to all.

Microsoft will expand access to security log data to all. [Read more here](#).

Cloud & AI

AI can make for a good detective

We will see new applications for AI popping up every day, and [here is another one](#) that successfully nabbed a drug trafficker using GPS data, traffic camera footage, and social media posts. The problem is that AI can be used to track people for many other reasons—something to ponder.

ChatGPT gets a memory

A new update to chatGPT now allows it to remember who you are and what you like. Read more detail [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Oppenheimer](#)

Now Playing: [Barbie](#)

Now Playing: [Resident Evil: Death Island](#)

28 July: [Master Gardener](#)

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TOP STORIES #21

If you want to subscribe to this maillist, click [here](#).

Most of the attention this week was focused on the [Samsung Unpacked](#) event, but even so, a little news still trickled out.....

Hardware

Intel Arrow Lake on track

This is good news for Intel, as AMD is hot on Intel's heels with the Ryzen 8000 series. Read more about the race [here](#). Further good news is that Intel is on track with Granit Rapids and Sierra Forest processors on 3nm for 2024. There are processors for the datacenter. Read more about that [here](#).

Microsoft

Teams being made easier to use on Mobile devices

Good news is that Microsoft is making changes to the layout making it easier to navigate. Read more about what is coming [here](#).

What to Expect from Windows 23H2

[Here is a summary of what to expect in 23H2](#), which is not expected to be that impressive, but is more about incremental improvements in making it easier to use with ongoing security improvements. We can expect it around October, maybe Sooner.

CoPilot is going to start getting supercharged

Windows 11 CoPilot has only just entered testing, and Microsoft will slowly increase it's intelligence as it learns how to best harness the power to allow you to use Windows more intuitively. Read more [here](#).

It is very important to start "kicking the tyres of AI" to see how it can start helping the people in your business work more efficiently. Getting on board early is so important, so I recommend you go to this site [here](#), where you can make contact with our division, First Digital to help start with this journey along the path to understanding how AI can enable your business and your people. [Here is an interesting article to ponder](#) about how AI is fundamentally altering the business landscape.

Security

Fraud GPT

Another bot has been created to do nasty things like WormGPT. Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

Watch out for ChatGPT scams.

Unfortunately, scams are getting harder to detect because ChatGPT is helping scammers do a way better job of fooling you. [Here](#) is a nice summary of all the main types of ChatGPT type scams, apps and extensions you should be watching out for.

Movies

Oppenheimer and Barbie together made some firsts in the record books. Oppenheimer is a must-see in an IMAX - the best one in Jhb and Pta is in the Mall of Africa. Book a seat in the middle, one-third up from the front of the screen.

Now Playing: [Master Gardener](#)

04 August: [Haunted Mansion](#)

04 August: [Meg 2, The Trench](#)

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TOP STORIES #22

It's a busy week for some Microsoft licensing changes and announcements, amongst other more routine news.

If colleagues want to receive this newsletter, they can click [here](#) to subscribe.

Hardware

Details about Intel's Meteor Lake emerge

It seems that these new CPU's are going to give us impressive performance with embedded AI acceleration capability. Read more [here](#), with even more detail [here](#).

Intel is very upbeat about this new generation and is saying that this generation is as important as when it introduced integrated WiFi 2 decades ago, read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Limits on storage for Education customers to be imposed

From 1 August 2024, all school tenants will be limited to 100TB of pooled storage, and the A1 Plus program will be retired. Read more [here](#).

It makes sense, if you had access to unlimited storage on a decently fast [connection](#), would you not feel tempted to use it for backing up loads of private stuff? This is probably becoming too much for Microsoft to support "free".

Some users now allowed to Office 365 in AWS

It seems that Microsoft is now allowing customers to run Office 365 in AWS, but you still need M365E3, NOT O365E3 to be able to do that. Read more [here](#).

Power Automate Mining is now available

Microsoft has announced that Power Automate Process Mining is now available.

A Power Automate Premium licence is required, which offers 50 MB of Process Mining Data Storage.

Each additional license purchased provides an extra 50 MB, up to a limit of 100 GB per client. Beyond this point, customers can buy a Power Automate Process Mining Add-on license, which provides an additional 100 GB of Data Storage at a monthly cost of \$5,000.

The announcement from Microsoft is [here](#), with licensing information [here](#), and guidance on pricing [here](#).

Teams Essentials and Teams Phone Bundle offers

Microsoft has unveiled special offer prices for Teams Essentials and Teams Phone bundles available to clients in the US, Canada, and the UK. Businesses can opt for Teams Essentials coupled with just Teams Phone Standard, a Domestic or International Calling Plan, or pay-as-you-go calling. Alternatively, customers can add these Teams Phone options to their current Teams Essentials licenses at a discounted rate. The announcement is [here](#), with details on the promotion [here](#).

Power Apps License renamed to Premium

Microsoft has changed the naming convention for Power Apps licensing - the Power Apps per User licence has been rebranded as the Power Apps Premium licence. This is the only modification, with the cost still being \$20 per user per month, enabling the licensed user to have unlimited access to apps and Power Pages websites. The licence continues to encompass Dataverse capacity and AI Builder service credits. More details can be found [here](#).

Viva Pulse is now available

Microsoft has announced the launch of Viva Pulse, a new tool designed to assist bosses in collecting frequent and confidential feedback regarding their team's experience. **This new application is included in the existing Viva Suite**, which costs \$12 per user per month. The announcement by Microsoft is [here](#), and a comparison sheet can be found below:

Experience Area	Viva App	Features	Base Score			Add-on Scores											
			Microsoft 365 / Office 365 Plan	Microsoft 365 / Office 365 Plan	Microsoft 365 / Office 365 Plan	Viva Suite (30 team seats)	Viva Suite w/ Glim (30 team seats)	Viva Learning (30 team seats)	Viva Topics (30 team seats)	Viva Insights (30 team seats)	Viva Goals (30 team seats)	Glim (30 team seats)	Viva Sales (30 team seats)				
Connection: Employee communications and communities	Viva Connections	Viva Conversation Dashboard, Feed, Newsfeed, and Teams app	•	•	•												
	Viva Engage	Communities, Conversations, Storyline, Advanced Security, Crisis Communications, Leadership Corner, AMAs, Storyline, Delegates posting, Advanced Analytics	•	•	•												
Growth: Learning and knowledge management	Viva Learning	Viva Learning app in Teams, Course learning tabs in Teams channels, Search offers, and chat about learning content, Microsoft Learn and MSO Training Enable + ISD app, LinkedIn Learning courses, Organization generated content with CoachHub and Viva Learning, Course recommendations and progress tracking, Surface learning content across the Microsoft 365 suite	•	•	•												
	Viva Topics	Integration with partner content providers accelerating management systems, Expertise identification, Topic cards and pages, Answers in this, Semantic search	•	•	•												
Insights: Analyze work and employee feedback	Viva Insights	Viva Insights app in Teams, Personal insights and experiences, Patterns personal insights and experiences, Manager and leader insights and experiences, Analyst workflow tools and accelerators	•	•	•												
	Viva Goals	Viva Goals app in Teams, Creation and management of Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), OKR workflows and customizable OKR dashboards	•	•	•												
Purpose: Goal setting and OKR management	Viva Goals	Project and task integration, data integration (e.g., Tableau, the Zentao, Jira list view)	•	•	•												
	Glim*	Employee engagement survey, 360 feedback, employee lifecycle	•	•	•												
Role-based experiences	Viva Sales	CRM Connectivity (Dynamics and Salesforce), Conversation Intelligence	•	•	•												

*Microsoft 365 Enterprise, Business Standard and Business Premium
 *Introduction price effective through June 30, 2023. Standard price of \$1000/month for Viva Suite and \$1500/month for Viva Suite with Glim effective beginning July 1, 2023.
 *Subject to Microsoft's Standard Terms of License. See <https://www.microsoft.com/licensing/terms> for details.
 *To take full advantage of Viva Suite, you need to be an admin.
 *To take full advantage of Viva Suite, you need to be an admin.
 *To take full advantage of Viva Suite, you need to be an admin.
 *To take full advantage of Viva Suite, you need to be an admin.
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See the latest information on Microsoft Viva plans and pricing at <https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-viva/pricing>

It is recommended that you get in touch with our division in First Digital which specialises in Viva [here](#) to see how this can be best used in your business to improve efficiency.

Windows 365 FrontLine is generally available.

Microsoft has announced General availability of Windows 365 Frontline. Users must hold licenses for Windows 11 Enterprise, Microsoft Intune, and Azure Active Directory Premium Plan 1.

Pricing for Windows 365 Frontline begins at \$42 per month for every three users.

Pricing for the 11 different configurations can be found [here](#).

The detailed Microsoft announcement can be found [here](#).

Like with the rest of the Windows family licensing, Windows 365 Frontline offers a customized Cloud PC (comprising of Windows, apps, data, and settings) to users, specifically targeting shift workers within an organization.

Every license acquired permits a company to create 3 Cloud PCs, effectively accommodating 3 employees working 8-hour shifts within a 24-hour span. It's important to note that the quantity of individuals using a Windows 365 Frontline Cloud PC at a given moment cannot exceed the number of licenses obtained.

Therefore, if you operate 3 shifts with 110, 90, and 100 workers respectively, you'd need to buy 110 Windows 365 Frontline licenses. This would enable you to deploy 330 Cloud PCs, with a maximum of 110 being used simultaneously.

Microsoft Loop Now available from the App Store.

Loop can be downloaded from the App Store, but you need to ask your admin to activate it. Read more [here](#).

Security

Abusing Employee Trust

This method of phishing is particularly nasty as it completely abuses the employee's trust in an email from HR. As always you have to be on the alert for increasingly nasty attacks made to look even more professional with the help of AI. Applying common sense before you click on a link in an email will save you many times!
 Read more about this nasty one [here](#).

Cloud & AI

OpenAI adds new features to ChatGPT

Tweaks have been introduced to make the interface easier to use, especially for beginners. Read about all the new tweaks [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: **Haunted Mansion**

Now Playing: **Meg 2, The Trench**

11 August: **Gran Turismo**

11 August: **Sarafina**

11 August: **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem**

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TOP STORIES #23

It's starting to heat up on the Intel front where we are soon going to be learning about all the details about Meteor Lake - the 1st CPU to usher in AI capability inside the CPU. This means you will be able to buy notebooks that are "AI enabled" but are not gaming machines. Quite a few stories on Microsoft.

If colleagues want to subscribe to this newsletter, ask them to click [here](#).

Hardware

Intel Lunar Lake may bring huge performance improvements

Intel's upcoming Lunar Lake processor is expected to offer significant performance improvements over Meteor Lake, thanks to its all-new microarchitectures and disaggregated multi-chiplet design.

Lunar Lake will use two new core types: Lion Cove and Skymont, which are designed for high performance and energy efficiency respectively. This could lead to up to 20% higher IPC (instructions per clock) on Lion Cove cores, up to 30% lower power consumption on Skymont cores, and up to 50% higher overall performance. Read more [here](#).

Raptor Lake Refresh looking good!

Though this is just a refresh of the current 13th Gen desktop CPU's early performance data leaks are promising. Read more [here](#).

Intel Meteor Lake Launching in September

Intel will be revealing what this new generation of CPU's is going to be doing for AI while being more power efficient. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft adds AI Service limits in September Services Agreement

[The Microsoft Services Agreement](#) is the final set of rules as to what you are permitted (or not) when it comes to your usage of Online Services. Unless your contract specifically amends what is published here, this is what applied.

The most important piece to take note of is the five rules of AI, namely: **Users of Microsoft AI Services may not attempt to reverse engineer the services to explore components or rulesets. Microsoft prohibits furthermore that users extract data from AI services and the use of data from Microsoft's AI Services to train other AI services. In the last two rules, Microsoft states it will process and store your inputs to prevent abuse, and of course, YOU are responsible for any third-party claims.**

You can read up on the gory detail [here](#).

You will notice that Outlook.com storage is now part of your OneDrive Storage Quota.

Microsoft announces multiple improvements across enterprise security products

The improvements include Google Cloud Platform support in Microsoft Defender for Cloud (coming on Aug. 15), the ability of Microsoft Defender for Storage to scan for malware (starting in Sept. 1) and the availability of a new **Microsoft Defender Vulnerability Management "Standalone"** product. Get all the detail [here](#).

Microsoft Authenticator will soon provide codes via WhatsApp

It may take awhile to get to South Africa, but you can read more [here](#).

Patch Tuesday fixed Display issues

Along with the usual security updates, Microsoft [included some fixes](#).

Teams (Premium) to allow for fancier backgrounds

Microsoft is working on a new tool to personalise your backgrounds, but this will only be available in Teams Premium. Read more [here](#).

Using Edge Split Screen feature with Grammarly in Windows 11

[This article shows you how](#) to use Grammarly effectively in Windows 11, including using the Edge Split Screen feature, which of course can be used for anything.

Updated Power Platform Licensing guide

Microsoft has updated the guide to include changes to Power Automate licensing and Power Apps

Premium along with the availability of Power Automate Process Mining. You can download the PDF [here](#).

Security

Microsoft 365 users targeted by major phishing campaign

As always the best defence is to be always alert, and not to give into clicking links that download files. Read more [here](#)

Cloud & AI

How AI innovation can drive 10X growth in enterprises

I think many of us were surprised when Microsoft Announced CoPilot as an add-on to M365E3/5 for \$360 per year. Though there may be many reasons for this price, including that Microsoft wants to discourage too rapid adoption of AI services as it upgrades it's datacenters worldwide by making it appear very expensive. But what if that price is "cheap" compared with the benefits it may bring? [Here is an interesting article](#) about how AI can drive extraordinary growth in Enterprises.

What to expect for GPT-5

It's early days, but already there are some articles speculating what GPT-5 will be doing different from the previous generations. Read [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Gran Turismo](#)

Now Playing: [Sarafina](#)

Now Playing: [Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem](#)

18 August: [Blue Beetle](#)

18 August: [Last Voyage of the Demeter](#)

18 August: [Doraemon The Movie: Nobita's Sky Utopia](#)

18 August: [Old Boy Remastered](#)

18 August: [Sound of Freedom](#)

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TOP STORIES #24

There is a lot on the Microsoft front, note in particular everything that is being renamed to Entra. If colleagues want to subscribe to this newsletter, they can click on [this link](#).

Hardware

More information leaks about 15th Gen Arrow Lake

We have not even seen 14th Meteor Lake Generally available, and already we are starting to get more detail on what to expect with Arrow Lake. and the [improvements seem to be significant](#).

Microsoft

Guess Who has the longest terms of Services agreement?

[Here is a graphical view](#) of how long these contracts take to read which we happily agree to *without* reading.

To give an idea, you can get through the entire Shakespeare Macbeth in about the same time will take you to read the [Microsoft Service Terms](#), and you will probably understand Macbeth better! To Microsoft's credit, the language does not require you to have a college degree to understand it as it scores quite well on the Flesch Reading-Ease Test.

Microsoft also helpfully tells you about the changes so you do not have to wade through the document to figure out what has changed.

Bing Chat Enterprise and Viva Sales CoPilot available.

Bing Chat Enterprise will be included in M365E3/E5, Windows CoPilot and standalone for \$5 per month. Read more [here](#) and [here](#), and for Sales CoPilot [here](#).

Entra Suite Expands

The family continues to grow, where you can find a summary of what's released and what's coming [here](#) with the available plans and pricing [here](#). The articles are quite lengthy, so a summary of what's available is below:

- **Microsoft Entra ID** – available in a free edition, Plan 1 costing \$6 per user per month, or Plan 2 costing \$9 per user per month. The [plan comparison document is here](#) to see where it's included in EMS and Microsoft 365 licences.
- **Microsoft Entra ID Governance** – available @ \$7 per user per month
- **Microsoft Entra External ID** – currently in public preview
- **Microsoft Entra Verified ID** – included with any Microsoft Entra ID licence, as well as the free one.
- **Microsoft Entra Permissions Management** – available @ \$10.40 per resource per month.
- **Microsoft Entra Workload ID** – available costing \$3 per workload identity per month.
- **Microsoft Entra Internet Access** – in preview.
- **Microsoft Entra Private Access** – in preview

CoPilot - where are we now?

This is what we currently know about CoPilot licensing.....

- **Windows Copilot** will feature in Windows 11 with a preview version available this year. More details can be found [here](#).
- **Bing Chat Enterprise** is presently in its preview phase and will be part of Microsoft 365 E3/E5 and Microsoft 365 Business Standard/Premium packages. **Upon its official launch, it will also be sold separately at a rate of \$5 per user monthly**, and can be accessed via Windows Copilot. Additionally, **Microsoft 365 Copilot, currently in preview, will be available as a \$30 per user monthly add-on for Microsoft 365 E3/E5 and Microsoft 365 Business Standard/Premium subscribers**. More on Bing Chat Enterprise and Microsoft 365 Copilot can be found [here](#).
- **Sales Copilot**, which incorporates Viva Sales features, is now widely accessible both as a separate license and as an inclusion for Dynamics 365 Sales Enterprise/Premium license holders. More information can be found [here](#).

Microsoft Dynamics Licensing Guide

There is a new guide for August with two additions:

100 invoice capture transaction allowance is added to Finance, Project Operations, Commerce, Supply Chain Management and Electronic Invoicing Add-on Capacity licenses. This automates

the Accounts Payable invoice-to-pay process. Read more [here](#).

Clipchamp now part of M365E3/E5

Clipchamp is a tool to help create professional videos and will now be available as part of the M365E3/E5 and Business standard and Premium licenses from the end of August. The announcement is [here](#) with the product information page [here](#).

Security

Email Phishing is getting better at fooling you

Don't ever think you are too clever to be caught, and that you have "protection". Almost 90% of all unwanted messages still get through. Always, always THINK before you click, read more [here](#).

Ransomware is still around.

This is now maturing into a service that you can pay for to carry out an attack, and increasingly it is about stealing data, and even bothering to do the encryption bit. Read more on the latest trend [here](#).

Cloud & AI

The Augmented Workforce

From the very beginning when ChatGPT was released, I have stressed that we are seeing the start of an [industrial revolution](#) that will impact us harder and faster than any other that the human race has been through over thousands of years.

One of the ways we will directly feel the impact is when AI will lead to employers favouring employing people who can use AI to support their job over others that cannot. This creates situations where employers need to figure out what to do next.

UK executives believe that 41% of their workforce will need to be reskilled over the next three years as AI comes into play, with developing new skills topping the list of the most pressing issues. Second was the concern over technological illiteracy.

[Here](#) is an interesting article from IBM that talks about the challenges employers face with having an Augmented workforce.

OpenAI running out of money?

Not all is going well for AI. Even though the genie is out of the bottle, OpenAI may be faced with problems making enough money to stay afloat. Somehow I think it will stay afloat no matter what, especially if Microsoft absorbs it and it becomes a Microsoft-owned business. Read more [here](#).

Windows CoPilot AI ready for preview

This is now available for early adopters. You can [read here](#) on how to enable it.

Movies

Now Playing: [Blue Beetle](#)

Now Playing: [Last Voyage of the Demeter](#)

Now Playing: [Doraemon The Movie: Nobita's Sky Utopia](#)

Now Playing: [Old Boy Remastered](#)

Now Playing: [Sound of Freedom](#)

25 August: [COBWEB](#) (already Streaming)

25 August: [Golda](#)

25 August: [Back on the Strip](#)

25 August: [Retribution](#)

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TOP STORIES #25

There is not much in the news this week unless you are a gamer who has been following GamesCom. One of the [big announcements from SAMSUNG](#) was the release of the 57" Odyssey and an updated ARK. If colleagues are interested in subscribing, they can click on [this link](#).

Hardware

WiFi 7 support only for Windows 11

It seems that Intel is planning to only [support WiFi 7 for Windows 11](#). This makes sense as WiFi 7 will only be mainstream in 2025, when Windows 10 comes to the end of its life, especially since there is a chance that Windows 12 may appear early in 2024. This is a very good reminder that it is time to start thinking seriously about migrating your fleet to Windows 11, or wait for Windows 12 and migrate straight to it.

Microsoft

New controls for Windows 11 updates

That's a good thing! With the latest update, some systems blue-screened with an "unsupported processor" message. [Read more here](#) about the new controls to avoid these situations.

Real-time Teams Calendar Sync problem solved

Personally, I've had some problems with calendars syncing, and [this update](#) looks like it will solve that embarrassing problem

Edge for Business is now available

This release which should already have been updated on your computer which separates your Business and Personal browsing experiences. Read more [here](#). It is important to be more mindful of your personal world overlapping with your business world because when CoPilot is fully functional it needs to know the difference, it will initially be smart enough to figure it out itself.

Libre Office 7.6 has been released

[Here is an interesting article](#) that reflects on the history of Microsoft Office, OpenOffice, WordPerfect Office and many others. What is clear is that Microsoft remains the clear leader, and will be even more in a leadership position when it launches CoPilot integrated across the entire ecosystem. Don't expect prices to come down anytime soon! This infusion of AI is already [starting with Windows 11](#).

Is Microsoft Co-Pilot worth the high price?

The first impression is that CoPilot at \$360 per year on top of what you are already spending is that it is really expensive, but in the bigger picture of the difference it could make, maybe it is not. [Here is an interesting perspective on the value proposition](#) which concludes: *"There will be some users who are able to benefit tremendously from using Copilot and others who might not see any benefit at all. As such, my advice would be to purchase Copilot licenses for the users who can get the most benefit from Copilot, rather than simply purchasing Copilot licenses for all of your Microsoft 365 users"* Also remember we have not actually started using it yet! (Except for the few on POC's).

Security

Make sure WinRAR is up to date

A few people have been unlucky in getting compromised. It is a good reminder that your computer and ALL utilities that you use are up to date read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

IBM uses AI to rewrite COBOL in Java

[This is a great example](#) where human-assisted AI is going to make a big difference in re-writing COBOL which is now 60 years old.

Movies

Now Playing: [COBWEB](#) (already Streaming)

Now Playing: **Golda**
Now Playing: **Back on the Strip**
Now Playing: **Retribution**
1 September: **Equalizer 3: The Final Chapter**

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TOP STORIES #26

A couple of big stories here to do with Microsoft removing software, Google Launching DUET and OpenAI getting ready for the enterprise.

If colleagues want to join this newsletter they can click [here](#).

As you are reading all this below - pause to ponder that 2025 is only 2 years (and a bit) away.

Hardware

Intel Meteor Lake will extend battery life

The new generation of CPU's with a VPU to process AI workloads will also include intelligence to extend your notebook's battery life. What you are getting is AI processing capability without power-hungry external GPU's but also AI to make the overall CPU work more efficiently. You can read more about this [here](#).

In the bigger scheme of things Gen 14, Meteor Lake is Gen. 1 of our new AI roadmap!

Thunderbolt 4 - What to know

Thunderbolt 4 is rapidly becoming the standard for most new computers from the 13th generation of CPUs onward. Although TB4 is not really faster than TB3, the specifications are more rigid including full backward compatibility. You can read more about understanding TB 4's specifications [here](#). It is very important when writing your specification for a new round of notebook purchases you insist that they must support TB4 as we may very well see TB5 at double the capability by 2025 for external devices that will be downward compatible with old "legacy" TB 4 notebooks.

Microsoft

WordPad is to be removed from Windows

[WordPad will be removed from Windows in the future](#). This has been part of the Operating System since Windows 95 - it has been around for longer than Google has been a company! Google is only 25 years old this year!

WordPad was really Microsoft's "Free" Word Processor, but for the future, you must use O365 or if you want something free, then there are many other options like LibreOffice.

Teams to be Removed from O365 (in EU and Switzerland)

This move is [in response to addressing EU competition concerns](#).

Microsoft has announced that Teams will now be unbundled from O365 and will be available separately for \$60 per year, but the price of Office 365 is reduced by \$24 per year. Teams Essentials has had its pricing adjusted as well, as per the FAQ [here](#).

It does not appear that South Africa (or the UK for that matter) will fall under the changes for the EU, but we still need to get official confirmation.

It is still early days, and we are still to get an official reaction from the EU, Slack and others, though the Coalition for Fair Software Licensing has already published commentary [here](#),

It gets more complicated for companies that have existing agreements and have divisions in other parts of the world, as you will have to elect to switch to the new unbundled SKU's.

For more details on this interesting development, you can read more [here](#), and of course, The Register has its [own take on this affair](#).

Security

One for the Good Guys

FBI has taken down one of the biggest botnets in the world.

Sometimes one needs to hear about the goods guys - read more about this [here](#).

Cloud & AI

Google Doc's Gets Proofreading as part of DUET

Google's advanced features are now available as Duet which is also priced the same as Microsoft's CoPilot at \$360 per year. An interesting part of [Duet's skills is the proofreading capability](#) that may well give Grammarly a run for it's money, though Grammarly has a very good free offering. It's still early days, and Duet's value proposition is [still a bit confusing for now](#). There is also a video on some of the features which you can [watch here](#) which will remind you a bit of CoPilot can also do, and more on how it stacks up against CoPilot [here](#).

OpenAI Launches ChatGPT Enterprise

OpenAI has launched a version of GPT-4 for companies that removes all usage caps and expands the context Window to 32K (about 24K Words) with all communication encrypted. Read more on whats to offer [here](#).

AI will shape future jobs

According to the World Economic Forum 50% of employees will need re-skilling by 2025 as the adoption of technology increases with AI already having a big impact. This is an interesting article to read [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Equalizer 3: The Final Chapter](#)

8 September: [My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3](#)

8 September: [Nun 2](#)

8 September: [Jawan](#)

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TOP STORIES #27

I have added a new section to the letter "**What's New at FTG**". This tells you about what upcoming events are being planned by First Technology Group (FTG) divisions. Sometimes it's difficult to know what's going on in the group that might be of interest to you, so I'm putting everything in one place. If you would like colleagues to join this newsletter, all they have to do is click [here](#) to subscribe.

It is a relatively quiet week unless you are a gamer! The Gamer world is flooded with stories about Starfield, though Intel is having challenges with getting it's GPU's to work with Starfield. The interest in Starfield is impressive - with [6 million players by day 2](#), Bethesda's biggest launch ever.

Hardware

The Ultimate Display

When I first got into computers as a teenager in the late 70's with the Sharp MZ-80K (my first computer), all I knew was the green screen CRT monitor. By the late 80's LCD started to replace CRT very slowly, and then in the 90's Plasma Displays were considered better than LCD for TV's.

This was followed by OLED in the 2000's improving contrast ratios and viewing angles, while LCD has continued to improve reaching impressive levels of quality. We also had a brief boom of 3D only to disappear entirely in 2016, remaining only in cinema.

Now we are starting to see what will probably be the ultimate in 2D flat panel technology before we start seeing [Wave Field Display technologies](#) in the next 15 years.

This is called MicroLED, brighter than LCD and longer lasting than OLED with no burn-in and infinite contrast ratio. You can even buy a MicroLED TV from LG today for \$237 000, but it is going to take a while for Micro-LED to reach realistic price levels.

LCD continues to improve in brightness and quality, but will never reach the levels of brightness and quality you will get from MicroLED, but still, the latest in Mini-LED LCD TV's are very impressive indeed (with prices less insane). Read [here](#).

To learn more about a Micro-LED TV that costs about the same as a pretty decent house, read [here](#). Note the speakers are optional for another \$80K.

Microsoft

Microsoft will defend you Against CoPilot copyright issues, But.....

This is quite a big deal! If you are looking to deploy AI in your company, a big concern is if you could end up with copyright issues. Microsoft has now announced that the company will protect you, but there is a catch...

You must correctly use the guardrails that Microsoft has implemented to prevent it's AI from returning copyright-infringing content, and only the paid versions are protected.

What is becoming very clear is that you need a [partner expert in this field](#) to help ensure CoPilot is deployed correctly. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft has also updated it's Services agreement effective 30 September [here](#).

Windows 11 23H2 is (almost) here

It is the first real start of the journey to Microsoft's AI future with the first limited inclusion of CoPilot for Windows. We can expect 23H2 somewhere in September or October. You can read a review [here](#).

Office 2019 & 2021 get Aptos fonts too

Contrary to Microsoft's statements, it appears that the new fonts have been added to Office 2019 & 2021.

Read more about the discovery [here](#).

Cloud & AI

It is not just about ChatGPT, Bing, DUET Here is CLAUDE!

Anthropic has launched Claude Pro which is similar to ChatGPT, and professes to be highly intelligent, able to pass many exams, and allows you to have human-like conversations with it. It is promising a much larger context window allowing even a large book to be ingested for insights you may be looking for. Read more [here](#).

Zoom Launches AI Companion

If someone joins a meeting late, the AI companion will help them catch up and also answer specific questions about the meeting content, generate summaries, etc....

Zoom uses multiple Language Models allowing users to benefit from the best for a specific need. Read more [here](#).

Security

Targeted Hacking of Microsoft 365 Accounts

This is a lesson in that nobody is 100% safe.

You have to keep making sure you are always on top of your security policies being in place and continuously updated with help from security experts. Read more [here about this 365-targeted attack](#).

What's New at FTG

Microsoft Mastery Day

BUI in partnership with Torque IT and [The CRM Team](#) is excited to extend a warm invitation to you for a remarkable event that promises to redefine your IT journey. We proudly present

Microsoft Mastery Day "Empower IT: Navigating the Microsoft Universe - Cyber Security, AI, Copilot, Power BI & Beyond", an immersive day of exploration and learning.

Spending the day with some of the top experts in the country is highly recommended if you want to get a good picture of how the sometimes confusing worlds of Microsoft Security, CoPilot and Power BI integrate.

When

19 Sept. '23, Time: 8:00am - 3:00pm,

Where

Torque IT Western Services Road, Gallo Manor. [Register Here](#), [Programme Here](#)

Code Like a Captain

Take your application management to the next level.

learn how to harness the power of Azure Insights and Co-Pilot to monitor, analyse, and optimize your applications seamlessly with [First Digital](#).

When

14 Sept '23, Time: 10:00am to 11:00am

Where

Online - register [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3](#)

Now Playing: [Nun 2](#)

Now Playing: [Jawan](#)

15 September: [A Haunting in Venice](#)

15 September: [Talk to Me](#)

15 September: [First Slam Dunk](#)

15 September: [Headspace](#)

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TOP STORIES #28

The news this week was dominated by the Apple launch of iPhone 15 - which is proving to be quite a significant upgrade. You can read about everything that happened with Apples event [here](#).

The big news on the hardware front is that Thunderbolt 5 standard has been announced - see below.

Hardware

Intel's most expensive CPU

Coming in at \$12 980 this CPU (XEON Max 9480) performs 3.7 times better than the 4th generation scalable XEON CPU's. It can even run Starfield on the CPU without external memory for 7 players! Read more [here](#).

There is an interesting YouTube video about it [here](#).

Thunderbolt 5 Released

This is a huge leap in performance over TB4 that is becoming standard in new notebooks that you buy today.

As soon as next year, with the release of Meteor Lake, you will see TB5 in computers which will give you up to TRIPLE increase in data transfer rates, AND support DP 2.1.

This interface standard is so fast it will allow you to connect external gaming GPU's to your notebook, rather than having to pay a fortune for capped-performance mobile GPU's embedded into the notebook. All AI capability you need for work will be handled by the new VPU inside the Intel CPU. TB4 will remain the standard for a few more years. [Here is a really good article](#) that takes you through all the details of the TB5 standard.

Microsoft

Outlook is Dead, Long Live Outlook

Microsoft has now announced that the Outlook we have grown used to for over 20 years, is going to be replaced with the new Outlook - actually, you can switch on a preview version of the New Outlook by switching on "Try the new Outlook" button at the top right of your Outlook app.

(DON'T do it - [read this first](#) - look for the section "Support for key Outlook features")

It is still early days, and the new Outlook cannot yet support PST's, but the new Outlook bring a big change, even when it is expected to replace the old version in about 2 years' time, which Microsoft call's "cutover" - to quote:

"But at some point, we will decide that we think that the new outlook is good enough for all users and we will interface, called "cutover." And this is where classic Outlook or universal mail and calendar are no longer supported. And so, users will have to move to the new Outlook."

COM add-ins will no longer work!

There are good reasons for Microsoft ending support of COM add-ins as they are famous for causing instability problems in Outlook, but they were a way for developers to customise Outlook to integrate with custom apps and processes in companies. Further, there are thousands of tools that use a COM add-in to work, and you may be shocked to discover just how many are running in your environment.

To read more about this announcement, read [here](#).

[First Digital](#), the development Division of First Technology Group. has put together a blog post on what you need to start thinking about in terms of finding COM add-ins, their importance in your business and what to do next, and how First Digital can help with this.

Remember, a COM add-in is the tip of the iceberg - you have to find what is hidden behind the add-in. [Read more published in the blog here](#) (it's really interesting - tells the history of COM add-ins and how they became embedded in the email ecosystem of Microsoft), and how to get in touch with at FD to start finding those add-ins and work on a modernisation plan.

Snipping Tool gets an upgrade

This tool has proven to be one of the more popular tools bundled with the operating system, and it is getting upgraded to OCR what you are snipping. Read more about it's new features [here](#).

The photos app has also been updated see [here](#).

Oracle and Microsoft working together?

In a surprise turn of events, Oracle databases will also be running in Azure. Read more [here](#).

D-Day is approaching for Windows Server 2012

Support is ending on 10 October 2023. Of course, if you move the workloads to Azure you get three years of security updates for free, but of course there are other costs.

Read more [here](#).

Offline Mode for OneDrive

Still in preview, but Microsoft is planning to support offline capability in the browser for OneDrive, not much different from Google Drive offline capability. Read more [here](#).

Sharepoint Server SE gets security and other updates.

Previous versions were also updated on Tuesday, but in addition, Antimalware has been turned on by default. Read about the updates in [detail here](#).

Cloud & AI

Adobe launches Firefly

Adobe has now launched the integration of AI across all its cloud applications. This is a big milestone for Adobe. If you are a creative interested in what Adobe is doing, read more [here](#). Of course, you can expect the price to go up, read more about that [here](#).

Microsoft CoPilot vs. Google DUET.

It is early days, but is interesting to [read an opinion on which is better](#).

In my opinion, it is hard to compare - if you are committed to Microsoft as a strategy, G-suite with DUET is not really an option, and similarly, if you are committed to Google, CoPilot is not an option.

Both are trying to do the same thing as an AI assistant, time will tell which one is better, but I think we will just be calling them "different" for now. It's very early days.

Security

Beware of Teams Phishing campaign

This is a very sophisticated campaign, take note, and read about it [here](#). It is reminder that we can never be too careful.

What's New at FTG

Microsoft Mastery Day - last chance

BUI in partnership with Torque IT and [The CRM Team](#) is excited to extend a warm invitation to you for a remarkable event that promises to redefine your IT journey. We proudly present **Microsoft Mastery Day "Empower IT: Navigating the Microsoft Universe - Cyber Security, AI, Copilot, Power BI & Beyond"**, an immersive day of exploration and learning.

Spending the day with some of the top experts in the country is highly recommended if you want to get a good picture of how the sometimes confusing worlds of Microsoft Security, CoPilot and Power BI integrate.

When

19 Sept. '23, Time: 8:00am - 3:00pm,

Where

Torque IT Western Services Road, Gallo Manor. **Register [Here](#), Programme [Here](#)**

Movies

Now Playing: [A Haunting in Venice](#)

Now Playing: [Talk to Me](#)

Now Playing: [First Slam Dunk](#)

Now Playing: [Headspace](#)

22 September: [After everything](#)

22 September: [Cats in the Museum](#)

22 September: [Expendables 4](#)

22 September: [Past Lives](#)

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TOP STORIES #29

This week we have a flood of news from Microsoft, Google, Intel, Apple and even [Amazon](#). I would say the biggest news is from Intel, and though there is a lot of news from Microsoft, there are no big surprises.

If colleagues want to join this newsletter, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

Intel announces Meteor Lake

Intel announced its newest processors at the Intel Innovation Conference on Tuesday, and unveiled details on what makes the 14th Gen CPU, Meteor Lake such a big deal.

According to Intel, this will usher in the age of the "AI PC" and it is the first CPU to have a dedicated Neural Processing Unit (NPU) to power AI-type workloads at the endpoint.

GPU performance is also **DOUBLED!** Intel is hoping to beat Apple in the performance stakes in the next few years, but I think [Apple is going to stay very hard to beat](#).

The launch date of these CPUs is the 14th of December so we can expect to see them in devices maybe 2-3 months later.

This is a HUGE leap, so if you were planning on buying a new notebook, but not in a hurry, maybe now is a good time to wait, but they will be expensive!

Of course, previous 12th and 13th-generation notebooks will probably drop in price as manufacturers try to flush out old inventory.

Read [more here](#)

Intel shows CPU Roadmap

Along with the announcement of Meteor Lake, Intel also gave us a glimpse of what to expect after Meteor Lake. Next up is Arrow Lake, then Lunar Lake, and then Panther Lake.

So here we are - buying notebooks with 13th Gen Alder Lake CPUs today, and they will be massively eclipsed by Meteor Lake CPUs in less than 6 months, and already we can be expecting to see 17th Generation CPUs on our desks in 2026 at the latest! Things are REALLY moving fast for Intel as it needs to [keep up with AMD](#) which is expected to launch the Ryzen 8000 processors mid next year.

It is now time to really start re-thinking your hardware lifecycles down to 3 years if you have not already. You can read [more about this roadmap here](#).

Intel Announced 5th Generation XEON CPUs

Imagine Servers that can give 2.5X Higher performance than anything you can get today where these new CPUs to reach a staggering core count of 432 cores!

Early next year you will be able to buy servers for your own datacenter with mindblowing processing capability over when you have - **but be careful - high core counts can cost you a LOT in licensing, so it is very important to think really carefully as to what types of CPU's you buy to get the maximum value from your licensing.**

You can read more about these new generation XEON CPU's [here](#) and [here](#).

Microsoft Shows off it's New Surface Lineup

These devices are aimed at businesses with Microsoft promising 4 years of updates for the devices, though I feel that how CPU technology is improving over the next few years, your 4-year-old device with 16 gig of RAM in it will be horribly underpowered. You can read all about what Microsoft announced [here](#).

NVIDIA 5090 to be twice as fast as the 4090

Not to be outdone, the next NVIDIA card due in 2024 seems like it is going to be insanely fast and expensive. Read more about what could be coming [here](#).

Microsoft

Windows Server 2012 ESU now available via Azure Arc

Windows Server will loose support by 10 October 2023. (It does not mean it stops working, it just means it stops getting critical patches).

Microsoft will provide ESU for 3 years and will **not** increase the price every year.

Azure Arc makes it easier to enrol these servers for ESU and can mix and match Standard and Datacenter licensing.

You can only enrol servers for ESU if they have current Software Assurance.

A LOT of detail on how this all works can be found in [this article here](#).

Windows 11 23H2 NOT releasing next week

Instead, it will be "Moment 4" update which is the new CoPilot for Windows 11 which was announced this week. Read [more about this here](#).

23H2 will probably come out in October. You can read more about what to expect in Moment 4 and 23H2 [here](#).

Apple [releases Sonoma on the same day](#) as well.

Farewell Active Directory, Long Live Entra ID

Well, at least for the cloud. This name change is to separate naming for AD on-premise and Entra ID for the cloud. For the detailed story on what is changing and what is not, and the reasoning behind the change, read [here](#).

There is also a 30mins video from Microsoft that takes you through all the details of the changes. I recommend the licensing specialists reading this [take a look at the video](#).

The "New Outlook" is released for companies, but it's still in preview!

In a surprise move, Microsoft announced that the new Outlook is generally available in spite of announcing earlier this month that it will take 2 years to get it ready for organisations given many important features are still missing. I think Microsoft has hurried this release up because some AI features may require that the new Outlook is needed. You can read up on all the detail about the announcement [here](#).

CoPilot for Business Launches November 1

Microsoft has now confirmed it's plans to bring CoPilot across all it's services for business starting from the 26th of September, culminating in the big release in November. It also has a [pretty new logo](#). Along with all this news there is also more AI capability coming to Teams as well - [read more about that here](#).

M365 for Business Plan Comparison Document - September

There is a new Plan comparison document updated for September which you can download [here](#)

Cloud & AI

Rewind - Locally powered AI to playback everything!

[Here is a demo](#) of Rewind at Intel's Annual Technology Conference. This is a stunning example of how AI can be put to use on your Meteor Lake powered computer. Rewind records everything you do and say on your computer enabling you to go back and ask questions about information you may be looking for that you cannot be sure where you saw it. Rewind will find it for you. It is impressive, and totally scary at the same time.

Intel Highlights Advances for AI and a Warning.

Intel is promoting the idea of being accessible to everybody, and be able to power AI solutions from the endpoint without the need to use massive cloud-based data centers.

The warning is that scammers will be able to impersonate you in a Zoom call so will enough it could get your parents or friends to send money to the "wrong you"! Read more [here](#).

Google gets to Read Your Gmail and more

Along with the flurry of announcements from Microsoft about CoPilot, Bard is now able to pull information from your emails and other data to make it more clever, but it won't be for free for companies, it will cost the same as Microsoft CoPilot. Read more [here](#).

Security

Breach in many apps.

Here is a reminder that the bad guys never take a day off. Here is a report on a bug that affects the WebP codec found in MANY apps. [Patches are rolling out](#), so make sure you are patched and up to date.

What's New at FTG

First Digital demonstrates how you can leverage the power of [Nintex Process Manager](#) to establish total process visibility, unearth risks and identify improvement opportunities, so you can gain control over all your business processes.

Visual process mapping software encourages company-wide collaboration, increases accountability, and will improve your processes—all with one easy-to-use platform.

When

5 October 2023, 10h00 to 11h00

Where

Online webinar, register [here](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [After everything](#)

Now Playing: [Cats in the Museum](#)

Now Playing: [Expendables 4](#)

Now Playing: [Past Lives](#)

29 September: [The Creator](#)

29 September: [SAW X](#)

29 September: [The Dive](#)

29 September: [Hans Steek Die Rubicon Oor](#)

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TOP STORIES #30

Now that all the big product launches of Intel, Microsoft, Apple etc.....are now past, this week is way quieter, giving us some opportunity to reflect on the release of Windows CoPilot along with all the confusion around the Win. 11 23H2 update which ended up not being actually being an update, but still an update (well, sort of).

If colleagues would like to receive this newsletter themselves, ask them to [click here](#) to subscribe.

Hardware

Windows 11 PC smaller than an iPhone?

An interesting side effect of how computers are becoming smaller and faster is that now you can squash everything you need to run Windows 11 into a tiny box. Read more [here](#).

Intel Meteor Lake is not for desktops in Sockets

They will not be intended for Gaming machines, read more [here](#).

Microsoft

CoPilot First Impressions.

It is early days, and it will surely improve, but [this reviewer is not impressed for now](#).

Free upgrades from Windows 7 and 8.x are coming to an end.

[Upgrades from Windows 10 to 11 are encouraged](#), especially since Windows 10 reaches EOL in October 2025 - a mere blip in time. There may still be some time left if you hurry. Read [here](#).

Why Win. 11 23H2 is not really an update (anymore).

It really just serves as a clock reset for the 24 month Support cycle for Win 11 Home, Pro and Enterprise. Read more [here](#).

What's new in the Win 11 2023 update?

[Here is what is new with the Settings app](#).

All the changes relating to Security can be found [here](#).

Microsoft font replacements for Aptos suck in Office 2016 and older.

The Publication "Office Watch" recommends that you embed fonts in the document you are sharing to users of older versions of Office (or stick to using the "old" fonts). Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT gets access to the Web

It is also very early days, and if you have an enterprise subscription [you can try it out](#). I have tried it, and I think there is a lot of room for improvement as it is not a reliable research tool yet.

Security

Beware of websites with false names that are easy to miss

[Here is the story](#) of how a piece of Malware impersonates Bitwarden to steal sensitive information from your computer - be alert ALL THE TIME!

What's New at FTG

Making Tech LIT

Join First Tech Group at the Umhlanga Convention Center to experience a dazzling array of Speakers, Exhibits and Technologies.

When

10 October 2023

Where

Umhlanga Arch Convention Center - [Register here](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [The Creator](#)

Now Playing: [SAW X](#)

Now Playing: **The Dive**
Now Playing: **Hans Steek Die Rubicon Oor**
6 October: **Exorcist: The Believer**
6 October: **Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie**

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TOP STORIES #31

It was a quiet week, with only Google having a big event - which you can read all about [here](#). If colleagues would like to receive the newsletter themselves, [click here to subscribe](#).

Hardware

Microsoft to announce it's own AI processor

Microsoft is struggling to get enough NVIDIA processors to meet its AI aspirations, which given the impending release of CoPilot will demand gigantic computing resources. To alleviate the shortage, it is rumoured Microsoft will announce this at the Ignite Conference in November. Read more [here](#).

Get \$1million if your doorcam snaps an Alien

This is too good not to share! If you have a Ring Doorbell camera, and if you capture a picture of an Alien you can win \$1 million USD, but they must show up by 3 Nov (T's & C's apply). Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Intel Drops a hint about Windows 12

This is the best indication yet that Windows 12 (or maybe it will be called Windows AI) is on track for Q4 2024. This is of course all speculation, and Microsoft has said nothing officially, but Intel did refer to a "Windows Refresh" for 2024. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

New Teams is Released

Microsoft has released the new improved, faster and less memory-hungry Teams, and you should be offered the option to upgrade as of now. Read more [here](#), and a more detailed story [here](#).

Now you have the New Teams, but what about the New Outlook?

This new version is far from ready to replace the old Outlook, and worryingly (and happily) will not support COM add-ins - which can be a worry for companies (read [more here](#) on what to do about that). [Here is a deep dive](#) into what the new Outlook looks like and what it can and can't do.

Microsoft now supports Mobile Application Management (MAM) for Windows 11

Intune MAM is now Generally available for Windows 11 after already supporting Android and iOS for years. Read more [here](#). You can manually upgrade by downloading it [here](#).

Teams can auto-enrol you in meetings with face recognition

Teams is getting the ability to identify you automatically by recognising your face - read more about how this will be rolled out in December 2023 [here](#).

SQL 2014 ESU Support available ahead of schedule

Even though SQL 2014 is supported to July 9 2024. Note that Microsoft is showing SQL 2014 Extended end date for Support is shown as 12 July 2027, but that is if you are purchasing ESU to extend it to that date. Read more [here](#).

OneDrive getting a (AI) makeover

It may eventually be easier to use than Google Drive!! Read more about the improvements [here](#).

Cloud & AI

97% of kids use their devices during school hours and beyond

This is a very concerning report, and given how AI is starting to spread through mobile devices, the dependence on devices by our youth will only increase. Encouraging our youth to understand that real-life interactions are better than those just with devices is so important.

There is also an interesting video segment about modern phone etiquette. Young people need real-life interactions to spot something dodgy, and without experience, young people can and sometimes will end up in serious trouble online.

Read [here](#).

Security

Hackers spreading Malware through Job postings

This will spread to other Job posting web sites, so be aware... The idea is to trick executives into clicking on links you trust. Read more [here](#).

What's new at FTG

Join First Tech Group at the Umhlanga Convention Center to experience a dazzling array of Speakers, Exhibits and Technologies.

When

10 October 2023

Where

Umhlanga Arch Convention Center - [Register here](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Exorcist: The Believer](#)

Now Playing: [Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie](#)

13 October: [57 Seconds](#) (Morgan Freeman one of the actors)

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TOP STORIES #32

This was a quieter week, with only Prime Day being the biggest event. Even the Movies have nothing much going on either! If colleagues want to subscribe to this newsletter, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

NVIDIA Speeding up it's release cadence

This has been inevitable - and we are seeing this across all the big tech firms. What this means is that in 2 years time, the technology you will be able to buy then will make what we have now look quite primitive, and GPT5 will be "in the wild" with a super-intelligent GPT6 on it's way. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft

Some positive comments on the latest Win 11 updates

At least some reviewers are happy with what they are experiencing with some of the Windows 11 updates, especially with the snipping tool and the Paint App. Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

Adobe uses a decentralised Cloud Storage solution

This is where your data is distributed across thousands of points around the world, rather than is huge data centres in only a few locations. Read more about this [here](#).

Security

Microsoft Defender for Endpoint Automatic Attack Disruption promises an end to ransomware

This is a lofty promise, but though it may not end attacks it can certainly reduce their effectiveness. [Read more about how it works and how to get it](#). NB! it is only in Defender for Endpoint P2.

What's Next at FTG

Even FT is taking a break this week!

Movies

Now Playing: [57 Seconds](#) (Morgan Freeman one of the actors)
20 October: [Killers of the Flower Moon](#)
20 October: [Cat Person](#)

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TOP STORIES #33

With the Bokke dominating the news, it just as well there is nothing that major in terms of news on the IT front as I suspect we will be a little distracted next weekend as well!

Hardware

Thunderbolt 5 is not supported by 14th Gen. Desktop CPU's

Intel had to correct a big "oops" - read [here](#).

However, it makes sense that we will see TB5 in Meteor Lake the upcoming 14th Gen family for Notebooks. Meteor Lake is the major new release next year, and TB5 is a major increase in connectivity performance. Of course, you will need peripherals to support it.

If you are thinking of a major hardware refresh, see if you can plan for Meteor Lake - which will probably be accompanied by the release of Windows 12.

Microsoft

Getting Started with Designer

[Here is an excellent guide](#) to get you started. It uses AI to create different types of graphics for any project.

Teams to get a Private Line Feature for Most Important calls

This is a feature (in Teams Premium) that will allow you to take calls that will bypass normal delegates, admins or assistants. It is expected to roll out in November

Cloud&AI

Gartner: Generative AI will be everywhere - strategise now.

"Generative AI is not just a technology or business trend — it is a profound shift in how humans and machines interact," Gartner distinguished VP analyst Mary Mesaglio said in an opening keynote.

[This is a great article](#) that supports my assertion that we HAVE to dive into seeing how we can use AI to bring improvements to our business through more efficient processes and enhancing the skills and capabilities of our employees.

Don't wait for somebody else's case study - if you do, it means you are late to the party.

Security

Patch WinRAR (or remove it completely)

WinRAR has to be [patched manually](#). If you do an inventory scan of your network you will probably find many trial copies installed. This is a very good opportunity to purge your network of this for good.

Remember Windows 11 23H2 will support RAR natively. Read more [here](#).

What's new at FTG

Cyber MXDR by BUI

With an estimated 921 password attacks happening every second and the average cost of a ransomware incident now more than \$1.82m, effective cyber security is absolutely critical.

Basic perimeter protection and internal safeguards are not enough.

To defend your networks, endpoints, applications, workloads, emails, identities and sensitive data, you need complete visibility across your connected environment and a team of experts to locate and mitigate threats in real time.

[Cyber MXDR](#) offers you all of this and more in a human-led, intelligence-driven managed security service designed to provide continuous monitoring and rapid detection, investigation and incident response.

When

24/7 (Not a Typo!)

Where

To discuss your requirements book an appointment [here](#).

Movies

With the World Ruby Cup Final on Saturday night, and the lineup below, I suspect cinemas are

going to be VERY empty this weekend!
Now Playing: [Killers of the Flower Moon](#)
Now Playing: [Cat Person](#)
27 October: [Five Nights at Freddy's](#)
27 October: [Freelance](#)
27 October: [Never Give Up](#)
28 October: [World Rugby Cup Final!](#)

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TOP STORIES #34

With the Bokke winning the World Cup, I'm not sure any of this can be remotely as newsworthy, but nevertheless, there is still something to write about this week.

Hardware

Intel plans to sell a LOT of new computers

Intel is bringing AI to the computer "on board" with Meteor Lake. This will allow the PC to perform some very impressive AI tricks, without accessing cloud resources or needing a super expensive GPU to do the heavy lifting. What it will mean is that you are going to need to refresh all your hardware! [Read more here](#).

This will be a very important upgrade, and it may be an idea to delay or re-negotiate major hardware refreshes to ensure that they come with Meteor Lake.

You can start expecting Meteor Lake based notebooks as early as Feb/March as Intel has confirmed that it is in [full production and shipping to OEM's](#).

This is a big deal, as the integrated CPU will do a decent job with games anyway, and do away with having to buy an expensive gaming machine with an Off-board NVIDIA GPU, unless you are a very serious gamer. Look at this demo [here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft Teases us about Windows 12

There are quite a few hints, but one of the more interesting ones is how the new operating system will be fully AI-enabled allowing a hybrid use of AI processing power onboard (a nod to Intel's Meteor Lake) and AI in the cloud. [Read a lot more here](#).

Purview Standard Perks delayed till May 2024

Microsoft has detailed plans to enhance audit logging and data retention for Purview Audit Standard users, with an extension of the default audit logs retention period to 180 days and the addition of 30 more audit logs. These improvements, rolled out gradually starting October 2023, will first benefit global enterprise customers, followed by government clientele, although some features won't be available until mid-to-late 2024. Read more [here](#).

Microsoft releases Security CoPilot

This is rolling out as an early access program, read more [here](#),

Windows 23H2 about to release

There are signs that 22H2 is about to be released by Microsoft, and it could be the last major update to Windows 11 before Windows 12. Read more [here](#),

Cloud & AI

Grammarly Releases New AI Features

I think a LOT of us are using the free version of Grammarly, so it is interesting to see what Grammarly is adding to its features for Business customers, noting you get some AI functionality in even the free version.

Read more [here](#), and [here](#) where you can read how it can learn your writing style and apply it to any text (think of the implications when it is used by scammers).

It's early days so be careful to commit to only one AI vendor.

This is an example of yet another startup that is growing dramatically, AutogenAI helps companies prepare new business contracts using AI. This is being launched in the US, but it is sure to become available worldwide soon. Read more [here](#).

Then [there is EVE](#) for the legal profession. Then [there is HeyGen, a video generation tool](#) that enables users to produce professional-quality videos without any prior design or video editing experience!

Security

Fraudsters using GPT to scam you convincingly.

Increasingly you cannot spot a scam because it has grammatical mistakes and spelling errors. Now you are going to have to be suspicious of emails that just come across as "too perfect". Trying not to be caught out is getting more and more difficult! [Read more here](#).

Ransomware is not going away

This is a sobering reminder that you cannot let up on security where this month saw the highest number of attacks ever recorded. Read more [here](#).

What's new at FTG

We are taking a break this week.

Movies

Now Playing: [Five Nights at Freddy's](#)

Now Playing: [Freelance](#)

Now Playing: [Never Give Up](#)

3 November: [Dear David](#)

3 November: [Miracle Club](#)

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TOP STORIES #35

Now that the Bokke are back, we can get back to work, and it has been quite an eventful week - with the Apple "[Scary Fast](#)" launch, Win 11 23H2 and CoPilot finally released, and Intel's Meteor Lake CPU's in the wild - we have a lot of news....

If you would like colleagues to join the mailing list - [they can click here to subscribe](#).

Hardware

The AI PC is almost here

We can expect to see AI-enabled PC's coming from all the major hardware vendors in Q1 2024, as they announce new models supporting Intel's Meteor Lake. AI is not only about what it can do for you from the Cloud but also about how it will make your experience quite different using your PC.

I cannot stress this enough how we will experience what computers and AI will be doing with us and for us in as little as 2 years time be completely different from what we know today.

Things are changing at a scary pace - just look at how long it took for Grok to arrive! (see below). Read more on what Lenovo and AMD have to say about this [here](#).

First Notebooks with Meteor Lake appear

It seems that some pricing information on the first "Core Ultra" (Meteor Lake) Notebooks for Lenovo has leaked. [Read more here](#).

Microsoft

CoPilot is Generally Available (T's & C's Apply)

CoPilot is now available for enterprises to test - at least for those that can afford it - at \$30 per user per month for a minimum of 300 seats, along with many other criteria. Read more [here](#).

[Here is an article with a lot more detail](#) on the criteria and links to Microsoft. It is very important to note that only the "New Outlook" is supported at the moment, which has a long way to go (2 years) before it will be capable enough to replace the existing "Old Outlook". Also, not everything is available - like CoPilot for Excel is still in preview. So do not be in too much of a hurry.. maybe spend more time getting ready before spending any money, **and on that note.....of you are interested in testing CoPilot and would like to understand the criteria needed along with a workshop to get the project underway, please speak with your First Tech account manager to make arrangements.**

The last Big update before Windows 12

Windows 11 23H2 is now rolling out worldwide, and it is looking increasingly like this is the last big update before we see Windows 12. [This article summarises the changes](#) in 23H2, and talks more about to what to expect in Windows 12.

Office 2016 and 2019 to lose support connecting to M365 online services

Microsoft has been warning about this previously, but it seems this is now getting serious as **Microsoft has now stated that from October 10 2023 it will not test or guarantee that Office 2016/19 will connect with Exchange Online, SharePoint Online and OneDrive for Business**. Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

And Now we have Grok!

Musk unveils xAI's first product to compete with GPT, CLAUDE, DUET, Bing Chat etc.....

It will first be released to a limited number of users in the USA, and then roll out worldwide. Read more [here](#). What is super scary to me is [Musk's comment](#) as to how long it took to develop the model which now is similar in capability to GPT 3.5 - see this: "*The engine powering Grok is Grok-1, our frontier LLM, which we developed over the last four months. Grok-1 has gone through many iterations over this span of time*".

CHatGPT can work with PDF's

You can now upload PDF's directly into ChatGPT to analyse. This is a big step and very useful as up to now it has been a bit painful to get GPT to ingest documents reliably. Read more [here](#).

A really good guide to Prompting an AI

This is especially relevant to read given that Microsoft is now making CoPilot available to companies to start testing. The key message here is that you must not overcomplicate it. It is early days, and AI is evolving so fast that soon you will not need to have to learn fancy ways of prompting an AI, it will be clever enough to figure it out. What you DO need to think about is how you give an AI the correct context to be able to help you better. It is worth a read - [see here](#).
Read the last 2 paragraphs at the end of the article.

Security

Microsoft to use AI to respond faster to threats

Microsoft has announced that it will use AI to shore up its ability to respond to threats and help mitigate the serious skills shortage by taking over more mundane tasks. Read more [here](#).

AI is making cyberattacks more dangerous

Up to now, it has been relatively easy to spot a phishing email - its use of language is poor, and there are spelling for formatting mistakes. AI is going to make it super hard to spot - [read more here](#).

What's new at FTG

CoPilot workshops

Next week we will have a landing page for you to sign up for these workshops, but if you want to get started right away, please make contact with your First Tech account manager, or send me an email to get the process started.

Movies

Now Playing: [Dear David](#)

Now Playing: [Miracle Club](#)

10 November: [The Marvels](#)

10 November: [Journey to Bethlehem](#)

10 November: [Butterfly Tale](#)

10 November: [Tiger 3](#)

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TOP STORIES #36

The big news is that everybody is getting ready for Black Friday deals - but beware the scammers are also happy that it is Black Friday, except for exceptional cases, if a deal is too good to be true it is probably a scam!
If colleagues want to join this maillist, ask them to [click here](#).

Hardware

Notebook Chargers will be no more

In the future and probably starting with the Meteor Lake generation of CPU's notebook chargers are going to change from just being chargers to docking stations as well. With the advent of ThunderBolt 5, these charger/docking stations could allow for all sorts of interesting solutions to be moved "off board". Read more [here](#).

It is very important to rethink how you write your RFP's for these new generations of notebooks that we will start seeing by March 2024.

Microsoft

CoPilot coming for Windows 10

It appears that Microsoft is going to bring CoPilot to Windows 10 after all. It probably has something to do with the slow uptake of Windows 11. [Read more here](#).

Amazon buys M365

I think this tells us that Microsoft is utterly dominant in enterprise productivity solutions. Amazon has signed a \$1 Billion deal over 5 years for M365. [Read more on the deal here](#).

Cloud & AI

Personal Agents will change everything

I have been mentioning in a few of my presentations about a personal agent [rewind.ai](#) that should be watched closely. It is interesting that Bill Gates is throwing his support behind the idea of a personal agent which could fundamentally change how we ask computers to do tasks for us, maybe this is a new iteration of the venerable Clippy! you can read more about [his investment here](#).

ChatGPT gets a major boost

OpenAI has announced a bunch of big updates including the GPT-4 Turbo model trained on data up to April 2023. [Read here for all the updates](#), and some [more here about GPT-4 Turbo](#). [This link summarises everything that was announced](#) at the OPenAI developer conference.

Security

Microsoft Authenticator will Suppress risky notifications

This does make sense that repeated requests for authentication are suppressed as that is the way the bad guys wear you down. [Read more here](#).

What's new at FTG

M365 CoPilot Workshops

As promised, [here is the landing page where you can sign-up for the workshops](#). Please note that you may qualify for Microsoft to fund these workshops, so I recommend applying.

Movies

Now Playing: [The Marvels](#)

Now Playing: [Journey to Bethlehem](#)

Now Playing: [Butterfly Tale](#)

Now Playing: [Tiger 3](#)

17 November: [Joika](#)

17 November: [Hunger Games: Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes](#).

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TOP STORIES #37

It has been a news-filled week, mainly because of the Microsoft Ignite conference ([here is a great overview](#)), the hype around "specials" for Black Friday and of course, OpenAI firing Sam Altman.

Hardware

Microsoft announces it's own chips

These two chips are going to be used in Microsoft data centres from early 2024, even Sam Altman (just before he was fired) has some positive things to say about the new chips. [You can read more on this here.](#)

Microsoft

Nadella Highlights CoPilot AI, cloud and Fabric

In the Keynote Nadella laid out a grand vision for CoPilot. You can watch the Keynote [here](#) (it's 1 hour), read a summary of it [here](#), and get an 8min version of the [Keynote here](#).

Microsoft introduces Sharepoint Premium aka Syntex

This is the new name for Microsoft Syntex, but now has a clear roadmap to increasingly apply AI to organisational content and governance. [You can read more details here.](#)

Windows 365 and AVD to get Windows App.

Microsoft announced at Ignite a Windows App preview which is sort of a home page for accessing VMs in the cloud, the AVD (Azure Virtual Desktop) infrastructure, Dev Box environments and RDS connections. [Redmondmag has a lot more on this here.](#)

Ignite and the many Microsoft CoPilots

There is a lot of hype around signing up for M365 CoPilot, but it is important to note that this is one of many aspects of CoPilot, and Microsoft introduced MANY at Ignite. Most of them are still in preview as well. A detailed summary of what Microsoft has [announced for CoPilot is here](#) . Microsoft is still finding it's way, so expect regular name changes, like Bing Chat is now called Microsoft CoPilot.

Office 2024 is coming

It is unlikely to have anything dramatically new, other than further integration with CoPilot. [Read here about this leak](#) - nothing official from Microsoft.

Teams gets to decorate your Office

One fun update that Microsoft announced is the ability for Teams to decorate your background by making it look more topical and less cluttered. A noise background remover was also announced. Read more [here](#).

Of course, this is only for Team Premium license holders.

To Do, Planner and Project become one

Microsoft is planning to consolidate these three products into one thing called Planner. Microsoft did not provide much detail at Ignite, but if true, there are going to be challenging licensing implications. Read (a little more) [here](#).

Cloud & AI

Privacy implications of AI Assistants.

For these assistants to really help you, they need to know as much as possible about you. Are you ready to start allowing the AI to scratch through EVERYTHING you interact with? [Here is a good article to help you consider the implications](#)

Security

It's REALLY important to stay patched!

Staying patched across your entire estate is probably the most important thing you can be doing. For some reason, companies have been slow to patch Citrix Netscaler with disastrous consequences [which you can read about here](#) .

What's new at FTG

AI for Business

Our division, BUI, has put together a framework to allow you to engage with them around getting AI to work in your business, starting with the preparation to be able to give the AI access to your data. This must happen even before the licensing gets finalised, and will actually help you figure out what licensing you will need.

[See here to sign up to start the process.](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Joika](#)

Now Playing: [Hunger Games: Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes.](#)

24 November: [Wish](#)

24 November: [Napoleon](#)

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TOP STORIES #38

There is so much noise about Black Friday, that it is hard to find any news! Of course, there is just too much news about OpenAI including [conspiracy theories galore](#) (or maybe not), so I won't pay much attention to that, other than that Sam is back and Microsoft is the biggest winner of this drama, by getting more control over OpenAI without having to buy them and jumping through some impossible regulatory hoops to do it.

Hardware

Intel's Arrow Lake will have an even more powerful GPU capability

This is the generation AFTER Meteor Lake due to launch in December. This means that our business PC's will be very capable for work and gaming without having additional GPU power, unless you are a serious gamer. [Read more here](#).

Microsoft

Eagle - supercomputing for the (rich) masses

Eagle is the third most powerful supercomputer in the world which Microsoft can give anybody (with enough money) to run HPC workloads. Read more about the Microsoft Supercomputer [here](#).

Cloud & AI

AI is still a toddler, careful what toys it plays with!

As much as we are excited about the possibilities around AI, we are actually taking the first steps. Now is the time for us to experiment with it, to see how it can enhance our capabilities in ways that will sometimes surprise us. We are still far (a couple of years) from actually letting it loose to act on our behalf...and more. [This article will help you ponder some of these issues](#).

Security

Cyberlink has been breached

This company has been around for a long time, and was probably most famous for its PowerDVD player software, but since turned to Video production software which is very popular. No company is immune from attack, and now Cyberlink has been breached by North Korean hackers according to Microsoft. Read more [here](#),

What's new at FTG

Be ready with Cyber DFIR

Cyber DFIR is a **Digital Forensics and Incident Response** retainer service from our division BUI, designed for businesses that want all the benefits of a dedicated DFIR team – expertise, experience, and guaranteed security support when it matters most – as well as the flexibility of DFIR-as-a-service. [Read more here about the service and how to get more information](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Wish](#)

Now Playing: [Napoleon](#)

1 December: [Thanksgiving](#)

1 December: [May December](#)

1 December: [Animal](#)

1 December: [Sam Bahadur](#)

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TOP STORIES #39

This week's big story is that ChatGPT is only one year old, yet it seems so much has changed. Also, evidence is building that Windows 12 will be released in 2024, though there is still nothing official from Microsoft.

If colleagues would like to subscribe, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

Samsung to Launch Galaxy 4 with Intel Meteor Lake

We are two weeks away from the launch of Meteor Lake, but news is starting to leak about what we will see in these new notebooks - where the most significant change is the inclusion of an NPU as part of the CPU architecture. Read more about the Samsung release [here](#). Product listings for Acer and Asus have also leaked online. The most exciting part of the leaks is that the pricing looks very attractive compared with what is available today, [read more here](#). And [here is a story of what Dell may be releasing at CES 2024](#)

Microsoft

Windows 11 24H2 and Windows 12 Expected H2 2024

It's not pretty certain that we are going to see Windows 12 somewhere in the 2nd half of 2024, [see more information here](#).

This is further [backed up by another article](#) here, which suggests we will be seeing Windows 12 by June 2024. It does make sense for this to happen to continue driving sales of the new Intel Meteor Lake CPU's which should be flooding the market by then.

Microsoft Product Terms Updated 1 December

As usual, Microsoft has [released the changes in its product terms document for December](#), which now includes ClipChamp and more favourable changes to SQL failover rights.

Paint is getting an AI-based feature.

Microsoft is rolling out a feature to create AI-generated images - open up Paint to see if the "CoCreator" feature has been added (I don't have it yet). [Read more about the feature rolling out here](#),

Cloud & AI

Nobody is an Expert with CoPilot - we are all learning

Beware of the AI gold rush, but at the same time, we all need to start using and experiencing what AI can do for us in our daily lives. [Here is an interesting perspective on where we are with CoPilot](#).

OpenAI released ChatGPT on 30 November 2022

This is something to ponder - AI, as it is being hyped today, is **only ONE YEAR OLD!!!** [Here is a great timeline of what has happened](#) in just one year, right up to the release of Amazon Q. It also serves as a reminder that we are still taking baby steps and that we are all learning together. [Here is another perspective](#) from VentureBeat.

Looking for Venture Capital? Best make your pitch machine readable!

[Here is an interesting perspective](#) on how AI is being used to summarise pitch decks, and how AI is used to make pitch decks machine readable. AI is already more pervasive than what you think!

Security

One down, many more to go

A major cybercrime syndicate has been taken down, but unfortunately, there are many more to go. We will never be safe, so we must always remain vigilant. Read more [here](#),

What's new at FTG

Events are coming to a close for 2023 as we prepare to take a well-earned break before 2024 comes around!

Movies

Now Playing: [Thanksgiving](#)
Now Playing: [May December](#)
Now Playing: [Animal](#)
Now Playing: [Sam Bahadur](#)
8 December: [Inseperables](#)
8 December: [Wonka](#)
8 December: [Silent Night](#) (Not silent at all!)

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TOP STORES #40

The year is closing with quite a lot of news, with a **LOT of speculation on whether we are going to see Windows 12 or Windows 11 24H2** as the first operating system from Microsoft to be infused with AI, and whether it will require the latest CPUs from Intel to work "properly"? More on this below.

What's more - Windows 10 will reach end of life October 2025, with 3 years of (costly) Extended Support to October 2028.

Colleagues can join this list by subscribing [here](#).

Hardware

AMD is ahead of Intel in the Server business (for now).

The competition is fierce, and though Intel may be ahead in the endpoint stakes with Meteor Lake, things are not so great for Server CPUs where AMD is for the moment, ahead. Read more [here](#) and [here](#). However, if you are running hardware that is around 4-5 years old, and you are also considering repatriating workloads from the cloud, now is REALLY a good time to start looking at some really amazing on-premise servers in 2024.

Microsoft

New Leadership and a new release of Windows

Whether it will be called Windows 24H2 or Windows 12 or Windows AI, we **are** getting a new operating system in Q2 of 2024.

More details on what to expect broke in an [exclusive story on Windows Central](#) (recommended read), triggering a storm of speculation in all the other news feeds. Of course, Linus Tech had its own humorous take on this [here](#), with [Techradar following up with more detail](#) on the types of features we can expect.

So what will it be?

Windows 24H2 or Windows 12.... right now, we really cannot be sure.....but if you look at the Microsoft Roadmap in terms of support cycles, Windows 12 might only officially become "a thing" in October 2025, right on cue for Windows 10 exiting support at the same time (more on that below) and ready for Intels NEXT generation of CPU technology starting with Panther Lake, marking the start of the "Angstrom Era".

So we may very well see Windows 12, now called Win 11 24H2 in 2024, and Windows 12 in 2025; either way, we are getting a **SERIOUSLY new operating system in 2024** that may only give you full **functionality (in an AI way) with the latest Intel Meteor Lake processors** which will be available in volume from all manufacturers by June in 2024, noting that they will be released at CES 2024.

What will actually happen? Follow the money.....

Windows 10 support REALLY ends 14 October 2025

We now know this for sure - because Microsoft has announce the Extended Security Update (ESU) program from Windows 10 from 14 October 2025 to 14 October 2028. **This will be a paid subscription offering that will be available to both consumers and corporate customers.** Read more [here](#).

Cloud & AI

New capabilities coming to CoPilot

In a recent announcement, Microsoft has noted that there are more capabilities coming such as GPT-4 Turbo, updated DELL-E, Bing Deep Search, Compose and ReWrite and other features - [read more here](#),

Security

Google Drive files lack protection

Here is a scary thought - how many of you files have you shared with "anybody with link can access"? [According to this article](#) - MANY!

This is not just a Google problem. Maybe think carefully about what you have been sharing...

All Windows and Linux machines are vulnerable to a new attack

You can never ever stop being vigilant and making sure you have the best support possible to watch your back. Here is a new attack that renders practically every protection tool out there useless because it is executed by the UEFI right at the beginning of the boot process. [Read](#)

[more here.](#)

What's New at FTG

We are taking a break!

Movies

The release slate is looking pretty bleak right the way through to the end of January with the [Beekeeper](#) - the only other two potentially big releases are [Migration](#) and [Aquaman](#) - both on the 22nd of December.

Now Playing: [Inseparables](#)

Now Playing: [Wonka](#)

Now Playing: [Silent Night](#) (Not silent at all!)

15 December: [Love Actually](#) (20th anniversary)

15 December: [Dream Scenario](#)

15 December: [Dunki](#)

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TOP STORIES #41

We are almost at the end of 2023 and getting ready for 2024, which starts with a bang with [CES 2024](#) - the world's biggest consumer electronics (now everything electronics), which is held right at the beginning of January. The [official site for CES is here](#) .

One of the big events for CES is the release of Meteor Lake based computers, which marks the start of AI-infused computers that will be part of every aspect of our lives going forward. The Intel CEO will have a lot to say about this and more in his [CES Keynote](#).

News about what is being released at CES 2024 is everywhere, but [here is a good summary of leaks and pre-show announcements so far](#).

If you would like to invite colleagues to subscribe to this letter, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

Intel Meteor Lake released

Intel has now formally announced the Meteor Lake generation of CPU's and you can [find all the details on the entire range here](#).

There are [already some announcements for laptops that have the new CPU's here](#) , but you can be sure there will be a lot more coming in the next few weeks.

What is quite important is that for business-oriented notebooks, you will still get great GPU capability without having to buy a power-hungry dedicated GPU, and you get new AI capability as well. [You can read more on this here](#).

Upgrading your servers to 5th Generation to save (lots of) money

Now is the time to start looking to plan your server upgrade because if you are using 2nd Generation Cascade Lake (going back to 2021) and compare that with the latest generation "Emerald Rapids" servers, the boost you are going to get in performance will be **absolutely massive - about 3X**, and in almost all aspects - speed, cores, AI, DRAM etc.....

*What is super important here from a software licensing perspective is that the increase in performance can **save you more money on software licensing than what you could be spending on the new hardware** (it's complicated, T's & C's apply). There is a way one goes about working out the saving, **and if you would like to know if this could work in your environment, please reach out to your First Technology Licensing AM**, or simply just reply to me on this mail.*

[STH - an excellent YouTube channel](#), has just posted an in-depth comparison based on SuperMicro Servers. Still, essentially, the same metrics will apply if you also have Dell, HP or Lenovo servers.

There is also a technical discussion about the capabilities in Emerald Rapids compared with the AMD EPYC processors [from Tomshardware here](#) .

For fun, you can use Bard to help summarise the video for you.

Here is how I phrased my question: "*Referring to the STH video, How much performance increase is there between the 2nd Gen Cascade Lake and the latest 5th Gen Emerald Rapids processors?*"

Microsoft

CoPilot available for Academic customers in early 2024

as what applied to business customers, there are a host of prerequisites. [Read more here](#).

Microsoft Hikes Prices

Microsoft has announced several cloud price increases with the biggest increase in Japanese Yen. This is very important to be aware of when looking at where your License agreement may be resident. [Read the Microsoft announcement here](#) .

OneDrive Activated in Teams

Microsoft is rolling out the OneDrive feature in Teams to support a more collaborative approach to storage of files that can easily be shared or collaborated over in Teams. [Read more here](#).

Cloud & AI

How to get better results from ChatGPT

The more carefully thought out the question for the AI, the better the response you will get.

[OpenAI has published a guide on how to get better results from ChatGPT](#) (remembering that CoPilot is based on ChatGPT).

OpenAI makes it quite clear: "These models can't read your mind. If outputs are too long, ask for brief replies. If outputs are too simple, ask for expert-level writing. If you dislike the format, demonstrate the format you'd like to see. *The less the model has to guess at what you want, the more likely you'll get it.*"

[Here are some tips for CoPilot](#) as well.

The importance of Playing the field of AI

It is important to not get sucked into only one AI system and through that pass judgement on whether "AI" is good, bad, useful, or indifferent. It is important to keep playing the field of what is out there.

Remember, there is probably nobody in your circle of contacts who is much more of an expert than you by more than a few months (there are exceptions of course). We are all learning as we go, and we must develop our own measures of how AI will be valuable to ourselves and our businesses.

Most importantly we need to be developing our OWN models on how to measure how AI can add value to our people and our businesses, and through doing all this, not to be left behind.

AI is going to get a HUGE push forward with the release of the Intel Meteor Lake generation of CPU's, and we all need to stay abreast of this as this will bring AI capability onto our devices, laptops and File Servers.. The Verge has a great summary on how AI in it's many guises, is rewriting the internet, [and is worth a read](#) .

CIO's are taking it slow

[Here is an interesting article from Techcrunch](#) that discusses when it comes to AI, why CIO's are taking it slow.

Basically, CIOs are cautiously approaching the adoption of generative AI in enterprises, focusing on evaluation and proof-of-concept rather than large-scale implementation, as revealed by a Morgan Stanley survey referred to by Techcrunch.

Security

Very Sneaky Phishing attack to demand money

You can never be too alert! [Here is a story about a phishing attack](#) that appears to come from a google.com domain allowing it to bypass normal safeguards.

What's new at FTG

Our Security and Azure Divison, BUI has been selected by Microsoft as [one of the first to participate in the Security CoPilot partner preview](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Love Actually](#) (20th anniversary)

Now Playing: [Dream Scenario](#)

Now Playing: [Dunki](#)

22 December: [Next Goal Wins](#)

22 December: [Migration](#)

22 December: [Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom](#)

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TOP STORIES #42

In the spirit of what has transpired in 2023, here is my AI-assisted Christmas message for tomorrow.....

I hope you all get some well-deserved downtime and enjoy every bit of the festive cheer. Here's to a day filled with good tech, better company, and some great memories. Wishing you all the best – relax, recharge, and have a blast!

Don't forget, if you want to track Santa's progress, [NORAD can show you](#).

As is usual at this time of year, most publications are looking back on what were the big stories of 2023 (AI - go figure), and what we can be looking forward to in 2024 (more AI), but in between all these ponderings of what was and what will be, there is more news leaking out about what we will see at [CES 2024 which is expected to be very big](#), with a huge emphasis on AI which everybody is hoping to drive a new surge in consumer spend.

[There are 6 trends](#) to watch for at CES - with a LOT of hype of course!

The biggest news of the show will be all the notebook manufacturers releasing their versions of notebooks with Intel's Meteor Lake CPU's.

Still, the most exciting part of CES is Eureka Park - where you can meet thousands of new startups looking for opportunities. It is incredible to see so much youthful innovation packed into one place. Competition is fierce to be allowed to attend. For example, [look at what the Swiss have put together](#). Unfortunately, I could not find a South African presence - maybe I have just missed it.

If colleagues would like to join the newsletter, they can [click here to subscribe](#).

Hardware

Notebooks with Intel's Meteor Lake released

News about new laptops with Intel's Meteor Lake CPU's are everywhere, and I would say we are pretty much on track to be able to start ordering them for delivery in South Africa by March (earlier if you are special or prepared to pay "early adopter" tax!). [Here is a review of a new Acer Laptop](#) as an example. Here is a [YouTube review](#) of MSI and ASUS laptops. Remember, it is early days.

Of course, AMD is not far behind, and the competition is fierce, so if you are interested [here is a very detailed benchmark review](#) of Intel's Meteor Lake compared with AMD Ryzen 7840U. It's very early days, but we are starting to get a hint of what "endpoint AI" potential could be like in a few year's time.

Intel on track for the Angstrom Era

Intel claims that it is still on track, which means that we are really going to see incredible performance gains in the next 2 years over everything that we see today - ie Meteor Lake. [You can read more here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 Moment 5 preview Arrives in Feb.

This [update comes with some tweaks and minor additions](#) plus a whole lot of changes for compliance in the EU.

240 Million PC's working just fine, but can't be upgraded

[A report by Canals](#) claims that a huge amount of perfectly working PC's is headed for the scrap heap just because they do not comply with the minimum requirements for Windows 11. Although these requirements can be bypassed with [Rufus](#).

You can further use [TINY11](#) (23H2) to install Windows 11 on machines with very limited memory and performs just fine ([read more here](#)), though clearly this is discouraged by Microsoft and most certainly not supported in any way AND you use it at your own risk. In all cases, you still need a valid Windows license.

Cloud & AI

Microsoft CoPilot promises much, but are you really ready?

What is clear is that AI is upon us and Microsoft is in the process of infusing it's entire M365

offering with generative AI capabilities. It means a LOT of strategic forethought and planning, where running into a very expensive trial without planning could lead to a lot of disappointment and frustration.

Done properly, implementing Copilot promises to be transformative for your organization, driving innovation, drastically increasing efficiency, and making your organization even more competitive.

ChatGPT derives its output data from three sources: information freely available on the Internet, data licensed from third-party providers, and information provided by its users.

By contrast, Copilot uses your organization's SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams data, and more to provide real-time assistance. Copilot can even consume data from other non-Microsoft data sources and applications to build a true cross-application AI productivity tool.

TechRadar has published a really good overview of CoPilot, what to expect and most importantly, the importance of being prepared.

To this end, our Cloud and Security Division, BUI has a CoPilot workshop that can possibly be funded by Microsoft to help you prepare for getting real value from CoPilot. You can [read about the workshop here](#).

Security

IBM predicts that AI will be the DNA of Cyberattacks

[This is a sobering warning for 2024](#) where we are going to have to double-down on our security. We cannot let up, not for a moment.

Attackers will strengthen their arsenals with generative AI and take their attack tradecraft to a new, more lethal level in 2024. The new year signals the start of a new era of deception and identity abuse, IBM's predictions warn, with attackers compromising networks with counterfeit and stolen privileged access credentials.

Hackers exploiting Old versions of Excel

Attackers are taking advantage of an old vulnerability in old versions of Excel which is quite sophisticated. [Read more about the attack here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Next Goal Wins](#)

Now Playing: [Migration](#)

Now Playing: [Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom](#)

29 December: [Anyone but you](#)

29 December: [The end we start from](#)

29 December: [Ferrari](#)

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TOP STORIES #43

As the year draws to a close, "leaks" about what we can expect at CES are all over the internet, and you can read [about some expectations and predictions here](#). AI will be everywhere, and if you are actually there you can go and visit LG's stand to see their idea of a [Zero Labor Home!](#)

I would like to wish you all of the very best for 2024, which I think for us involved in technology in some way we will experience 2024 as an AI-infused one - I look forward to us experiencing and learning about this new world together - we are still only taking baby-steps!

If you would like colleagues to Join the maillist, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

Microsoft preparing new surface PC's for 2024

Microsoft is making major updates to it's product line for 2024 with a major emphasis on AI and ARM. That Microsoft is going to be releasing ARM-based AI-infused hardware that will work with Windows 12 (Codenamed Hudson Valley) is [especially interesting](#).

1 Trillion Transistors in a CPU by 2030

TMSC is predicting that we will see such incredible densities in little more than 5 years. Can you only imagine what processing capability these CPU's will have compared with the best we can get today? [Read more here](#). Remember, data transfer rate capabilities are increasing at the same pace with the [PCIe 6.0 interface probably seeing production in 2024](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft Office support end date Checklist

Microsoft support end dates for Office keep changing. In theory you have 10 years of support, but in practice, it is very different, with far less than 10 years along with some caveats to make you nervous about when support actually ends - Office 2016 and 2019 are a case in point. Woody's Office Watch - one of the best publications on the internet dedicated to following the Office Suite, has [published an up-to-date guide on the support dates](#).

End of support does not mean the product stops working, it just means Microsoft no longer issues updates.

Cloud & AI

Walmart CEO to Give CES Keynote

When it comes to a show like CES it is reasonable to conclude that a Keynote should be given by a CEO from Intel, AMD, Nvidia, Sony, Ford etc..... (they all have given keynotes), but it is a surprise to learn that the Walmart CEO is giving the keynote. Or, maybe it is not a surprise? Given the relevance of AI which is only 1 year old in the public's eye and how it will impact our lives in the future, maybe this keynote IS very relevant to hearing a compelling story of how Walmart is enabling the next generation of retail and how will reflect on their people culture, beyond the advances powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning. [Read more about the upcoming Keynote here](#).

New Tools, Old Mindset

[Here is Part 1](#) of a very interesting story that illustrates the importance of adapting your mindset to make the best use of new tools.

Though the story is about why meetings are still bad, I think it applies equally to AI.....

The effectiveness of AI depends largely on a shift in mindset and a re-evaluation of the processes into which it is integrated.

Just like with meetings, where the problem isn't the tools but the approach to the meetings themselves, the challenge with AI isn't the technology itself, but how it is used within the context of what already exists.

The last statement in the article is most insightful:

"If we don't first address what a modern meeting should look like, throwing new technology at an outdated mindset will never deliver the needed results."

Parts 2 & 3 get into a lot more detail around what we can do to improve our meetings based on studies from Barco and Microsoft. They are really worth reading.

The author makes some interesting statements (remembering these are opinions, not "the law") to consider:

"There are only three reasons to meet synchronously: to make a decision, forge a team or hold a forum." [Meetings should be about action, not information.](#)

"Come to meetings prepared, don't use meetings to prepare"

"Throwing new technology at our existing meetings won't make them any better. It just allows us to have even more bad meetings from anywhere and everywhere."

"Companies can embrace "Accountability Culture"

A culture of accountability sets expectations, extends trust and creates a mutually beneficial contract between the company and its team members in order to achieve amazing results."

[Part 2 is here](#)

[Part 3 is here](#)

Security

Moving beyond passwords

2024 may be a watershed year for many of us as we are forced to move on from using only passwords to secure our accounts and services. In future, we will need to ensure we activate 2FA, use biometrics where possible and use password managers (which have their own weaknesses). [Here is an article that suggests a varied approach.](#)

What's New at FTG

Taking a break for New Year!

Movies

Now Playing: [Anyone but you](#)

Now Playing: [The end we start from](#)

Now Playing: [Ferrari](#)

05 January: [One Life](#)

05 January: [Noah's Ark](#)

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TOP STORIES #45

If you would like colleagues to subscribe to this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Well, CES is done and dusted with HUNDREDS of videos on YouTube from every major Tech publication showing you what they think was the "best of CES 2024", and everybody has a different take on what was the best, but for me, [I think the best of CES](#) was not really what happened on the show floor, [but what we saw in the Walmart Keynote](#) with Microsoft where it highlights Walmart's announcement of a new partnership with Microsoft, featuring a deep integration of Azure and OpenAI into Walmart's systems.

This collaboration aims to revolutionize Walmart's supply chain management and customer fulfilment, challenging competitors like Amazon and Google in their respective domains.

[Walmart is positioning itself as a "people led, tech-powered omnichannel retailer dedicated to helping people save money and live better"](#).

Walmart is doubling down on using AI technology with Microsoft and OpenAI (aka CoPilot) to achieve its goal, and the Keynote talks about this (even Satya makes an appearance (25:00 mark).

I recommend you [watch it](#).

There are other keynotes and [videos of CES](#) that are interesting to watch when you have some spare time.

Linus has a fun summary on YouTube of some AI tech [seen at CES](#)

A more general review of some crazy tech at CES is [summarised here](#).

And remember, there are hundreds of other videos about CES 2024 on YouTube

Hardware

Intel CES 2024 Keynote

Of course, the big news at CES was every single manufacturer rolling out their new offerings with the new Meteor Lake CPU, and of course, Intel spent time talking about that and the upcoming [roadmap for 2024](#). You can watch the [Intel Keynote here](#).

AMD Announces AI Processors at CES

Not to be left behind, [AMD also launched its range of processors](#) that include NPU capability, but we still have to see how well they will stack up against Intel's Meteor Lake when these CPU's can be benchmarked. Note it is still going to take awhile before we see apps that will fully leverage the NPU's in these CPU's, right now most AI apps at the endpoint still use the GPU for the heavy lifting.

First Dual Screen OLED Meteor Lake notebook

This notebook from ASUS sure got my attention - TWO screens that you can use in different configurations. Very impressive - [read more here](#), and see a video [from Linus here](#).

15 of the best of CES 2024

You will find hundreds of videos on youtube from different publishers telling what they think was the best of CES, and I recommend you browse through them. For a list of the best in hardware, [Toms Hardware has a nice list](#) for you to look through.

Microsoft

CoPilot Key not mandatory

Now that the hype has died down, it appears Microsoft is quite relaxed about how and even if a CoPilot key will be added to keyboards. You can [read more details regarding Microsoft's response to some questions here](#).

Cloud & AI

OpenAI launches the GPT Store

Here is a new way to share and discover custom chatbots. You can [read more about this here](#).

Security

YouTube videos used to trick you into downloading an information stealer

This has been done before, and now we have a [new round of videos](#). Be especially careful of downloading cracked software. It is not worth it.

What's up at FTG

Weaving Innovation into Your Digital Landscape with Microsoft Fabric

Join First Digital for an insightful introduction to the dynamic world of Microsoft Fabric, where we'll unravel its core features, showcase its seamless functionality, and explore the myriad benefits it brings to your business.

From enhanced collaboration to streamlined workflows, discover how Microsoft Fabric is reshaping the future of your digital experience.

When

25 January 2024, 10h00 to 11h00

Where

Online webinar, register [here](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Mean Girls](#)

19 January: [Poor Things](#)

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TOP STORIES #47

We are back to a more measured pace on the news front, but news the news does not stop when it comes to AI, but it is essential to try and separate the hype from what is actually meaningful, which I'll continue to do.

On the hardware front the news about the leaps in performance that we will see will be nothing short of mindblowing. It now makes sense that the Microsoft minimum spec. of 40 TOPS for AI performance looked a little high, given what we can buy from AMD and Intel Today. On the news front for Technology Shows, we have [ISE](#) (starting Tuesday) and [NAMM](#) (Open now). A really big show will be the [Mobile World Congress](#) at the end of February. We have representatives attending these shows so we will have quite a bit of news!

Hardware

Intel to deliver a 5X increase in AI compute performance in 2 years

This makes a mockery of the traditional Moores Law, but of course this is AI compute which is a bit different. What it does mean is that our computers will be capable of doing mind-blowing things compared with what they can do on the current generations (noting that actually there is very little that uses these NPU's just yet). It also makes sense that the "TOPS" specification announced by Microsoft appeared quite high - well clearly, it's not.

Still, Intel insists that Panther Lake for 2025/6 is on track.

This means whatever notebook you buy today. you will REALLY want to be replacing it in less than three time!

Read [more about this here](#).

Some notebooks to expect for 2024

In addition to the [ASUS Dual screen laptop](#) released at CES, [here are some more laptops to expect for 2024](#). This list will keep getting bigger as manufacturers get close to being able to ship in volume. Of course for corporate buyers, the DELL XPS series is really worth paying some attention to. Of course, the Lenovo Windows/Android hybrid looks really interesting!

Microsoft

Windows Server 2025 Insider Build released

It has a name, but not a release date - and will still be able to be purchased as a perpetual license, which probably speaks to a huge on-premise base that just won't migrate, albeit having a subscription option as well. You can [read more here](#), and [here is a summary of the features you can expect](#).

Voice Clarity and USB 4 80Gig coming to Windows 11

Microsoft has released a preview of Windows 11 that brings some big features to existing PCs without requiring an NPU. [Read more here](#).

Windows 12 or Windows 11 24H2?

The rumour mill is still grinding away furiously every week, but right now, publications are leaning towards Microsoft sticking with Windows 11 to maintain the 5-year mainstream support cadence. Given the new announcements from Intel about Panther Lake and the massive increases in performance, we may just see Windows 12 as another upgrade in October 2025 on top of [Windows 11 24H2 which is already looking like a major upgrade](#). Then again Microsoft is also rumoured to be moving to a 3-year cadence - so there is a lot we don't know...

Cloud & AI

New AI features for Chrome

Google has released some useful features for Chrome which you can read [more about here](#).

Even Easier to create DeepFakes

There is [now a new method to create a deepfake of somebody with just one image](#). This is going to cause drama in ways we cannot predict. Seems like seeing is NOT believing is going to be something we are going to have to get used to!

Oracle launches AI tools

Oracle cannot afford to be left behind, and has launched it's own set of AI tools, [which you can read more about here](#).

Security

MFA is not bullet-proof, but not having it can hurt!

This is a hard lesson learnt by Microsoft that we should take note of. EVERYTHING needs MFA, and not having it could lead to devastating consequences. [Read more about what happened to Microsoft here](#) and it turns out that [not only Microsoft was attacked](#).

AI Will increase Ransomware

It reminds me about a cartoon I once read in the Sunday paper many years ago before the internet - [Spy vs. Spy](#) - This is a never-ending cycle of bad guy betting the good guy that beats the bad guy - and so onIt is now getting really interesting (not in a good way) where AI is starting to amplify this cycle. We must be paying more attention to our security than ever before as AI will help threat actors trick you into accepting things you would not normally do. [Read the report here](#). The human element is increasingly the weakest link.

What's up at FTG

[With the ability to now buy one CoPilot license at a time](#) , getting ready for CoPilot is very important, as utilising AI in your business will become increasingly relevant - especially when the AI can use your own data to support you.

BUI is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#).

Movies

Again a fairly lean release slate, but Argylle looks refreshingly interesting,

Now Playing: [All of us Strangers](#)

Now Playing: [Beautiful Wedding](#)

Now Playing: [Color Purple](#)

Now Playing: [The Beekeeper](#)

2 Feb: [Dogs at the Opera](#)

2 Feb: [Argylle](#)

2 Feb: [Zone of Interest](#)

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TOP STORIES #48

Welcome to all the new members of TOP STORIES!

Thank you for signing up!

I hope you will find it interesting and use it as a way to navigate the overwhelming flood of news every week, where I try to draw your attention to some of the more important stuff that is going on.

I tend to lean towards news related to Intel, Microsoft, AWS, Google, AMD, NVIDIA, OpenAI, and, of course, Movie Releases!

As usual, there are also specific updates relating to Microsoft licensing as they become available.

For the newcomers, there are two previous TOP STORIES I recommend you read that may be especially interesting.

[#44](#) - check out "[Signs and Portents](#)" - this is about AI

[#46](#) - How do you end up buying a car with no seats?

[NAMM](#) - the annual show for music and studio gear has ended.

It was an impressive show, and you can [read about it here](#), and of course, you can search YouTube for videos summarising all the new gadgets for 2024.

The other big Tech Show was [ISE](#) - the world's biggest audiovisual expo, which ended yesterday and was extensively covered by [rAVe publications](#). It is definitely the best coverage of this enormous show!

FTG had representatives at the shows, so we may have some interesting things to share later.

There are a lot of Microsoft updates!

Hardware

Intel Arrow Lake information leaked

We are still waiting to receive our first Shipments of Meteor Lake computers, and already we are hearing about the NEXT generation CPU's in Intel's roadmap and are expected to ship in H2 of 2024. What is interesting is that Intel may be dropping hyperthreading. You can [read more about this leak here](#).

Stick to Well-known USB Stick Brands. Here is why

Increasingly, dodgy manufacturers are re-using chips from manufacturers that failed QC or using microSD cards inside USB sticks. The result of all this is that the data you store on the sticks is at risk. [The full story is here](#).

Apple Vision Pro Released

With it being really early days, and with the "early adopter Tax" really high, it may be an idea to wait to see what Apple's competitors do. Apple will probably stay the leader, but let's see....

[Here is some news about some competing products in the works](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft releases CoPilot for Sales and CoPilot for Service

[Microsoft is selling both the Sales and Service Copilots for \\$50 per user per month each, inclusive of Copilot for Microsoft 365 licensing.](#)

It is important to understand what these AI services from Microsoft actually offer and how they could be used to add value to your business. You can [read more about the services here](#).

Microsoft has hinted that CoPilot for OneDrive is expected in May 2024, but things are still a bit vague as to what it will be.

It is so important to start engaging our specialists to understand these technologies (not to buy them, but to learn about them) and how they could add value to your business in any type of customer engagement process. [Please reach out to your account manager in FTG. If you are not sure who to call, just reply to this mail asking for assistance.](#)

How many Shades of CoPilot?

Why buy one when you can buy more?

Microsoft's CoPilot offering is split into 6 broad categories, but still all just different shades of AI. Microsoft's foray into AI is not easy to follow!

There is much publicity around CoPilot, but that is only really focused on one aspect - the one you can buy for \$20 (Pro) or \$30 per month, and there is still access to a free version as well. [Here is a summary of some of the different types of CoPilots](#) that you can get from Microsoft (noting that there is more detail below).

It is very important to consider whether your business is ready for CoPilot. With a monthly fee of \$30 per user, you must assess if CoPilot for Microsoft 365 aligns with the scale, requirements, and financial capacity of your organisation. Beyond the subscription cost, additional expenditures for gathering and preparing accurate, valuable data for the AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) to learn from must be taken into account.

This significant effort requires a dedicated commitment to decide on adopting the CoPilot platform. **Notwithstanding this comment, it is so important to start playing with CoPilot in some way for yourself and also your business as well as trying to figure out how to measure the benefit (see "Signs and Portents" above). Please talk to us about starting the journey, even if it is just about figuring out how to start playing with what you can use for free.**

Larger organisations need to evaluate if the gains in productivity from utilising the CoPilot for Microsoft 365 platform justify the initial investment and ongoing expenses.

Conversely, individuals and smaller enterprises without sufficient data for LLMs can access consumer-grade versions of Microsoft CoPilot at no charge, including Bing Chat within Microsoft Edge or even other LLM's such as ChatGPT, Bard, etc.....

CoPilot - Dive in or Wait?

When it comes to AI, you will get a lot of opinions. I think it is important to start playing with it as early as possible while at the same time figuring out how to use this new technology safely.

[Here is an excellent little article](#) written by the former CTO of Microsoft, now working for Directions on Microsoft, that mostly agrees with my approach. **Please note that we have workshops to help you navigate this** - read down below..

Microsoft is announcing new CoPilot stuff practically every two weeks, and it is getting very confusing, as it seems there is always one more CoPilot!

[ZDNET has published a nice summary here](#) (it is already a little out of date)

[TechRepublic has also published a cheat sheet here](#) . (more up to date)

If colleagues want to join the maillist they can click [here to subscribe](#).

NO Windows 12 in 2024

It is starting to look like we ARE getting a big update to Windows, but it will fall under the Windows 11 banner - 24H2. [Windows 10 comes to the end of Support in October 2025](#) , and it is THEN we will probably see Windows 12 which will be ready to see in Panther Lake on Intel's roadmap onwards (and we currently do not have much information beyond Panther Lake). [Here is a more detailed story as to what we can expect for 2024](#). Of course, [The Register has its own commentary!](#)

What is not changing is the demise of Windows 10, and we need to prepare for that.

Microsoft Entra ID Governance

This serves as an identity governance solution designed to enhance security measures and facilitate compliance with regulatory standards for organisations. Naturally, there are several methods through which you can obtain licences for this solution, and the [Microsoft licensing guide provides a detailed explanation of the available options](#)

Exchange Server 2019 end of Mainstream support (sort of)

Even though Exchange Server has reached the end of Mainstream support, there are still two more updates planned - [read more about this here](#) .

Visual Studio End-of-Life Dates

This is a particularly important reminder for those of you still using older versions of Visual Studio. [Microsoft has published a summary here](#).

Microsoft 365 Plan Comparison Table

Microsoft has just updated this handy table as of 1 Feb 2024! [You can download it here](#).

Updated Viva Feature Comparison Table

Microsoft has updated this useful table as of January 2024 to help you keep up with what is included in what suite. [You can download it here.](#)

Product Terms Updated as of 2 Feb 2024

The [Summary of the changes can be found here.](#)

Cloud & AI

Gemini Pro now powers Bard

It is now smarter in more languages and now includes image generation. Read [more about the update here.](#) Bard may also be [renamed to Gemini.](#)

Custom GPT's to make ChatGPT more powerful

There are thousands of Custom GPT's to make your use of ChatGPT even more effective. [Here is a list of some of them](#) to consider next time you want to do something.

Security

How Audio-jacking can subvert a Live Audio transaction

This is just plain scary - [but here is story about how it is done](#) demonstrated by IBM showing that it is quite easy to hijack an audio conversation and replace the words with different words in the same voice with nobody noticing the difference!

What's up at FTG

[With the ability to now buy one CoPilot license at a time](#) , getting ready for CoPilot is very important, as utilising AI in your business will become increasingly relevant - especially when the AI can use your own data to support you.

FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here.](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Dogs at the Opera](#) (A Russian produced animation!)

Now Playing: [Argylle](#)

Now Playing: [Zone of Interest](#)

9 February: [Land of Bad](#)

9 February: [Holdovers](#)

9 February: [Dune Part 1](#) - Re-release as a reminder for Dune Part 2 on 1 March

9 February: [Teri Baatoon Mein Asia Ujiha Jiya](#)

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TOP STORIES #49

For all the new members this week, welcome!

Below are some previous emails that might make interesting reading.

[#44](#) - check out "[Signs and Portents](#)" - this is about AI

[#46](#) - How do you end up buying a car with no seats?

[#48](#) - The previous email - many Microsoft announcements, including CoPilot Sales and Service

If you would like to invite colleagues to join this newsletter, they can click [here](#).

This week's news is Microsoft-related - note the new PC Manager App below from Microsoft.

Hardware

Transparent notebook display.

Of course, the next big IT Show of the year is the MWC in Barcelona at the end of Feb, and already, vendors are starting to tease with what they could be announcing at the show. Lenovo's notebook with a transparent [display looks very cool](#), but maybe not very practical.

Microsoft

Confirmed - it's NOT Windows 12

Microsoft has confirmed that the next big update that will include a major AI update will be Windows 11 24H2 - Windows 12 (and they are not committing anything) can be expected H2 2025 - probably to sync with Intel's release of Panther Lake. You [can read more here](#).

CoPilot is getting confusing - take your time!

[Experts agree that Microsoft is releasing too much too quickly](#), causing great confusion where you are no longer sure about which Copilot is which and what functionality you can expect. I recommend you [read this article from Directions on Microsoft](#) to help you take a deep breath before taking the leap into spending large sums of money. **At First Tech we do offer Workshops to help prepare and demystify how you can approach CoPilot - see "Whats up at FTG" below.**

Change to "from SA" Licensing Rules

As of 1st Feb 2024 you will **no longer be able to purchase new** "from SA" licenses to allow for a price benefit from having spent on SA for current on-premise Office licenses. Most companies have migrated already so this is not really a major issue anymore. The Microsoft announcement can be found [here](#). The Microsoft product Terms have also been updated to reflect this change [here](#). (Search for "From SA" and scroll to the very bottom of the page for the specific term - 7th instance).

Yay! Something for free - Azure SQL Database failover rights

As of December 2023, Microsoft introduced updated failover privileges for Azure SQL Database within their Product Terms. These adjustments permit savings on licensing when a secondary database replica is allocated solely for disaster recovery purposes without supporting active workloads or application connections.

[This classification as a standby replica allows for the allocation of vCores equivalent to those licensed for the primary database at no additional cost.](#) However, charges will still apply for the compute and storage resources utilised by the secondary database.

The announcement from Microsoft can be [found here](#) and instructions on how to [configure it are here](#).

Dynamics Licensing Guide updated January 2024

You can find the [latest guide here](#). The most recent update is the Power Virtual Agents are replaced with CoPilot Studio. As of November 2023 Microsoft launched Copilot Studio, a conversational AI platform enabling users to build bots using either natural language or a graphical interface, replacing the Power Virtual Agents brand.

This service is available under a tenant capacity license for \$200/month, supporting 25,000 messages, alongside a mandatory no-cost Per User license for each bot creator.

Power Platform Licensing Guide - February 2024

Microsoft has updated the document, which you can [download here](#). The big change of course

is also addressed on the Dynamics guide which is that Power Virtual Agents are no called CoPilot Studio.

This is a handy document, and if you are working with the aspect of Microsoft products, I really recommend you download it.

OneDrive is getting smarter

As soon as May this year you will be able to ask CoPilot to sift through your OneDrive files - including PDF's to answer specific questions for things that you are looking for. Unfortunately you will have to pay for it. [You can read more about it here](#).

Intune Suite Piles on the Add-ons

Microsoft has announced that there are now three Intune Suite Additions bringing three choices when it comes to buying Intune, in addition to buying some of the add-ons individually. You can see more about [how the pricing works here](#).

[Here is some more detail on these new features](#) and what is already available in the Suite.

Where Microsoft Software Goes to Die

The [Microsoft Graveyard](#) is an open source project which you can contribute to, but is also a great place to go down memory lane - and of course to see what has recently passed.....

Microsoft PC Manager aka PC Cleaner App now in the Microsoft Store

This is a free tool from Microsoft that has been in testing since 2022 and can replace tools like CCleaner that can be full of nagware. You can [read more here](#). I have checked, and I was able to install it. Microsoft has an official web site for [PC Manager here](#).

Windows 11 February Moment 5 Update due soon

It is mainly an EU compliance update, but it does bring some new features and tweaks. [You can read more here about what to expect](#).

Cloud & AI

Google Bard is now Gemini

Gemini is set to become the primary assistant for Google, with a paid-for tier called Gemini Ultra. You can read more about this change [and more here](#).

Security

If it Walk's like a Duck and Quacks like Duck, maybe it is still not a Duck!

[This story has been quite prominent in all the news feeds](#), and it serves as a reminder that you have to be vigilant and very much aware of how your colleagues look, sound and behave. If there is something "off " about their behaviour, especially when it comes to giving instructions to transfer funds, you should triple-check that what you are being instructed to do is legit.

Companies who's key people that have no in-person contact with each other are especially vulnerable.

If meeting occasionally physically is not possible it is important to always have your camera on with a good quality image so your colleagues can both see and hear how you interact with them. It is still difficult for an AI to imitate you 100%, and alert staff may pick up that they are looking at a fake before it is too late.

What's up at FTG

[With the ability to now buy one CoPilot license at a time](#), getting ready for CoPilot is very important, as utilising AI in your business will become increasingly relevant - especially when the AI can use your own data to support you.

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Now Playing: [Holdovers](#)

Now Playing: [Dune Part 1](#) - Re-release as a reminder for Dune Part 2 on 1 March

Now Playing: [Teri Baatoon Mein Asia Ujiha Jiya](#)

16 February: [Madame Web](#)

16 February: [Bob Marley One Love](#)

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TOP STORIES #50

News from Microsoft has slowed down a bit, but still a lot of interesting things going on this week. For all new members this week, welcome! You can read last week's letter [#49 here](#). If you would like to invite others to Join, they can click [here](#).

Hardware

What is all fuss about the Intel Meteor Lake Generation of CPU's

Well, there is a lot.

The first is that these new CPU's contain a special processor dedicated to certain types of AI workloads (NPU/VPU), taking the pressure off the GPU. Next, is that the GPU inside the CPU can deliver "ok" gaming performance, and then Intel is using a Chiplet design that allows it to make the CPU up out of different pieces of silicone from different foundries, allowing for more efficient designs leading to better battery life at higher levels of performance.

In addition to all this Intel has a brand new naming convention, where it is resetting these generational releases back to starting with 1. **All these changes are very important to understand especially from a procurement perspective.** The basic things that you used to include in your RFQ's specifications like Core i5, i7, i9 etc..... are no longer applicable. It is very important to meet with your First Tech Hardware AM to understand the new models coming down the line so you can update your specifications, and I URGE you to consider changing your minimum memory specification to 32Gig (See [TOP STORIES #46](#) about Microsoft changing the minimum specification). Remember, what you buy today will be in your environment all the way through to 2027.

[Here is a great summary from Linus Tech Tips](#) explaining just what the Intel Meteor Lake CPU is all about, along with the change in the naming convention.

End of the line for UHP lamp based projectors

In the EU regulations banning the manufacture and sale of UHP lamps will come into effect in 2026.

Right now, the ban is limited to the EU, but it is likely to ensure that manufacturers will not be investing in R&D in UHP lamp-based projectors going forward, so it is now a good idea to consider transitioning to LED and Laser-based models. You [can read more here](#).

Microsoft

CoPilot in Teams has been updated

Microsoft is rolling out a new CoPilot experience in Teams allowing better prompts (including accessing a library of prompts) and the ability to see your chat history. You can read [more detail about this update here](#).

Older computers will not be able to upgrade to Windows 11 24H2

Only CPU's that support the POPCNT instruction will be able to run this major upgrade of Windows 11. It may sound dramatic, but this instruction has been supported by CPU's going back 14 years (the Intel Nehalem and AMD Phenom II era).

There will be no workaround, so if you have [modified Windows 11 to run](#) on these only machines, this is now the end of the line. You can [read more about this here](#).

[Here are instructions on how to check what CPU you have](#).

[And here is how to check if your CPU supports the POPCNT instruction](#).

This is a reminder that you should start removing old machines from your environment that can only run Windows 10 on 8GB of RAM. This is necessary as Windows 10 will reach end of support in October 2025. Of course, Google has been quick to say that these machines could be upgraded to ChromeOS Flex, but not without some potential drawbacks. [You can read more about that here](#).

Please read on below about servers ready to expire in 2024.....

Reminder: Microsoft Servers coming to end of support in 2024

This is a reminder of all the versions of Microsoft server products coming to End of Support.

- Dynamics CRM 2013
- Microsoft Host Integration Server 2013
- Team Foundation Server 2013
- SQL Server 2014
- SQL Server Parallel data Warehouse EoS has been pushed out to March 2026

and then of course the **Living Dead - (Extended Support)**

- Windows Server 2008, ESU Year 4 for Azure only (Jan. 9, 2024)
- Windows Server 2008 R2, ESU Year 4 for Azure only (Jan. 9, 2024)
- Microsoft SQL Server 2012, ESU Year 2 (July 9, 2024)
- Windows Server 2012, ESU Year 1 (Oct. 8, 2024)
- Windows Server 2012 R2, ESU Year 1 (Oct. 8, 2024)

You can read more about [the migration options here](#).

Cloud and AI

Chat with RTX your OWN GPU

NVIDIA has released a LLM that can do similar things that ChatGPT or CoPilot can do, but the AI engine lives on your computer, and only works on the data you point it to. It is a early beta and can be glitchy, but gives you an interesting insight into how much machine intelligence can be exposed using the processing power of your own computer. It is very glitchy, so if you do install it, treat it as a demonstration of what is possible.

Increasingly, you will find really powerful LLMs being able to run on your own computer without needing the cloud.

Figuring out the best way to leverage AI is a marathon, not a sprint, but what is very clear. you **MUST BE STARTING THE RACE NOW!**

[Here is a good guide](#) on installing Chat with RTX. [Here is another good guide as well.](#)

ChatGPT getting a memory

In becoming more your trusted assistant, conversations no longer have to start from scratch, but is this a step towards General intelligence?

[Read more on this here.](#)

OpenAI Shows off Sora

This is a huge leap in AI's ability to render realistic videos from prompts. I'm almost scared to wonder what will be possible in 3 years time?

[Read more about it and see example clips here.](#)

Security

New Azure hacking campaign

Hackers are going after C-suite executives with a targeted campaign. This is another constant reminder to make sure one's security posture is constantly reviewed and users are educated on how they can be tricked into granting a bad actor access. [Read more here.](#)

What's up at FTG

An Insider View of Microsoft Security CoPilot

BUI is excited to personally invite you and your team to an exclusive one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here.](#)

Nintex AI-Powered Process Automation - want to know more?

Join First Technology Digital as we delve into the transformative realm of Nintex's AI-powered Process Automation.

When

29 February 2024, 10h00 to 11h00

Where

Online webinar, register [here](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Madame Web](#) (turned out to be a lot better than the critics were saying)

Now Playing: [Bob Marley One Love](#)

23 February: [Demon Slayer: To the Hashira Training](#)

23 February: [Frankie end Felipe](#)

23 February: [Oppenheimer \(re-issue\)](#)

23 February: [Miller's Girl](#)

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TOP STORIES #51

There is not much big news this week, but there is still enough news that is interesting. The [biggest Mobile technology conference of the year is about to kick off in Barcelona](#), which promises to be very interesting, and there will be a lot of news next week! If you are new to this newsletter - welcome! You can catch up on the previous weeks letter [#50 here](#). You can invite colleagues to [join here](#).

Hardware

Microsoft Adding Support for AMD Neural Processors

Microsoft is adding support for AMD's NPU's (Ryzen 8000 and upwards) to the Task Manager. Intel is already supported. This is the next big step forward in AI computing, where your computer will support AI capability using its own computing power, rather than having to connect to the cloud. [You can read more here](#).

Intel On track with Arrow Lake and Lunar Lake

Based on the latest disclosures, Intel is on track with their next generations of CPUs that will include tiles from TMSC - however, it seems Panther Lake will only be ready in 2026. [You can read more here](#). What is clear from this roadmap is that you can't lock yourself into buying notebooks with exactly the same specifications for more the 18 months (probably less).

Microsoft Makes an AI deal with Intel

Microsoft has done a deal with Intel to manufacture chips designed in-house by Microsoft on top of Microsoft already announcing that TMSC is also going to be making chips as well. [See more about this here](#).

Microsoft

Security Patches without reboots coming to Windows 11 24H2

This feature is not new, it had been enabled for Windows server 2022, but now Microsoft is planning to add it to the big release of Windows this year that almost got called Windows 12. [Read more here](#).

New Teams Video Clip feature coming in April

Microsoft says that in April, you can now [use Teams video clip in the channel](#), in addition to chat. Record yourself, your screen, or an audio-only clip and attach the video clip to your channel post or reply.

Publisher coming to end of life

Microsoft publisher has not ever been very popular, but is nevertheless used by some. For those few, this is an advance warning that Publisher will be gone by 2026. Libre Office and Corel Draw will still support importing Publisher files. You can read more about the [demise of Publisher](#) here.

Are people actually using CoPilot?

[Here is an interesting story](#) with examples of how people are using CoPilot to enhance their work. What is clear is even though it is early days, it is very important to be experimenting with AI as you must remember this quote: *"AI is not going to replace humans, but humans with AI are going to replace humans without AI."*

Again it is so important to get ready for AI and to get into the Workshop that we are offering, see "What's up at FTG below".

Cloud & AI

The Rise of Sovereign AI

[This is a very interesting interview with the CEO of NVIDIA](#) talking about how datacenters in the near future will be limited in their scope and access to single countries and companies as they start to realise the raw material of AI is data, and maybe you do not want to put it on the internet for all to scrape.

Adobe adds AI to Acrobat

If you are an Acrobat user, you will have noticed that Generative AI capability has been added,

and it is actually pretty nifty - you can ask it to help you with the document you have open without having to jump through hoops to get your other AI to chew on it. It is in beta, and currently for free - [you can read more about it here](#) .

Security

Opponents of US are gearing up for an AI assault

This report may be a bit overdramatic, but it serves as a sobering reminder that AI will be used for good and bad in equal measure, and you need to keep adapting to ensure that the bad guys do not catch you out. Microsoft's response to this is to rollout CoPilot for Security which is really just part of a bigger ongoing arms race. [You can read more about this here](#). Of course, Phishing attacks are already a lot more sophisticated thanks to AI.

What's up at FTG

FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#).

An Insider View of Microsoft Security CoPilot

BUI is excited to personally invite you and your team to an exclusive one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here](#).

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Now Playing: [Oppenheimer \(re-issue\)](#)

Now Playing: [Miller's Girl](#)

1 March: [Jungle Bunch 2](#)

1 March: [Dune Part 2](#) (this may be the biggest release of 2024 - only Deadpool 3 on 26 of July may beat it)

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TOP STORIES #52

the Mobile Web Congress has now closed, and it was a [crazy, weird and wonderful show](#). Here are stories all over the internet about what was announced and shown off. Lenovo in particular [scored a PR victory with its transparent notebook](#). Of course all the big hardware vendors used MWC as the platform to launch their new AI PC's along with Intel announcing the new [vPro platform for enterprise](#). There are many YouTube channels talking about MWC, but [here is a nice summary](#) of some of the mobile phone Highlights. Because of MWC, this is a busy week, as many companies used the conference to make announcements.

The link to the previous [TOP STORIES #51 is here](#). If you would like to invite colleagues to Join, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel launches Core Ultra VPro Processors

These are the CPU's specially for enterprise customers that include servicability and management features. You can [read more about the announcement here](#). vPro is also being introduced for 14th Gen Desktop processors. Here is a short video from Dell [explaining what vPro is](#) all about and [more here](#).

For enterprise customers, if you have not already, it may be an idea to explore if VPro can be of value, by contacting your First Tech. AM to help get you in touch with the experts.

Dell Announces New computers with a focus on AI

Along with everybody else, Dell has also announced a big list of new Laptops and Workstations with Intel's new Meteor Lake AI CPU's. You can [read more here](#).

1nm (10A) is now on the roadmap for 2027!

If Intel (and the rest of the World's Fab's) get to this, the computing capability that you get in 2027-2028 compared to now will be many magnitudes greater than anything we are seeing today. Intel is also saying that these factories will be fully autonomous.

[Read more about this here](#). I suspect our roadmap is going to get a lot more exciting really fast!

Microsoft

Microsoft launches CoPilot Lab

Microsoft has finally launched a web site that puts some of its CoPilot offerings in one place for you to understand what is available and gives you some examples on what you can do with it. The [landing page is here](#).

What you might find interesting is the section that shows you how CoPilot works in your everyday apps.

[It is becoming increasingly important to start using CoPilot in some way as it becomes more prevalent across all of Microsoft's applications. To avoid being left behind, please refer to the information below on how to sign up for CoPilot workshops.](#)

What is very important to recognise that it is still very early days for CoPilot, and for all its flaws it is really important to start playing with it.

The mileage is also different, for example, the benefits that CoPilot can bring you today in Teams is just amazing, and it is HIGHLY recommended that you experiment with it. Unfortunately, features that are available to you depend on what level of Teams you are using, for example one of the really cool features, called Intelligent Recap, is only available in [Teams Premium](#).

Another section that is good to read through is "The Art of Prompting"

Warning about the the "New Outlook"

[CoPilot only works in the "New Outlook"](#) - and please be very careful switching to it as some things stop working including losing access to local PST's (Microsoft is promising to support in future), for now, it can also be slow, memory-hungry and is [not getting great reviews](#) - MS still has a way to go before it replaces our venerable old Outlook, but is on track to replace it in around 2 years time.

You can read about all this in detail in [TOP STORIES #28](#).

Also, a very big deal is that the ["New Outlook" will no longer support COM add-ins](#). You can [read more about this here](#). It is really VERY important to connect with our [First Digital division to unpack if this is an issue](#) (or not) in your business.

Office Watch is advising that you steer clear of the New Outlook for now - [read here](#). However, Microsoft is continually improving the "New Outlook" and you can [stay abreast of the changes here](#).

You can teach an old (Excel) dog new tricks! Checkboxes as Values.

Microsoft has been testing checkboxes in Excel since 2023 allowing you to visualise data to include TRUE and FALSE values - **basically, you can use checkboxes as values**. [Here is a very interesting way to use this new feature](#) for many different applications. You have to enrol on the insider program to get this.

Microsoft Announces AI Access Principles

Microsoft used the MWC as the platform to announce it's AI principles (which are not binding) that is an 11-point plan to govern how Microsoft will Operate AI in it's infrastructure. You can read more [here](#) and more [details here](#).

"Old Teams" gets a lifeline.

Even though the New Teams is a lot faster and less memory hungry, the Old version still has a strong following, enough for Microsoft to delay it's retirement. From now on no new features will be added to the Old Teams, with availability extended to 1 July 2024. You can [read more about this here](#).

Windows 11 Moment 5 Update Announced

It is not a very big update, and is only expected to be rolled out in the April Patch Tuesday cycle, but still there are [some changes that you can read about here](#).

Microsoft Forms gets CoPilot

Microsoft is adding CoPilot to forms to help generate forms which is expected to go live in the next few months. It could be quite handy if you work with forms - [you can read more here](#).

Cloud & AI

Microsoft using AI to stop phone scammers

Spam calls can be really irritating, but what about the calls you actually answer? Can an AI warn you that the call is dodgy? Microsoft is now trialling this interesting use of AI. You can [read more about this here](#).

Mistral releases new AI model to rival GPT-4, and Microsoft buys a stake

The world is changing faster than what I'm feeling is even remotely Ok for me to cope! Only in May 2023 was Mistral incorporated and now they announce they are building an [alternative to OpenAI and Anthropic](#), and on top of that even a year later we have [Microsoft investing \\$16 Million in the startup!](#)

You can read more about this here where you [can sign in with your Azure subscription](#).

NVIDIA - Coding dead as a career -

This is quite a dramatic statement, and that it comes from the CEO of NVIDIA, it is good to pay attention to what he is saying. You can [read more here](#).

It does make one think about the future. [Look at what the Singapore Government has announced](#) for it's citizens age 40 and above - note what he says about SORA. [I really recommend you watch this!](#)

Adobe enters the world of AI music

Adobe is getting into the business of generating background tracks. Want an orchestra to play a background to a movie script? Just prompt it. It's early days, but watch the [demo here](#), and some [more background on what is being developed here](#).

Security

Make Sure you are patched - always

This is a reminder that you can never EVER relax when it comes to security. Microsoft has patched a new flaw in the Applocker driver in the February release. [Read more about the flaw here](#).

What's up at FTG

FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register](#)

[here.](#)

An Insider View of Microsoft Security CoPilot

BUI is excited to personally invite you and your team to an exclusive one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here.](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Jungle Bunch 2](#)

Now Playing: [Dune Part 2](#) (This is probably the biggest movie for the year)

8 March: [The Bricklayer](#)

8 March: [Imaginary](#)

8 March: [# Love my Selfie](#)

8 March: [Cabrini](#)

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TOP STORIES #53

MWC is now done, and we are now back to a more normal news week.....

Last Week's TOP STORIES #52 can be found [here](#).

If you would like to invite colleagues to join, they can [click here](#)

Hardware

Is ARM with Microsoft catching up with Apple?

With the new Snapdragon X benchmarks appearing online, it looks like Apple is in for some more competition - but not anytime soon as the problem is developers need to make sure their apps will run on the ARM version of Windows. [You can read more about the challenges here](#).

Microsoft launching AI PC's in March

Microsoft is going to be releasing Surface 10 and Laptop 6 this month and will be the first from Microsoft with the new AI silicone from Intel and Qualcomm. Microsoft is also likely to demonstrate the new features expected to roll out in Windows 11 24H2. [You can read more here](#).

More news on Arrow Lake

Intel is going to be releasing more details on what we can expect from Meteor-Lake's successor, Arrow Lake, at Computex in June, though we can only expect it in volume in 2025, just as we start getting our hands on Meteor Lake Core Ultra CPUs (see Microsoft announcement above). Because of the accelerated release cycle, it is very important not to lock yourself into buying computers with a specific generation of CPU for anything longer than a year.

After Arrow Lake is Lunar Lake and then there is AMD

[It looks like though Intel is on track](#) (Note the embedded MLID YouTube video) for us to see Lunar Lake in 2025 which will bring major performance improvements over anything we see today, AMD is likely to take the lead from Intel very soon as well. It is very important going forward to consider Intel and AMD equally in your choice of new hardware; however, if you are using vPro from Intel, that could limit your choice.

Microsoft

CoPilot can now read your files

This is a good thing! Microsoft is rolling out this feature that gives it the ability to "read" your files on your PC allowing you to interrogate it on matters relating to contents of the documents. [You can read more about this here](#).

Android App support on Windows 11 is no more

Though this has taken everybody by surprise, it seems the project was doomed to fail because Amazon and Microsoft could not get enough apps to run from the store. Google walking away from the venture sealed it's fate. [You can read more here](#).

Cloud & AI

Anthropic surpasses GPT-4 and Gemini

The AI wars continue with Anthropic announcing Claude 3 that surpasses the capabilities of it's competitors. You can expect a lot of this to happen every couple of months. [You can read more here](#).

Maybe you do NOT need a plan for AI?

[Here is a very interesting article](#) to ponder posted by a columnist from InfoWorld. I think he has point, AI is moving too fast for you "bake" plans that take a long time (like 6 months) to show results. You need to be adaptable, and most importantly start small and stay agile constantly open to new ideas. It is worth reading to help formulate your approach to seeing how you can get value out of AI in your business.

Weirdness of prompting AI's

In line with not having a fixed plan to deploy AI, [here is a very interesting article](#) written by Ethan Mollick explaining that prompting an AI to do a task is not as obvious as you may think, and encouraging people to experiment is very important indeed to get the best results. It is also important to recognise that GPT-4 is [already beating most humans](#) when it comes to creative

thinking, so it is very important to start going down this rabbit hole with AI in your business especially encouraging people to be creative in how the prompt an AI for help and even asking the AI to help develop better prompts!

[You can read more here](#) about how you get better responses from AI's when you trick them into thinking they are something else.

Microsoft is really killing Outlook

Please refer to what I published in [TOP STORIES #52](#) (warning about the "New Outlook").

Microsoft has just released more information confirming that the "Old Outlook" is really on it's way out, with "good news" that the Old version will still be supported up to 2029. [You can read more about this updated roadmap here](#). For all users who are already using the online version of Outlook, they are actually already "migrated", but for everybody else who has been using the "Old Outlook", things are going to change dramatically. Redmondmag has published more details and commentary on these plans here, [which I recommend you read](#).

Security

Microsoft under sustained attack

It seems the attack is not letting up, and it is a reminder that we ALL need to be as vigilant as possible all the time. [Read more here](#).

What's up at FTG

Cape Town

You are invited to Register at the Microsoft-hosted Envision Connection, where FTG will also be presenting, represented by Dirk Prinsloo

When

Thursday, March 14, 2024, 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Where

Cape Town International Convention Centre

Register [here](#).

Johannesburg

You are invited to Register at the Microsoft-hosted Envision Connection, where FTG will also be presenting represented by Dirk Prinsloo

When

Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Where

Heaton Lane Longlake 20 Modderfontein Lethabong, Sandton

Register [here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [The Bricklayer](#)

Now Playing: [Imaginary](#)

Now Playing: [# Love my Selfie](#)

Now Playing: [Cabrini](#)

15 March: [Arthur The King](#)

15 March: [The Bush Knife](#)

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TOP STORIES #55

You can read the previous week's [TOP STORIES #54 here](#)

If colleagues would like to join, they can [click here](#).

It is a fairly slow week, but if you are using Power Apps and Dynamics, please note an update to the saga below.

Hardware

Microsoft Launches Surface Pro 10 and Surface 6 Laptop

Microsoft has launched these premium devices for the enterprise packed with AI features which you [can read about there](#). Here is a [video summary of the event](#).

AMD releases new generation to take on Intel

AMD has announced its 8000 series Ryzen processors to take on Intel. This means we will see up to a tripling in AI performance over what we see today by 2025, so be careful about buying new technology in too much of a hurry. More importantly, if you HAVE to buy, do not lock yourself into a specific CPU model or generation. [You can read more here](#).

Microsoft

CoPilot in Azure SQL preview

Microsoft has announced a preview of CoPilot in Azure SQL databases to translate natural language queries into SQL. [Read more here](#).

The PowerApps and Dynamics Licensing saga continues

You may recall in [TOP STORIES #54](#) I drew attention to a change in PowerApps licensing relating to how you access Dynamics data that could massively increase your licensing costs. It seems that Microsoft is using the March changes to limit Power Apps Subscription rights and subsequently increase costs.

For more detail, I **URGE** you to read [this post from Directions on Microsoft here](#), and also the post [from the Register](#) with some further comments from the DOM analyst they interviewed.

PLEASE heed his guidance.

The financial implications are potentially **MASSIVE**, so I urge you to contact your First Tech account manager to direct you to the relevant experts so that you can unpack the implications further.

Microsoft AI - a new division

Microsoft has a new division focused on AI and has appointed Mustafa Suleyman, co-founder of Google-owned DeepMind to head this division. [Read more here](#). The idea is to consolidate CoPilot, Edge and Bing into [this new division](#).

Office 2024 Preview in April

Microsoft is going to release another version of a perpetual licensed version of Office. This will be supported for 5 years from the release date and will lack many cloud and AI features. [You can read more about this here](#),

Cloud & AI

GPT-4 "sucks", here comes GPT-5

Just when you thought GPT-4 was pretty good, Open AI is saying the next version is going to be released in the next few months and will be materially better - [read more here](#).

CISCO bets on Splunk

CISCO has splashed out \$29 Billion to build on customers insights into companies digital footprints to enhance security. [Read more about the acquisition here](#),

Security

Malware spreading through a new Vulnerability

Yet again, this is a new sophisticated attack that depends on tricking a victim into downloading a file like a "monthly salary report". This triggers a complex injection of malware into the computer. As always you CANNOT EVER LET YOU GUARD down. [Read more here](#),

Fortinet Appliances are still vulnerable Though there is a gradual improvement in patching, many devices are still vulnerable. [You can read more about the vulnerability here](#). If you need assistance, please reach out to your First Tech AM to put you in touch with Fortinet experts to assist further.

What's up at FTG

FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Kung Fu Panda 4](#)

29 March: [Asphalt City](#)

29 March: [Godzilla X Kong: The New Empire](#)

29 March: [The Chosen Spy X Family Code: White](#)

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TOP STORIES #56

I hope you are having a great Easter weekend break!

Microsoft financial Q4 is now starting, so there is quite a bit of news as the company prepares to try and meet (and exceed) it's revenue collection targets.

Be very wary of [any news on 1 April](#), though some are working up to be quite funny.

Last week's [TOP STORIES #55 can be found here](#)

If you would like to invite colleagues to join the maillist, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel and Microsoft Announce the new AI PC Specification

This is a long story, but it is important to read.

Some of this is "old news", as, back in [TOP STORIES #46](#) I wrote that Microsoft had already indicated that the new AI PC specification will need to have a **minimum** of 16Gig RAM and 40 TOPS (see more on that below).

Clearly, when Microsoft specifies a minimum of 16Gig, you should at least double it in practice to give you some realistic breathing room, (To my point - Microsoft **still** says 4Gig RAM and 64Gig Storage is the [minimum requirement for Windows 11](#) - which is clearly not realistic anymore - just try do anything with 4 Gig RAM other than booting it!)

What's now changed is that Microsoft says you need to have the CoPilot Key to allow the machine to be called an "**AI PC**".

This key is going to matter!! It's a status symbol, just like a badge on a brand new car!

But there is a problem!

The current Meteor Lake generation from Intel which does have an NPU, is less than half of the minimum performance requirement [set by Microsoft to allow for CoPilot AI to run locally](#).

You can [read more about this announcement here](#), and you can read [even more detail on what to expect in an AI PC as defined by Microsoft and Intel](#).

Furthermore, it looks like AMD is beating Intel in the race to achieve 40 TOPS first, and it is looking like the first high-performance AI PCs will be available from AMD long before Intel is able to get chips in any volume on the market.

The YouTube Channel "Moore's Law is Dead" has just [released a bunch of leaks about all this](#) which seems to verify that AMD is ahead of the game.

What's clear is that we will [only see production volumes for Arrow Lake and Lunar Lake](#) from intel in 2025 - where only the Lunar Lake generation will easily meet the Microsoft Specification.

Because things are moving quickly it is clear that you must not be in a hurry to buy new AI PC-compliant hardware right now, however this new type of AI PC is exactly the hardware you NEED to buy because once you have bought it, you are stuck with it for at least 3 years, and AI is going to be even more of a big deal a year from now.

This means it is important to start planning what you are going to buy and not to lock yourself into buying a specific model for any extended period right now.

You will undoubtedly be able to buy Meteor Lake notebooks soon, but they will quickly transition to Arrow Lake and then Lunar Lake in 2025.

[Regardless of the AI PC specification, it is very clear that the minimum memory requirement has changed dramatically, and it is important to reconsider increasing that to 32Gig \(16Gig as an absolute minimum\).](#)

Taking everything into consideration above, it is a good time to review your hardware specifications and start planning your next refresh cycles.

These new notebooks for your business will come with specifications that you haven't considered before, such as TOPS, as a reminder that it's important to start taking this new world of AI PC's into consideration.

[To get insight on what to do, please contact your First Tech AM to schedule a planning session to discuss what's on the horizon with your specific hardware vendor.](#)

The Race to the TOP(S)

TOPS, which stands for Tera Operations per Second is a metric, not a benchmark - which you

can read [more about here](#) is important to understand as this is going prominently feature as part of the minimum requirements for the PC going forward.

Microsoft March Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide

The new Guide, revised in March 2024, incorporates a handful of modifications.

The table detailing Base and Attach licences on pages 4 and 5 has been amended, excluding Field Service Contractor, Guides, and Remote Assist as these are not eligible for Base licence categorisation. Furthermore, updates have been made to the capacities for Supply Chain Management on page 31, expanding them to encompass Electronic Invoicing and Intelligent Order Management.

You can [download the latest guide here](#).

CoPilot for Education delayed to 1 May

This service was supposed to roll out on 1 April but instead, has been delayed to 1 May. You can [read more here](#).

CoPilot for Security released 1 April

This a reminder that Microsoft is releasing CoPilot for Security on Monday, You can find the [details about the release here](#). This will be billed as a consumption model per hour (Security Compute Unit - SCU).

Microsoft Licensing guide for 1 Feb 2024 with "from SA" Changes added

Microsoft has published a new guide which you can [download here](#). It is important to note that from 1 Feb 2024 no new "From SA" licenses can be purchased by new or existing customers. The change was originally communicated in [TOP STORIES #49](#) where you can find the details of the change in the Product Terms.

M365 Plan Comparison documents updated for March

The Modern Work Plan Comparison Document for Enterprise has been updated. You can download it [here](#).

Note that the Intune Suite now consists of three plans which you can [read all about here](#) and [here](#).

Teams gets even Smarter

Microsoft is adding more smarts to Teams where CoPilot will be able to add more insights into what is being discussed in the meeting. Additionally, Intelligent Recap in Calls is being added to Teams Premium, with even more features being added for Hybrid meetings; you can [read more here](#).

Of all the add-ons Microsoft is offering, Teams Premium with CoPilot also demonstrates how big a difference AI can make to your business, with new features being added all the time.

I urge you to reach out to your First Technology account manager to arrange a demonstration of these new features our Unified Communications specialists - it is really worth it!

Power BI licensing switching to Fabric licensing

Everybody that is using Premium P1 to P5 SKU's is affected.

One of the big changes is that the dual-use benefit is going away, and you will have to cover your on-premise deployments with SQL Enterprise on-premise licensing.

The impact of recent changes could significantly affect your ongoing strategy to adopt Power BI.

If you are working with or considering Power BI, I suggest that you spend some time with our Power BI specialists to understand the impact and assess if you could benefit from the changes.

PLEASE reach out to your First Tech account manager to schedule a meeting to unpack this.

You can [read more about this change here](#) and on the [Microsoft Blog here](#).

The clock is ticking! You have 9 months!

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT is better than CoPilot

A fairly consistent complaint is that ChatGPT is better than CoPilot. This is because ChatGPT was first and has thus gotten smarter than CoPilot, [at least that is according to Microsoft - read here](#).

There is also a deeper issue that can further explain this difference: Microsoft is putting more emphasis on ensuring that proper security guardrails are in place before CoPilot can be used in

the corporate environment, leading to lower general adoption.

Ultimately I think CoPilot will catch up, but this is a marathon,, not a sprint - [as explained by the research institution - Directions on Microsoft.](#)

This situation is temporary, and CoPilot WILL catch up and ultimately probably end up being the most extensively integrated AI offering you will be able to get. It is thus very important to prepare now to ensure that CoPilot can be enabled for some users in your environment.

[If you have not already, please see about signing up for FTG's CoPilot workshop detailed below .](#)

Nervous about AI in your Business? You not alone.

[According to a new report](#), almost all tech. executives are slowing down the adoption of AI, while still feeling pressurised to adopt AI as soon as possible. This connects with the story about CoPilot above, and actually confirms that the emphasis should be on preparation. Please refer to our workshops to help you prepare for the inevitable arrival of AI in your company below...

Don't bet your life on AI (yet)

[Here is a story](#) warning people to not rely on AI to tell you if mushrooms are safe to eat - it can get it fatally wrong!

Security

Sharepoint Vulnerability under attack

This patch has been available for a year, but since this vulnerability is now being exploited, it is a good idea to be 100% sure that you have this patched. [Read more about this here.](#)

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#)

Copilot for Security You and your team are invited to a one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here.](#)

Movies

Now Playing: [Asphalt City](#)

Now Playing: [Godzilla X Kong: The New Empire](#)

Now Playing: [The Chosen Spy X Family Code: White](#)

5 April: [The First Omen](#)

5 April: [Ordinary Angels](#)

5 April: [Monkey Man](#)

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TOP STORIES #57

Probably the biggest news of the week is Microsoft's unbundling of Teams From Office worldwide. This will probably benefit nobody.

If you have a volume licensing agreement, it is VERY important to read more about this below. Last Week's [TOP STORIES #56 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up to this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Terabit-per-second data transfer speeds are coming

It is now looking certain that we will see these transfer rates before 2030, as we already are seeing devices supporting PCIe 6 that achieve 800Gb/s. You can [read more about what to expect here](#).

The Key-Code for the CoPilot Key

This is for the inner Geek in you. The key (F23) actually exists on an ancient IBM Terminal keyboard which you can read [more about here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 24H2 on track for September. LTSC Edition confirmed

This piece of news is very important as it tells Corporates that THIS is the edition that should be adopted. LTSC is a version of **Windows Enterprise** that's designed for stability and as such, feature updates are infrequent and can be delayed or skipped entirely, and only opting for crucial security patches and fixes is an option.

This is **NOT** typically the version you should install on your users' machines. It is intended for critical systems that should be "touched" as little as possible.

[Read more here](#).

Time to Deploy Windows 11 (almost - read above)

Microsoft has just given you the best incentive possible to start the migration to Windows 11 before Windows 10 comes to the end of Support in October 2025. The price for extended support has been announced! **\$61 in the first year, and then doubling every year after that!**

[Read more here](#).

Teams unbundled from Office

Score: EU=0 Microsoft=1

This is actually old news first published in [TOP STORIES #26](#). It started years back with Slack complaining to the EU that it was uncompetitive for the EU to allow Microsoft to sell Office bundled with Windows, as it prevented companies like Slack from selling their offering to compete with Teams.

Well, Slack got it's wish.

Directions on Microsoft analyst Jim Gaynor said: "In the end, this move is about Microsoft trying to stay ahead of regulatory scrutiny, not about offering customers a way to reduce costs."

What is really important to read is [this paper from Directions on Microsoft](#), where you should particularly note this statement:

"Because so many Microsoft and third-party products are integrated with Teams these days or use Teams-based apps as their main user interfaces, axing Teams might not be a simple decision. Many of those using Microsoft 365 Copilot claim the most useful piece is Teams Copilot."

The benefits of Teams with CoPilot is very impressive, and if you have not explored just how impressive the results you get from Meeting summaries, recaps etc..... **I recommend that you reach out to our Unified Communications Division, GaldonData, [here](#)**, to request a demo of the more advanced and impressive features of Teams with CoPilot. (In the "Let us know how we can help box" - just enter #57). And of course refer to our CoPilot workshops below.

Redmondmag has published a more detailed breakdown of the Teams and No Teams pricing [here](#). [This site from Microsoft](#) has more information but is more directed at partners.

When it comes to the pricing implications and how this will affect your agreement, especially when it comes to planning your renewal, it is ESSENTIAL that you contact your First Tech Licensing account manager to understand your options

going forward.

New Planner for Teams rolling out

Complete with a new logo, Microsoft is rolling out this update in Teams right now. so It should appear in your Teams soon.

The new Planner app in Teams mashes up the features found in the older To Do, Planner, and Project for the web apps. It includes the new My Tasks view, where you can see all of your scheduled tasks on one page, including from basic and premium plans in one and from other Microsoft apps like Loop, Teams, and emails.

[Read more about the rollout here.](#)

Microsoft Product Terms updated

Microsoft has updated the terms to accommodate Office without Teams, changes to Dynamics 365 and also, Intune. You can [read up on the details here.](#)

Cloud & AI

Opera allows users to run LLM's locally

This is a big deal that you can now download multiple LLM's to experiment with them locally. You can [read more about this here](#). NVIDIA also has an LLM that you can experiment with on your own machine that you can [download here](#).

Major Upgrade to CoPilot

Right after Open AI making GPT 3.5 freely available, all CoPilot users now have access GPT-4 Turbo, a massive context window and up to 100 image generations per day. [You can read more here.](#)

Security

Dangerous DOS Server attack

Here's a reminder to always keep security a top priority. Recently, a new attack has been discovered that can crash web servers. [Read more here.](#)

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#)

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Now Playing: [Ordinary Angels](#)

Now Playing: [Monkey Man](#)

12 April: [Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire](#)

12 April: [Mothers Instinct](#)

12 April: [Back to Black](#)

12 April: [Civil War](#)

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TOP STORIES #58

NAB is now in full swing in Las Vegas, which is all about the production of content - this is where filmmakers go to learn about new gadgets and technologies, which is a welcome distraction from the onslaught of news from the IT world, where we are currently overwhelmed by AI news. [Show Daily - Day 1 is here](#). Remarkable technologies are being shown, for example, you can see how they are making the [idea of the HoloDeck a reality](#).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #57 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up to this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

The original story about Teams being unbundled is provided below in case you missed it.

Hardware

ARM AI PC's to outperform MAC's?

Microsoft seems confident that the latest Windows-based ARM PCs will beat the Apple M3 MacBook Air this time. We will have to wait till the 20th of May for the release, but if this is the case, this will be quite a big deal. [You can read more here](#). Not that Apple is going to be left behind for long - the [M4 has just been announced!](#)

Lunar Lake will have 100+ TOPS

Intel has announced that the Lunar Lake NPU will have 45+ TOPS beating Microsofts minimum requirement which will be enough to allow for parts of CoPilot to run locally. [You can read more here](#).

Microsoft

New Windows Server 2025 features revealed.

We are now getting more information on what's new including hot patching and confirmation that you will still be able to buy it as a perpetual license. [You can read more here](#).

Teams unbundled from Office

Score: EU=0 Microsoft=1 - the dust has not settled!

This is actually old news first published in [TOP STORIES #26](#). It started years back with Slack complaining to the EU that it was uncompetitive for the EU to allow Microsoft to sell Office bundled with Windows, as it prevented companies like Slack from selling their offering to compete with Teams.

Well, Slack got it's wish.

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When it comes to the pricing implications and how this will affect your agreement, especially when it comes to planning your renewal, it is ESSENTIAL that you contact your First Tech Licensing account manager to understand your options going forward.

Windows 10 End of Life

It is starting to look quite clear that [there will be no extension to the end of life date](#) for

Windows 10 (October 2025), and you now need to start planning the upgrade to Windows 11 24H2 which is expected in September. It is now really important to start the planning- starting with making sure that all pre Gen 8 hardware is on it's way to the recyclers. Please reach out to your account manager to start helping with this planning that dovetails with the procurement of new hardware and, of course, the new minimum system requirements.

Cloud & AI

Need a Video for your presentation - AI will make one for you

Google has announced an AI App that will when prompted with some text, documents, pictures and videos generate an entire video with music, script and voiceover - everything for your production. [Read more about this here](#) and [here where it is suggested we will see Lunar Lake shipping by end of 2024](#).

It is really important to reach out to your First Tech. Hardware AM to discuss your plans in terms hardware refreshes - things are changing so fast!

ChatGPT gets an upgrade

For paid subscriptions, its model has gotten smarter and is now aware of what is going on in the world up to December 2023. [You can read more about it's new intelligence here](#).

Security

Brand new Malware coming to your inbox (again)

As always this serves as a reminder for your need to stay alert for anything suspicious, which is becoming more difficult because AI's are helping the bad guys where English is not their first language, communicate perfectly. [This one is nasty as it can detect if it is running in a sandbox](#).

What's up at FTG

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Copilot for Security You and your team are invited to a one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire](#)

Now Playing: [Mothers Instinct](#)

Now Playing: [Back to Black](#)

Now Playing: [Civil War](#)

19 April: [Sleeping Dogs](#)

19 April: [Abigail](#)

19 April: [The boy and the Heron](#)

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TOP STORIES #60

The big news this week, is that a South African company, BUI, a division of the First Technology Group has found a critical vulnerability in Microsoft Defender XDR - read more below.

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #59 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up for this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel confirms Panther Lake for mid 2025

Not only will we see performance tripling over what we can buy today with Lunar Lake, but we will also see another **doubling** by mid-2025!

Panther Lake is the result of three generations' rapid development in endpoint AI computing capability, which most likely sets the stage for the release of Windows 12 in October 2025.

[Read more about the Panther Lake announcement here](#).

Microsoft

End of Support for the "Old" Teams

It is now finally time to make sure you are running the "New Teams". The Old Teams will be switched off 1 July 2025. [Read more here](#).

This is also a good time to remind you that the next big app that is on the chopping block is your favourite Outlook, with a "New Outlook" already released for you to play (unhappily) with.

I originally published a story about this in [TOP STORIES #53](#) and in [TOP STORIES #52](#) where I recommend you review the story "[Warning about the "New Outlook"](#)" in which is especially important to note that support for COM add-ins ends with the Old Outlook. A big feature that is still not shipped in the New Outlook is PST support - you can [see the list here](#).

What is Windows 11 LTSC - can I install it?

The answer is: "not really".

Only if you are a company with an Enterprise Agreement can you get your hands on it (exceptions apply).

[This is a special version of the operating system designed for long-term stability and reliability, ideal for mission-critical systems that require minimal updates.](#)

Unlike the standard version, LTSC receives feature updates only every 2-3 years and monthly quality updates without bundled apps like Microsoft Store and Microsoft Edge, making it suitable for devices like medical equipment and ATMs that need to operate consistently with little maintenance. [You can read more about Windows 11 24H2 LTSC here](#).

What it also means is that Windows 11 is really ready for the Enterprise.

Microsoft now has a stable enough version that corporates can install without (hopefully) major issues.

If you have not already, this is the signal for you to start deploying Windows 11 24H2 if you can wait for it (September 2024), but it should not stop you from deploying in the meantime, as upgrading to 24H2 should be seamless.

[It is important to start now, if you have not already, as Windows 10 is coming to the end of support in October 2025.](#)

Please reach out to your FT account manager to connect you with the right resources in the First Technology Group to help with this - we have a LOT of experience!

Dynamics Licensing Guide April 2024

There is an updated guide that you can [download here](#).

The changes from the previous guide can be found on Page 63 where Microsoft appears to be tweaking your Sales Use Rights.

It is also important to remember that a significant price increase is coming in October 2024, which I addressed in [TOP STORIES #59](#).

Therefore, it is very important that you reach out to our Dynamics Specialists to help understand (and hopefully mitigate) the impact.

The On Premise Licensing guide is also updated, which you [can download here](#).

There is actually a single site where you can download ALL the guides including GP - [the link is here](#).

Cloud & AI

New AI that runs on your laptop

Microsoft has unveiled the Phi-3 Mini, a new AI model that operates directly on your personal computer. (Disclaimer: I have not installed it myself).

This local execution ensures your data remains private, eliminating the need to transmit it to cloud services, which could potentially be intercepted by unauthorized entities.

Additionally, Phi-3 Mini is available at no cost because it is distributed as open-source software.

[To download and install it go here.](#)

For a guide on [how to get it working go here](#).

It is very important to start looking at what AI capability you can get on your PC without any dependence on the cloud. Remember that by the middle of 2025, the computers that will be available then could be five times **more powerful with AI than the most powerful computer you can get today!**

Please ask your First Tech Account manager to reach out to our team of AI Development experts to help you put a picture together on how to start experimenting with all these different types of LLM's.

It's NOT all about the cloud as AMD, Intel, NVIDIA, and Qualcomm want you buying high powered silicon at the endpoint as well.

Security

BUI, a South African Cyber Company Research Department Finds Critical Microsoft Vulnerability

A **newly discovered critical vulnerability** within the Attack Surface Reduction (ASR) rules of Microsoft Defender XDR poses a severe threat to cybersecurity.

These rules, which are integral to the protection of organizational networks, can be bypassed by adversaries due to an unprotected registry key, allowing them to evade detection and compromise system defences.

Despite the gravity of the situation, a fix is not yet available, leaving organizations to rely on Advanced Hunting queries and Custom detection rules for interim risk mitigation.

The vulnerability may result in your endpoints being compromised and lead to a potentially serious degradation of your protection.

A detailed explanation of the vulnerability and a method to mitigate this issue has [been published here](#).

If you need help immediately with this issue reach out to your First Technology Group Account manager, or you can [click here](#) to complete the form and put "XDR" in the message.

Microsoft to put Security above all else

Microsoft has revealed plans to prioritize security over features and investments. I expect Microsoft's investments in its AI tool, "CoPilot for Security," to increase dramatically. [You can read more about this here](#).

Will Microsoft commit to "Secure by Default"?

To quote Directions on Microsoft, "Microsoft should not be selling security as a premium offering".

Microsoft has made some baby-steps in this direction by making logs available to customers not licensed for E5 for 180 days in response to the Midnight Blizzard attack in 2023. Right now, Microsoft's easiest security option is M365E5, but unfortunately, it needs to be for ALL users.

You can read more about what to do in [this paper from Directions on Microsoft](#) by Mary Jo Foley. Some commentary from [The Register is also interesting](#).

There are some possible options by taking lower level SKU's and then adding specific add-ons, but your specific situation needs to be understood.

It is really important that you reach out to your First Tech Account manager to help you explore options to try and improve your licensing value proposition.

What's up at FTG

Sophos Security Technical Masterclass on Sophos Intercept X

This is an in-person event in Umhlanga, Durban

When

Wednesday 8 May 2024 @ 9:00am - [Register here](#).

Where

Holiday Inn Express Umhlanga, 2 Ncondo Place Crn Ncondo Place &, Ntusi Rd, Off Umhlanga Rocks Dr.

CoPilot Readiness FTG is offering a [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#)

Copilot for Security You and your team are invited to a one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [10 Lives](#)

Now Playing: [The Fall Guy](#)

Now Playing: [Boy Kills World](#)

3 May: [Star Wars: Episode 1 The Phantom Menace \(re-release\)](#)

3 May: [Breathe](#)

3 May: [Challengers](#)

3 May: [Just Now Jeffrey](#)

3 May: [Snake](#)

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TOP STORIES #62

It is not a very busy week, though the fallout from Broadcom's acquisition of VMWare is still playing out - read more below.

Microsoft is paying more attention to security and getting CoPilot to work better with existing features, so we will see a slowdown in the announcements of new ones.

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #61 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up for this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

The link last week was invalid - this one works - apologies!

Hardware

AMD hits highest Market Share in Desktop and Server

AMD is proving to be a headache for Intel where it's market share is climbing as companies look for more cost-effective computing power without sacrificing capabilities. Performance, price and availability of the latest AI-capable technology may very well result in you needing to pay more serious attention to AMD based computing systems. [You can read more here](#) and some more details [here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft's VMware Rapid Migration Plan: Not as shiny as it looks

Directions on Microsoft has published an article that warns you to be careful about the VMware Migration plan. It can be beneficial, but you do need to be careful about what happens after the five years of reserved instances come to an end (the new cut-off date for purchase is 1 December 2024). You can [read more here](#).

[Please contact your First Tech Licensing account manager for assistance in deciding how best to take advantage of the Migration plan.](#)

Microsoft Purview enhanced with AI hooks

Microsoft is rolling out Purview AI Hub, which will offer insights into how AI applications are being used within your networks and allow you to prioritise data risks. Microsoft Purview eDiscovery will allow streamlining the collection of CoPilot data.

[You can read more about this here](#), and then please reach out to your First Tech. account manager to connect you with our specialists in Purview to see if and how you can start participating in the preview program.

Microsoft M365 Plan Comparison Table - May 2024

A reminder that you can download the latest M365 Plan Comparison Document dated 1 May 2024 [here](#).

Cloud & AI

AWS Rights to resell VMWare terminated

Hot on the heels of Microsoft's VMWare migration plan VMWare has ended AWS's ability to resell VMWare cloud as of 30 April. AWS has also posted a [blog](#) on moving customers from VMWare to AWS native services. You can [read more about this here](#).

Please also reach out to our [AWS Specialists at First Horizon](#) to work with them to look at your options with AWS. Please also reach out to your First Technology Licensing AM to ensure you are connected with the right people to best assist you.

Security

Major Dell User Data Breach

You may already be aware of this, but it's pretty serious, as you cannot undo it by changing the Service Tags affixed to Dell hardware at customers.

49 million customer records, including your computer's Service Tag (aka. serial number), are now being sold on the dark web, so [it would be wise to be extra wary of any communication claiming to be from Dell \(or even a partner\), especially if you get it in your inbox](#). You can read [more about this breach here](#).

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness Workshops are now available for you to register [here](#) or [here](#).

Copilot for Security Join BUI, (FTG's Azure, Cloud and Security specialists) for an exclusive one-on-one demo session featuring Microsoft Security Copilot!

This is a prime opportunity for your team to experience the forefront of technology with our latest release. Dive into discussions about defining and understanding the consumption needs specific to your organisation.

Reserve your spot now! [Sign up here](#).

Microsoft CoPilot Studio Webinar

Join us for an enlightening webinar on Microsoft CoPilot Studio, where we'll unveil the capabilities and potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing organizational productivity. Discover how to craft your own AI CoPilots and integrate them seamlessly into your business processes.

Don't miss this opportunity to empower your organization with the next generation of AI technology.

When

Thursday 23 May @ 10:00am - [Register Here](#)

Where

Online - Microsoft Teams Thursday, 23 May 2024

Movies

Now Playing: [Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes](#)

Now Playing: [Tarot](#)

17 May: [The Strangers: Chapter 1](#)

17 May: [Imaginary Friends](#)

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TOP STORIES #44

Well HAPPY NEW YEAR! 2024 is already looking like it is going to be quite exciting

We start the year with some really big news that is all over the Internet just in time for CES (go figure) - Microsoft has announced the first major change to the Windows keyboard layout in 30 years.

PLEASE read "Signs and Portents" under the Cloud and AI section below.

We are now getting a **dedicated CoPilot Key!** I think this is a genius marketing move on the part of Microsoft as it will drive interest in CoPilot and drive sales of new hardware at the same time. A PC without a Co-Pilot key will just look so old and uncool! (If you are not sold on the Co-Pilot idea, then there may be seriously good deals on keyboards without the Co-Pilot key in the coming months).

So, brace yourself for a flood of requests for new notebooks with the "cool AI key" and the Intel AI Core Ultra CPU (Meteor Lake) inside!

The next two weeks will be dominated by what is happening at CES, and then the aftermath. Most of the events are going to be live-streamed [here](#).

You will see an interesting addition to the Keynotes, L'Oreal is going to be presenting - which I think will be really interesting!

Here is a list of all the session categories you can visit:

- **Keynotes** and **Great Minds** – your chance to hear from global industry leaders.
- **Research Summit** – insights into the trends impacting consumer behavior and more.
- **Innovation Policy Summit** – where government officials and industry experts discuss AI, AVs, health care, privacy, blockchain, international trade, competition, and more.
- **C Space Storytellers** – conversations around the future of advertising, brand marketing and more.
- **CMO Insights** – a look at how AI and other tools impact marketing strategy.

If colleagues want to join the maillist they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Dell Releases new Laptops with the CoPilot Key

Dell has updated its range of XPS laptops with a bunch of new features most notably the **Core Ultra CPU's and the THE KEY!**

Intel to announce roadmap beyond 18A

Up to now we have only had a picture of Intel's roadmap to 2025, but now we are going to get insight into what the more distant future holds Read more [here](#).

The Best Business Monitor for 2024

Dell has announced its new 40" curved 5K monitor for business use. This is probably the best monitor you can get for 2024!

[Read more about it here](#). The only monitor that you can consider that would beat the Dell monitor is the **SAMSUNG 57" 8K Odyssey**. Both monitors have the same pixel density of 144 PPI

The First Graphene Processor

This should be read in conjunction with "[Signs and Portents](#)".

Signs and Portents was written **without considering** how Graphene processing technology could accelerate what is being predicted. It is truly scary and exciting when you look at the bigger picture of technological development and where this might take us.

[This new announcement about graphene](#) is exciting as it suggests that processors using this technology will be able to work significantly faster and consume less power.

[There is a great YouTube Video here](#) that explains this development in more detail.

ZEISS Announces a SmartGlass Transparent Camera

Imagine the window or screen you look at or through is actually a camera as well. Gone is the need for a cut-out or a hole in a screen to poke a camera through - the screen IS the camera!

ZEISS has made this announcement just in time for CES 2024 (of course) with a press release explaining what this "Smart Glass" can do - and acting as a camera is just one of the things it can do.

The idea of "Smart Glass" has been around for a while, but being able to act as a camera, is new! [Read more here](#),

Microsoft

New Revision to the Windows Keyboard and CoPilot App for iOS and Android

As you may have noticed this news is everywhere, but what slipped under the radar is the release of the CoPilot Apps. [Read more here](#). [More detail on the apps here](#) and [here](#).

Create new Office Documents with One Link

Microsoft has got some new domain names. For example, when you click on a <https://word.new> link, it will open a new Word Document. This applies to Excel etc.....[Read here for more detail](#).

Cloud and AI

Signs and Portents

[This](#) insightful paper talks about what we can expect from AI in 2024.

It is quite long, but I [really urge you to read it if you are involved in any way with AI, from deciding to procure CoPilot from Microsoft through to using AI to developing apps, or even just using Bing Chat, GPT 3.5, 4.0 or Bard for any thought you may want an opinion on, or if you are starting to use AI to support your work, and if you are not I urge you to consider starting....](#)

[This paper references other papers that are important to read as well](#), so this is not a 5-minute read, but very very important. (Tip: Use Chat GPT 4 or CoPilot to help summarise it for you - but be sure to give it context when prompting)

The Author addresses points that I have been emphasising for a while, especially relating to a Harvard paper that reveals the use of GPT-4 significantly improved the quality of results from the consultants.

He talks about a paper that looked at legal work, where there too is a significant improvement in quality.

One notable outcome of the studies is that the biggest improvements are for lower performers when they used GPT-4 to help them - this is called the levelling effect where AI helps those not performing well to rise to be close to those of the best performers

He addresses the importance of adopting AI aggressively and uses an example of what the CEO of the company IgniteTech did - he gave everybody a paid subscription to GPT-4 and fired anybody who did not try to use it at least once in the first month, and gave prizes to those that showed how they were using GPT-4 to improve their work. Clearly, this is a bit extreme, but it is worth pondering when considering how you should be adopting AI enhancement for your employees to do better, [however it is important to pay attention to what he calls "The Jagged Frontier" where it becomes clear that AI is better at some tasks than others.](#)

[What is really worth paying attention to is the chart at the beginning of the paper, which shows the timelines of expected milestones of AI technologies in the next 10 years, but pay close attention to the band between 2025 and 2030.](#)

Clearly, with the announcement of the first functional Graphene semiconductor this week, this could completely change the roadmap from 2030 onwards, and we may even see SGI (Super General Intelligence before 2040!

Bard Advanced to compete with ChatGPT

2024 will surely be the year of AI as competition heats up between all the big players. It looks like Google is getting ready to compete head-on with ChatGPT (aka Microsoft). [Read more here](#).

Security

New Flaw Lets Attackers Bypass Security and Spoof Emails

A new flaw has been found to allow bad guys to send emails from arbitrary email addresses. We have to remain ever-vigilant! [Read more here](#).

What's up at FTG

We will be back at work from next week, so news on what we are planning for 2024 will start from next week as well.

Movies

Sadly, 2024 is going to be a bleak year for the movie industry as Hollywood is still recovering from COVID and now more recently the writer's strike that has caused even more delays in productions. Disney is badly affected.

Nevertheless, [here is a list of movies we can expect for January](#) (worldwide).

Now Playing: [One Life](#)

Now Playing: [Noah's Ark](#)

12 January: [Mean Girls](#)

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TOP STORIES #54

This is a quiet week, but there is important news regarding the licensing of PowerApps and Dynamics—it seems the licensing rules for Dynamics and PowerApps are changing. Read below.

You can read last week's [TOP STORIES #53 here](#). If colleagues would like to join, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

What we know about Intel Lunar Lake

News is changing all the time, and this is the latest on the generation after Meteor Lake (which we are still struggling to get hold of). This is expected to be released at the end of 2024 and actually ship around March 2025. This is expected to be 1.5 X Improvement on Meteor Lake. You can [read more on what to expect here](#).

AMD beats Intel Meteor Lake

It's not going Intel's way, and it looks like when it comes to AI performance AMD is beating Intel by a wide margin. You will also find AMD based computers to be quite a bit cheaper than Intel. If you are committed to vPro as a corporate, then of course AMD is not much of an option. In today's world of changes happening so fast, it is a good idea to try be open to Intel and AMD as equal choices for your company notebooks. [Read more here](#).

NVIDIA 5090 - what to expect

The rumours are starting to swirl around what performance we may see from the 5090 and when we may expect it. It looks like we may see it late 2024 at the earliest and may be 1.7X faster than the 4090, and at a price that may need you to mortgage your house! [Read more here](#).

Microsoft

Possible Increases to Power Apps license costs

It appears that with the publication of the latest [Dynamics Licensing Guide for March](#) (63 Pages!), users with Power Apps licenses will no longer be able to access data in Dynamics 365 Applications and instead will have to switch to paying for Dynamics Licenses, which will cost considerably more (like a LOT more!). Microsoft furthermore kindly links you to a "Solution Checker" that helps you [verify your license compliance](#). Essentially, the list of restricted tables has now gotten longer. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you are concerned that this may impact you, please reach out to your FT account manager to get our Licensing and Power Apps experts onboard to assist.

Microsoft Office 2024 LTSC preview announced

The new Office will no longer include Publisher (retired) and Teams (separate download). You will be able to download a preview in April. [Read more here](#).

Excel for Web App now exports in CSV format

This may appear to be a small change, but now you no longer need a full Office Install to allow users to export CSV files. [Read more here](#),

There will be Only One (Teams)

This will be a very welcome update for those who have to work with more than one Teams account.

It will be rolled out later this year, along with Windows 24H2. [Read more about it here](#),

CoPilot for Security Available 1 April

This service will be capacity-based billed as Security Compute Units per hour at \$4 per hour. You can [read more about the availability of the Service here](#). **It is highly recommended that you take advantage of the [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready.** You can [register here](#).

Cloud & AI

Meet Devin the AI Software Engineer

With the rather controversial statement from Jensen Huang [predicting the end of coding as a job](#), here is a demonstration from Cognition showing how their AI Software engineer can take on a coding task. [It's amazing to watch knowing that this is early days](#) - we are still just watching prototypes!

Security

Ransomware targets individuals

There are many ransomware programs out there, but this one has evolved to be exceptionally dangerous, which is [important to read up on](#).

What's up at FTG

Johannesburg - Microsoft Envision

You are invited to Register at the Microsoft-hosted Envision Connection, where FTG will also be presenting represented by Dirk Prinsloo

When

Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Where

Heaton Lane Longlake 20 Modderfontein Lethabong, Sandton

Register [here](#).

CoPilot M365 Readiness

Copilot for Microsoft 365 is now available to businesses of all sizes and BUI is offering readiness workshops for licensing, advisory and support services to help you succeed with AI technology from Microsoft - BUI has a number of workshops available [which you can choose from here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Arthur The King](#)

Now Playing: [The Bush Knife](#)

22 March: [Kung Fu Panda 4](#)

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TOP STORIES #59

NAB Came to an end with some emphasis on video walls for virtual productions... imagine planning a new movie where most of your sets never have to be built. Here is a summary of [some of the interesting things seen at NAB](#). Of course, search YouTube for what you would like to know about NAB 2024.

Just when I thought it would be quiet on the Microsoft front, there were a bunch of announcements that are quite important, especially when it comes to price increases.

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #58 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up to this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

What is TOPS?

In this case it is not your (very important) corner [SPAR](#), but a measurement which denotes how many Trillions of Operations a system can perform per second. As this is a measurement that is now going to be referred to a lot and something that you are going to be including in your hardware RFP's (remember a minimum of 40 TOPS for PC's) it is important to understand just what this measurement is. Here is an article that [explains it a bit more](#). It is not a perfectly accurate metric, but does give you an idea of a system's potential AI processing capability.

AMD and Microsoft announce Ryzen 8000 Pro

These are enterprise versions of the processors with improved AI processing capabilities and include the Pluton security processor designed by Microsoft. [Read more here](#).

Microsoft

Snapdragon joins the Elite.

It seems that AI Explorer will be reserved for PCs only with the Snapdragon Elite processor (which is capable of 45 TOPS). The clever version allows you to search a timeline for everything you do on Windows.

I suspect that this AI Explorer capability will be reserved for NPU capable Intel based computers with Lunar Lake CPU's expected to launch at the end of the year. [You can read more about this here](#).

Power BI Premium Capacity retired in favour of Fabric

Microsoft has announced the phase-out of Power BI Premium Capacity SKUs (P-SKUs) in favour of Fabric Capacity.

After 1 July 2024, new customers will no longer be able to purchase P-SKUs. Existing non-Enterprise Agreement (EA) customers will still be able to renew their current subscriptions until 1 January 2025 and may add further capacity until the subscription term ends.

EA customers can continue to purchase or renew until their EA term concludes.

There will be no changes to the licensing for Power BI Pro or Power BI Premium Per User (for now).

It is really important to make sure you are really on top of understanding what your exposure is to Power BI licensing as Microsoft continues migrating to Fabric. You can read the Microsoft [announcement here](#).

[If you feel you need some assistance in this please reach out to your FT Account manager who will make sure you talk to the most relevant Power BI specialist to help you review your potential exposure,](#)

[This extends to the changes in PowerApps](#) I addressed in [Top Stories #55](#) which references an important paper from Directions on Microsoft on that subject.

Dynamics price hike

Microsoft has announced some potentially hefty price increases effective from October 2024, which gives you at least some time to recover from the surprise! You can read what [The Register thinks about it here](#).

Across the 12 categories, Microsoft appears to have applied an average increase of 11.5% with some even higher. Microsoft has provided [full details about these changes here](#) and from TechRadar [here](#).

If you are using Dynamics, and if you are coming up for a renewal, it is VERY VERY important you check in with our First Tech. Dynamics team along with your First Tech. account manager to understand the implications of these price increases and factor them into your roadmap with Dynamics going forward.

Microsoft 365 Plan Comparison Documents ex Teams.

These documents have been updated to reflect the removal of Teams. You can download the one for [Enterprise customers here](#).

Microsoft Office LTSC 2024 Public Preview available

Microsoft has announced that commercial customers can now install Office 2024 (which extends to Project and Visio 2024), and also has confirmed that prices will increase by 10%. [You can read more here](#).

END OF SUPPORT!!!

Microsoft has announced the upcoming end of support (EOS) date for Office 2016 and Office 2019 apps, along with related productivity servers. All of those apps will no longer be supported after October 14, 2025. [You can get the full list of what is coming to the end of support here](#).

Cloud & AI

Microsoft Demonstrates Human-Like replicas of you talking

This is quite worrying and exciting. Microsoft is demonstrating AI technology which allows it to take a single picture of your face and audio clip and then animate it so realistically it will be possible to fool people into thinking they are looking at the real you! I immediately think about with "bad guys" could do with this..... I shudder at the thought.....

You can watch the [video of this technology being demonstrated here](#). Microsoft is calling it VASA-1. Yikes!!!! once you have watched the video, you will get an idea of what VASA-2 could be!

After watching the [Mona-Lisa one](#), I'm not sure I'll sleep very well!!!!

Adobe to Add Sora, Runway & Pike to Premier Pro

Adobe is planning to add these technologies to Premier soon allowing creators to move seamlessly between AI-generated and real footage. No props or costuming necessary! [Read more here](#).

Security

Large Scale brute force attack

CISCO is warning about a large-scale attack on Cisco, CheckPoint, Fortinet, SonicWall, and Ubiquiti devices. As always it reminds us to never drop our guard and to make sure we are applying patches as soon as they become available. You never know when you will be next

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness FTG is offering an [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#)

Copilot for Security You and your team are invited to a one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Sleeping Dogs](#)

Now Playing: [Abigail](#)

Now Playing: [The boy and the Heron](#)

26 April: [10 Lives](#)

26 April: [The Fall Guy](#)

26 April: [Boy Kills World](#)



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TOP STORIES #61

Some big news is that Microsoft has announced MTO capabilities (explained below), and CoPilot prerequisites have been expanded to include the "F" and "E" base licenses (more on that below as well).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #60 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up for this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel Panther Lake on Track for Mid 2025

Panther Lake is the culmination of three generations of Intel processors. It looks like Panther Lake remains on track and marks Intel's ability to deliver CPU on the 18A process. [Read more about the roadmap here](#). A LOT is going to happen in the next 12 to 18 months!

Microsoft

Prerequisites for CoPilot expanded to F1/F3/E1/E3 licenses.

Microsoft has updated the Product Terms for May 2024 to include additional eligible licences for purchasing Copilot for Microsoft 365. Now, users holding Microsoft Business Basic, Microsoft 365 F1/F3, and Office 365 F3/E1 licences can also acquire this product.

The updated product terms are [here](#).

Microsoft Outlook for mobile apps gets CoPilot

Microsoft has announced some new features for Outlook, but one of the biggest additions is support for CoPilot. You can [read more about this here](#).

How to get Office 2024, but maybe don't bother.

Microsoft has released a preview of Office 2024 LTSC which you can read all about how to [download and install here](#) (not for the faint-hearted),

Unless you have very specific requirements to be running Office completely offline, it may be a good idea to give this a miss - and all your efforts should go into ensuring that you are able to deploy and support O365. This edition is practically identical to Office 2021, and is really just a new release to give you 5 years of support if you buy a new 2024 license.

Multi-Tenant Organisation capabilities for M365 announced

Microsoft has announced the general availability of Multi-Tenant Organization (MTO) features in Microsoft 365, designed to improve collaboration and communication across various tenants through Teams and Viva Engage. For licensing, each employee in a multi-tenant setup needs just one Microsoft Entra ID Plan 1 license, and access to MTO capabilities in Viva Engage requires a Viva Suite or an Employee Communications & Communities User SL.

The announcement [from Microsoft is here](#) and a good explanation on [how to implement different options is here](#).

This is a really big deal for companies that have different divisions each on their own tenants, as this can help divisions communicate more effectively with each other without compromising security. There are some licensing requirements, namely Entra ID P1, so please reach out to your First Tech Account manager to understand the implications (if any) for your agreement and get assistance from our engineering teams to enable this for you.

TinyBuilder - de-bloating Windows 11

This utility lets you build a specific version of Windows 11, stripping out components you do not need and allowing you to get more out of your PC's resources. It has been around for a while but is now getting updates that make it worthy of some serious attention.

It must be noted that this utility helps users automate the creation of debloated and streamlined Windows 11 images **using Microsoft's own DISM (Deployment Image Servicing and Management) command-line interface and can now support ESD files as well.**

You can [read more about NTDEV and TinyBuilder here](#).

If you would like assistance with creating these images that align with the services you require at the endpoint while eliminating unnecessary features, please contact your FTG account manager, who will connect you with our engineers.

OneDrive Offline mode

Microsoft is rolling out new capabilities for OneDrive for the web, the biggest of which is offline mode. You can [read more about this new capability here](#).

Cloud & AI

If you want Premium AI - choose NVIDIA

The war for AI dollars is now underway with NVIDIA claiming that the 45 TOPS specification by Microsoft for the AI PC is only good enough for the most basic of tasks (NVIDIA is probably right). NVIDIA showcased at an event that even current version NVIDIA powered laptops can pretty much handle any AI task that you can throw at them. [Read here about how NVIDIA makes the case for their GPU's for AI](#). Of course this means if you want a PREMIUM AI PC, you need one with an NVIDIA GPU in it - [read here](#).

Chat with RTX gets a major upgrade

This ties in with NVIDIA's announcement about premium AI PC's where this new update to ChatRTX really shows off what can be done with the RTX GPU in your notebook. You can read [more about the impressive capabilities here](#).

Security

Microsoft Officially makes security it's top priority

In a new post, Microsoft's VP for security said the company will cover 6 categories in it's new security initiative. Microsoft also says that this is already making a difference which includes enforcing MFA. You can read more about Microsoft's [new-found mission here](#).

There is no SHEIN in this box!

If you receive an email about a SHEIN mystery box, DO NOT OPEN IT!

This is a trick that may very well be tried using Temu, Amazon, Alibaba and Takealot as reasons to trick you into opening the mail.

As always, this is a reminder you can never drop your guard. You can [read more here](#).

What's up at FTG

Sophos Security Technical Masterclass on Sophos Intercept X

This is an in-person event in Umhlanga, Durban

When

Wednesday 8 May 2024 @ 9:00am - [Register here](#).

Where

Holiday Inn Express Umhlanga, 2 Ncondo Place Crn Ncondo Place &, Ntusi Rd, Off Umhlanga Rocks Dr.

CoPilot Readiness FTG is offering a [M365 CoPilot Readiness Workshop](#) to help you get ready. You can [register here](#)

Copilot for Security You and your team are invited to a one-on-one demo session we are hosting featuring Microsoft Security Copilot. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase this cutting-edge technology to you. [Sign up here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [Star Wars: Episode 1 The Phantom Menace \(re-release\)](#)

Now Playing: [Breathe](#)

Now Playing: [Challengers](#)

Now Playing: [Just Now Jeffrey](#)

Now Playing: [Snake](#)

10 May: [Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes](#)

10 May: [Tarot](#)



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TOP STORIES #63

It's a busy month for conferences. Microsoft's Build conference kicks off on the 21st May, [which you can read more about here](#) on what to expect.

Google just had it's [I/O developer conference](#). You can read a summary of what was [announced here](#).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #62 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up for this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel prepares Lunar Lake with integrated 32Gig RAM

This is a special version of the CPU that will be able to get in your computers in the near future (see Dell leak below) that will support applications that demand intensive memory usage, such as video editing, 3D rendering, and high-end gaming. Users can expect smoother multitasking, quicker load times, and more efficient handling of memory-intensive tasks. You can [read more about these "MX" CPU's here](#).

ARM based Silicone to change (up) Microsoft's game

Today (Monday) Microsoft is going to unveil it's vision of Windows PC's with an emphasis on Arm-based silicone which is looking to have more AI horsepower than what is currently available from Intel and AMD.

A huge change is that emulated applications will not "feel" emulated, with the added bonus of having even more performance when compiled natively for ARM. Buying a Windows-based computer is about to become a lot more complicated! [You can read more here](#).

Major Dell Roadmap leak

This is a huge leak that reveals when we can be expecting the next 4 generations of Intel CPU's to ship. What's interesting is that we can expect Lunar Lake MX series CPU's to arrive before the end of 2024, Panther Lake Q1 2026 and Nova Lake in 2027.

it also looks like that Panther Lake will really be 5 times faster than the current Meteor Lake processors that we can get today - a huge increase in performance!

It is really important to be planning your refresh cycles well in advance! [You can read more here](#).

Microsoft

Power BI to Fabric migration warning

[Directions on Microsoft](#) has published an article warning about Microsoft forcing Power BI customers to migrate to Fabric whether they are ready or not.

Andrew Snodgrass from Directions has published a document detailing the implications which can be pretty serious for some customers: *"Power BI Premium customers can theoretically remain on Power BI until the end of their agreements, which could be three years from now. However, unless their Power BI deployment is purely reporting, that's not likely to happen. It's evident that any Power BI feature that can be replaced by a Fabric experience (like machine learning or data marts or streaming datasets), will be. This means customers who need those features will be forced to migrate to Fabric (with short notice) either by redeploying their Power BI workloads in Fabric or creating a separate Fabric deployment that runs alongside Power BI, just to perform those activities."* [You can read more detail about the implications here](#).

It is really important that you ask your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Power BI/Fabric specialists to help you with the migration should you feel you will be affected.

System Center 2025 available Fall 2024

System Center will include all the products and will be fully compatible with Windows Server 2025 (also expected end of 2024) and also compatible with Azure stack HCI 23H2. System Center will focus on security enhancements as well as support for Azure Arc. [You can read more about what to expect here](#).

Updated Microsoft Viva Comparison Table

There is an [updated feature comparison table for the Viva family of products](#) as of April 2024.

A [new row has been added for Viva Pulse](#) in the Product Terms, which is now available as a standalone licence costing \$2 per user per month.

Additionally, [references to Viva Topics have been removed](#), as this feature will be retired in February 2025.

Notably, the comparison table now specifies which Viva products require a Microsoft Teams licence, given that Teams is now sold separately from the Office 365/Microsoft 365 suites (see points 1 through 8 below the table).

It may be a good idea to understand how Viva can benefit your company ([Directions on Microsoft has a helpful blog that explains Viva here](#)).

I recommend that you contact your First Tech. account manager, who can connect you with our Viva experts to discuss this further.

Cloud & AI

OpenAI rolls out 4o

OpenAI has rolled out its latest AI model that can converse in real-time and can read emotional cues as well as respond to visual input. It is free for all users, but do not give up on your subscription, as another major upgrade is probably coming soon for subscriptions only. [You can read more about this announcement here.](#)

Security

DocuSign Phishing threat

As always this is a reminder that you never let your guard down. Hackers are using credible-looking templates to trick you into viewing or signing a document. [Read more about the attack here.](#)

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness Workshops are now available for you to register [here](#) or [here](#).

Copilot for Security Join BUI, (FTG's Azure, Cloud and Security specialists) for an exclusive one-on-one demo session featuring Microsoft Security Copilot!

This is a prime opportunity for your team to experience the forefront of technology with our latest release. Dive into discussions about defining and understanding the consumption needs specific to your organisation.

Reserve your spot now! [Sign up here.](#)

Microsoft CoPilot Studio Webinar

Join us for an enlightening webinar on Microsoft CoPilot Studio, where we'll unveil the capabilities and potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing organizational productivity. Discover how to craft your own AI CoPilots and integrate them seamlessly into your business processes.

Don't miss this opportunity to empower your organization with the next generation of AI technology.

When

Thursday 23 May @ 10:00am - [Register Here](#)

Where

Online - Microsoft Teams Thursday, 23 May 2024

Movies

Now Playing: [The Strangers: Chapter 1](#)

Now playing: [Imaginary Friends](#) - also known as "IF"

24 May: [The Garfield Movie](#)

24 May: [Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga](#)

24 May: [Hit Man](#)



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TOP STORIES #64

The big news this week was Microsoft's launch of the CoPilot+ PC's and the Build conference, and of course the CoPilot + AI PC was hyped like crazy - lots more on this below. Next week, when the dust has settled, there will probably be more serious news about what was announced at Build.

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #63 is here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up for this newsletter, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

Intel's next-gen Lunar Lake processors will launch in new AI PCs sooner than you think

Intel is promising that you will see its Lunar Lake generation of CPUs with 45 TOPS NPU processing ability to compete with ARM sooner than you may think. From what we can see from Dell's major roadmap leak, it does look like we may very well see computers with this CPU before the end of the year. So, as interesting as the Qualcomm CPU's may look it may be worth holding off any big decisions for a few months so we can let the dust settle.

You can read more about the [latest roadmap announcements here](#).

Microsoft announces Surface Laptop with Snapdragon CPU

Microsoft has announced its first "next generation" ARM-based CoPilot+ laptop. Given that it is the first generation of the "new generation" and Microsoft's third attempt (more on that below), this piece of hardware is impressive.

What is even more mind-blowing is that this will look quite "old school" in a year from now when the next generation CPU's are released. [Read more about the Microsoft announcement here](#).

NB!!! All the big brands like Dell, HP, Lenovo etc.....are releasing computers like this, so it is important to consider your options.

It is highly recommended that you contact your First Tech account manager to make arrangements to see this new generation of laptops in action.

See the Thunderbolt story below..... it's great to be buying these fancy new notebooks that are NOT Intel-based and thus have no Thunderbolt ports, but now you may need some extra assistance in deciding what docking solutions you may need.....So when you are talking to your FTG hardware specialists, it is important to bring up the question of docking bays that you can standardise on.

Is Thunderbolt 3/4/5 (Intel only) compatible with USB 4?

Thunderbolt is proprietary to Intel and strictly controlled when it comes to the certification of devices - USB-4 not so much, and that's a problem.....

USB-4 is an open standard that is used by everybody else - AMD and Qualcomm - and with the latest ARM Windows 11 based computers being released, USB-4 is going to be something you will need to know a lot more about as there is a huge ecosystem of Thunderbolt peripherals that you now need to know if your new computer will connect to them and know what docking unit to get. [Here is a Windows Central article that helps you understand some of the complexity](#) .

That article, in turn, refers to a more detailed comparison [between the standards here](#).

Microsoft

Build Conference

The big news of the week was the Build Conference preceded by the announcement of the CoPilot plus PCs.

[Here is a video summary](#) of the key announcements from the build conference. Of course, Microsoft's announcements influenced much of this week's letter.

Windows 11 24H2 Preview released

Though the Microsoft AI announcements this week have been very impressive, the reality is that the next big release of Windows 11 is on track for a release in September/October but does not yet have AI features like Recall integrated into the preview for you to test.

You can read more about what is available and [how to install it here](#), and [more detail here](#) on what to expect in the final preview.

CoPilot Plus PC's

Hype Alert!!!

Try not to get sucked into the hype relating to the announcements regarding AI capabilities on Qualcomm-based PCs ahead of Intel and AMD ([here is an article that "de-hypes" Recall](#)). The first batch are based on Qualcomm, but the rest are coming soon. [The significance of Windows now being available on ARM-based devices is huge, but it is important that you do not rush into making major decisions](#) around buying these new ARM-based notebooks too hastily. The most interesting feature is Recall, but actually this is not a new idea - Microsoft had a feature called timeline in Windows 10, but stopped supporting it in 2021, and this capability has been available on MAC's as a product called [Rewind](#) for more than a year.

You can read [more about Microsoft Recall feature here](#).

Directions on Microsoft has also published a blog on their thoughts regarding Microsoft's latest attempt to entice companies to use ARM, and makes a good point that this is actually Microsoft's third attempt. [You can read more here](#).

Of course, Recall alone, if used, will require around 50Gig of local storage, which underscores my recommendation going back quite some time to make sure your new PC's have a minimum of 512Gig storage with 32 Gig RAM for this and MANY other reasons in the future.

You can read more about [how Recall works here](#) in addition to all the links above.

Mandatory MFA for Azure Clarified

Earlier this month Microsoft made an [announcement that MFA will be required for all Azure users](#) which caused a bit of drama because Microsoft was not very clear on the details.

Basically Microsoft clarified with the following: *"In addition, service accounts, managed identities, workload identities and other token-based automation accounts will be excluded from the MFA requirement, NajShahid from Microsoft said. For cases where no workaround is available, there will be an exception process, which Microsoft will detail via official notifications."*

[Directions on Microsoft has a great summary of this change in MFA requirements here](#).

[It is recommended that you contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Azure experts to assist with any challenges or questions you may regarding this change.](#)

Microsoft reminds everybody that Windows 10 is "EOL"

Microsoft recently launched a page that reminds you about Windows 10 coming to the end of support. Actually, there is a whole raft of products coming to the end of their useful lives, which I'll be addressing in #65 next week. In the meantime, [you can start preparing to mourn the end of Windows 10 here](#) (unless you want to spend a serious amount of money to extend support).

Cloud & AI

Is GPT-5 next?

It seems that increases in intelligence are still exponential, but they are not likely to follow the GPT 3 -4- -5.....naming convention. One reason may be that the increase in intelligence will not be deserving of a version number increment. Whatever names these new intelligences are given, what is sure is that we are close to "human brain" capability.

These are incredible things to ponder - [you can read more here](#).

Security

Recall and Security

This is unleashing a huge debate when it comes to what could happen with your data dutifully recorded by Recall - and for sure understanding how to make sure computers are secured is becoming increasingly important. You can read a [great article on this debate here](#). Just imagine how hectic this is going to get when Recall records all your audio and video as well

BitLocker used against you.

Here is news of a new attack that uses BitLocker against yourself to ransom you. Once code-execution capability has been obtained, it is effectively "game over".

This serves as a reminder that you can never be vigilant enough to be able to pick up signs that you may be under attack, and to constantly be reviewing your attack surface exposure. You can read [more about this new nasty attack here](#).

What's up at FTG

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Movies

Now Playing: [The Garfield Movie](#)

Now Playing: [Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga](#)

Now Playing: [Hit Man](#)

31 May: [Haiku! The Dumpster Battle](#)

31 May: [Ezra](#)

31 May: [Face Deep](#)

31 May: [Mr & Mrs Mahi](#)

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TOP STORIES #65

Though Microsoft made quite a splash with its announcements at its Build conference, there are quite a few conferences and events lined up that could steal the limelight; the events coming up are.....

- Apple is up next [with WWDC](#), and Apple may very well eclipse Microsoft with its announcements about AI. We can only wait and see. Apple is sure to try and get the world's attention, so WWDC is going to be very interesting!
- Starting on Monday is [Computex](#), the world's biggest computing conference, where we can expect to see big announcements from AMD (Zen 5), Intel (Lunar Lake), Nvidia (5090) etc Expect an overdose of AI! The overdose of AI has already started with the NVIDIA Keynote (pretty cool—[you should watch it](#)), in which Jensen Huang is saying that we are truly in the middle of an Industrial Revolution.
- Next up is [Infocomm](#), which is THE show for Pro AV. Of course, FTG will have representatives at the show as AV, relating to Zoom and Teams, is a very important part of the services FTG delivers. [Infocomm is a big deal for us](#) this year as the focus of the show will be on Conferencing and Collaboration, with Teams, Zoom, and Google featuring heavily.

The previous week's [TOP STORIES #64 is here](#).

If colleagues would like to subscribe to the newsletter, [they can click here](#).

Hardware

Except for the NVIDIA keynote, there is no news for this week, because everything is building up for Computex where we will see AMD launch the [Ryzen 5000XT CPU's](#), Intel hype up Lunar Lake, and of course [AI will be everywhere](#), but it will be more about the hardware than the software.

Expect lots of news and announcements - Computex runs from Tuesday to Friday this week.

Of course AMD, Intel and NVIDIA will be trying to "over TOPS" each other - each one telling you how they are beating other with a TOPS rating exceeding the 40 minimum set by Microsoft while playing catch-up with Qualcomm.

There will be 4 Keynotes that will be worth following as well, with the first already having happened - see below.

NVIDIA Keynote

Because we live in different time zones, the NVIDIA keynote has already happened. It is truly scary to see what Jensen Huang is predicting for the next few years what really brings it home for me is the graph he shows about what they are achieving vs. [Moore's law \(timestamp 1:18:03 in the keynote\)](#). Of course, there are many perspectives on Moore's Law, but NVIDIA's view is that this old law is dead.

There is a lot to unpack from the keynote, and I'll address the important things from this and the rest of the Computex in TOP STORIES #66 when the dust (FUD) has settled after the show ends.

In the meantime, you can read NVIDIA's [announcement about NIM's](#), but of course, there is so much more than just this one announcement.

Microsoft

May Power Platform Licensing guide

As you can see in the change log on the last page, the update to the Power Platform Licensing Guide includes a significant change: **The Power Automate Hosted RPA Add-on licence has been replaced by the Power Automate Hosted Process licence.**

This new licence, which does not require any prerequisites, expands on the features of the Power Automate Process licence by adding a Microsoft-hosted virtual machine and an unattended RPA bot.

You can [download the latest guide here](#).

Please contact your Licensing account manager for help understanding the impact if you are using or intend to use the Power platform.

Azure Compute Reservations extended till further notice (whenever that is)

Microsoft initially declared in October 2022 that Azure compute Reservations acquired from 1 January 2024 onwards would not be eligible for exchange.

Subsequently, in October 2023, they introduced a grace period allowing customers until at least 1 July 2024 to exchange their Reservations for Azure Dedicated Host, Azure App Services, and Reserved Instances.

The most recent update in May 2024 extended this grace period indefinitely, [which you can read about here](#). Microsoft has also [published some example scenarios here](#).

Please contact your Licensing AM in FTG for advice on how you may benefit from this indefinite extension.

Windows Server 2025 Released in Public Preview

Microsoft has released the public preview of Windows Server 2025, which is available for evaluation in ISO format or via Azure images.

This release, expected to be generally available in fall, will be an LTSC release with mainstream support for five years and extended support for an additional five.

Windows Server 2025 introduces an easier update process, a [pay-as-you-go subscription option](#), improvements to Azure Stack HCI, hotpatching, SMB over QUIC (Quick UDP Internet Connections), and more. Ian LeGrow head of Azure Edge + Platform highlights new features such as enhanced security, Azure hybrid capabilities, AI workload support, and Hyper-V performance improvements, making it (according to him) the most secure and innovative version to date.

[You can read more about the announcement here](#).

Please contact your Licensing Account Manager to assist with the new licensing options for Windows Server 2025

Cloud & AI

AI improves quality of life (hearing)

Have you ever noticed that when you are in a room full of people, like at a party or business function, you just don't seem to hear the person speaking to you as well as you used to?

Well, as we age, our hearing deteriorates in different ways, but diminished hearing compared with when we were younger is pretty universal. This is known as a reduction of your "*Speech Intelligibility Index*", and if you are interested, you can read [more about what that is here](#).

Now, [here is a really good example of how AI can make a huge difference in your life](#).

Imagine being able to look at someone talking, and by doing that, the "AI" will automatically filter out all other noise and even other voices, allowing you to focus on only the voice you want to hear. Imagine as a student in a classroom that is noisy, you can tune all the noise out and just hear the teacher - it can be a game changer for some students who may be hearing impaired and not even be aware of it.

Well, in probably in less than a year, your newest model airpods, or headphones will be doing what is [shown here](#).

Waves has also developed a solution that does something similar called "SoloMode" [demonstrated here](#). We will probably see this technology appearing in some form in AI PCs from the end of 2024 onwards as there is quite a heavy dependency on NPU computing capability.

Security

The danger of StalkerWare

These are Spyware applications that allow individuals and companies to surreptitiously spy on partners or employees.

This type of software crosses acceptable moral and ethical boundaries by being able to spy on people without their knowledge, but this gets even nastier when the companies that sell this type of software are hacked.

[Here is an interesting story about software like this](#) and the MANY reasons why anybody should not be using it.

It can backfire badly on the person that is using it to spy with when the company the person that bought the software from gets hacked.

Microsoft tracking new Ransomware

Microsoft is tracking a new North Korean group known as Moonstone Sleet which has developed it's own tools and infrastructure.

They have many ways of attacking a company, and as always it is the human element that is the weakest part of the attack strategy. [You can read more about this new group here](#).

Pirated Office Delivers a malware Cocktail

[This story of some very clever malware hidden inside a pirated install of Microsoft Office](#) is a very good reminder that in today's world of bad guys lurking around every corner and under any rock that you stay away from anything that is even remotely dodgy.

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Movies

A big surprise is that [Garfield may even overtake Furiosa](#) at the box-office which could lead to us [not getting another Mad Max movie](#) - it was going to be called "Wasteland".

Now Playing: [Haiku! The Dumpster Battle](#)

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TOP STORIES #66

The biggest hardware show in the world -Computex has come to an end, and of course YouTube is flooded with summaries of the show.

The Apple WWDC is about to start and it will be awash with Apple's view of AI - "Apple Intelligence" and I'm sure we will see some really interesting stuff announced.

Then of course we have Infocomm which will also have many interesting announcements. So... again we have a busy week!

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can [click here](#).

Previous [TOP STORIES #65 is here](#).

Hardware (dedicated to Computex)

Best Laptops of Computex

According to TechRadar (and there are many opinions), [here is a list of what they consider to be the best laptops announced at Computex](#) - a good read as you then can go on to read about what AMD, Qualcomm, NVIDIA (see [TOP STORIES #65](#)) and Intel announced at the show in their respective keynotes below.

Intel Keynote

Intel made quite a splash with their keynote, contrasting with NVIDIA but insisting that Moore's Law is alive and well. You can scroll through a nice [summary of the keynote here](#).

Intel laid out their plans for the [Intel Based AI PC](#), with a lot more detail on [Lunar Lake about to be released](#).

Intel also unveiled the [XEON 6 series CPU's focusing on density and efficiency](#). I wonder if we will see vendors change their licensing (pricing) to recognise E-Cores vs. P-cores (I doubt it), but this may become an interesting point of negotiation when looking at your licensing going forward.

Qualcomm Disruption

The most disruptive part of Computex was Qualcomm with the launch of the Snapdragon CPU's that now allow Windows to outperform the equivalent technologies from AMD and Intel throwing a huge spanner into what computers we decide to use going forward.

Take a look at the summary of the [Keynote here](#). Qualcomm's impact on the Windows ecosystem is most telling when you look at [Linus Tech's YouTube channel's reaction to the launch of these new computers](#) (yes - Qualcomm did sponsor it), but it is still very insightful. What's interesting is that Qualcomm teased us with the idea that we will be able to get [CPU's for all form factors of PC's](#) implying we will see even more powerful processing capability in the future.

Up to now it was easy - you bought an Intel based machine, and you could be pretty sure you were **not** making a mistake. Now..... you might just be making a mistake.

AMD Keynote

The [AMD keynote was packed with announcements](#), and it looks like AMD will beat Intel on having [more powerful CPU's available sooner than Intel](#). For the first time it looks like your first choice for a new NPU based notebook may very well be an AMD based one instead of an Intel (and then of course you have Qualcomm's Snapdragon to add to the confusion). Of course, Intel made sure that we heard that [Panther Lake coming next year](#) will beat AMD!

Many other announcements at Computex

This was a really big show, and all major publications have published their summaries of what they thought to be big announcements at the show.

TomsHardware published their [Best of Computex here](#) as an example.

It is also a good idea to browse YouTube, and maybe you have your own favourite channels you are already following. Take some time to look through what was announced at Computex - it was a LOT!

Buying a Laptop is going to get Confusing (VERY!)

One thing that is clear from Computex is that buying a laptop is going to get very [very confusing](#). You have more choices than ever before, and now they are not all equal with the same type of operating system. Windows 11 for CoPilot+ PCs is different from the non-CoPilot

ones. More confusing is that you will have CoPilot and Non-Copilot PC's to choose from between AMD and Intel, where initially **AMD could be outperforming Intel in the price, performance and availability stakes!**

One thing is clear, if you HAVE to buy a PC for your business now - PLEASE PLEASE buy it with a minimum of 512Gig NVMe Storage with 32 Gig RAM. This PC then has a better chance of giving you 3 useful years of life with Windows 11 and all the pieces you need to be running in it to be compliant with security and other bits plus a bit of AI.....

Now more than ever, please contact your FT Hardware account manager to get the right experts to sit with you to help you navigate this suddenly more complicated future.

Microsoft

RIP NT Lan Manager!

Microsoft has finally announced that NT Lan Manager is coming to the end of it's life, and though it will continue to work no further development will be done on it. Basically it's time to move on. You can read **more about the announcement here**, and the official announcement from Microsoft **here** (and all other recently deprecated features).

If you need some assistance in finally retiring this method in your infrastructure (it hangs around) contact your FT Account Manager to put you in touch with our experts to assist you in removing all traces of NTLM.

Should "Recall" be Recalled?

The new Recall feature that Microsoft announced for its CoPilot+ Snapdragon PC's has turned into a **major PR disaster**, forcing Microsoft to backtrack making the feature opt-in and undertaking to encrypt the locally stored data as **described in detail here**.

Here is an interesting paper written by the former CTO of MS's IT Unit, now with Directions on Microsoft that suggests that Microsoft has lost it's way when it comes to what makes an operating system relevant, and asks if Recall will actually add value to the enterprise.

There is also a darker aspect to this—remember Purview and Compliance? There is an add-on called "Forensic Evidence," which can watch in real time what an employee is doing. Will Recall be immune to this? I highly **recommend you read this article!**

Enabling Purview ethically in your corporate environment is critical and is a precursor to enabling CoPilot (and perhaps Recall) in the future, **so it is really important that you ask your FT Account Manager to connect you with our Purview experts to discuss planning the way forward.**

In my opinion, the Genie is out of the bottle, and there is no putting it back. We need to figure out the way forward, and the sooner we start on the journey the better.

Cloud & AI

Apple going AI (Apple Intelligence)

It seems that the Apple AI PR machine is going to go into high gear next week with the WWDC conference, but already we have an idea of what may be announced - **you can read more here**. Guidance on **when and where to watch it is here**.

Security

New FOG Ransomware Targeting Schools

A new strain has been detected using compromised VPN credentials targeting educational institutions in the USA, but as we know, no matter where you are in the world, you are ultimately at risk from this nasty if ones get spawned from this one - so again heads up! **Read more here**.

What's Up at FTG

Legacy Snapshot – Creating The Immortal Enterprise

As organizations hasten their IT modernization efforts, the web of legacy systems while still alive and lurking inside your environment *maybe* doing something useful, refuse to go off and die gracefully. ("Yikes!!!! Don't switch it off - maybe somebody needs it!")

This situation confuses employees and customers, while posing significant security threats and compliance risks that can jeopardise brand integrity. **This webinar highlights the strategic importance of a disciplined approach** to decommissioning these systems.

It will explore effective strategies for archiving legacy system data in line with organisational access control and records retention policies, ensuring the information remains accessible and operational for future decision-making.

When

Thursday 20 June @ 11:00am - [Register Here](#)

Where

Online - [Register Here](#)

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14 June: [Inside Out 2](#)

14 June: [Doraemon The Movie: Nobita's Earth Symphony](#)

14 June: [Highway Sheila: Resurrection](#)

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TOP STORIES #67

As with every week, there is always news, and it is no different this week. Read on.....

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can [click here](#).

Previous [TOP STORIES #66 is here](#).

Hardware

Zoom Experience Centre

Zoom has opened a centre in the UK to show different approaches to conferencing solutions, some of them need some very deep pockets, while others are a bit more realistic. Here is a [short story about the experience centre](#) and [more from Zoom here](#),

If you want to learn more about different options for your conferencing rooms, [you can contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Zoom and Teams experts to chat with you about the "art of the possible"](#).

Infocomm 2024 is done

Infocomm has now closed and, it was a huge show, with many well known brands walking away with the ["best of the show" awards](#).

You can read the show daily publications for Day [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#) which do a good job of covering all the technologies and vendors that came to the show. Rave Pubs probably has the most definitive guide to [Infocomm here](#).

Some really cool technology was on display, such as [Samsung's transparent bezel-free micro-LED display](#)—stuff we only thought we would ever see in science fiction movies!

We will have a lot more to share once our representatives return from the show with bags full of information and new products to improve your boardroom experience even more without spending a fortune!

Of course, no visit to Las Vegas can be complete without visiting the Sphere - [here is a story about one person's experience](#) of a show especially for Infocomm guests.

CoPilot+ PC reviews are disappointing (for now)

This is not great news, but also to be expected when it comes to such new technology. Hopefully this is because the first test results are on machines that are still going to get optimised with BIOS updates and patches and next week we will see more reviews from more brands. [It is still very early days, and a reminder that being really first is not always the best!](#)

In the USA, when these PC's launch next week [you will be able to get a free 50" TV](#) when buying a CoPilot+ PC!

Microsoft

CoPilot GPT Builder officially retired

If you have a Copilot Pro licence you will no longer have the ability to develop your own custom Copilot GPTs. Additionally, any Copilot GPTs generated by Microsoft or by customers will be eliminated at this juncture. You can find the [official announcement here](#). The retirement of this perk has been a bit surprising. You can find [more about this here](#). [If you are affected by this change, please contact your First Tech. Account manager to connect you with our CoPilot specialists to help with alternatives.](#)

Recall is Recalled

It is no surprise that Microsoft has decided to launch CoPilot+ PCs without the most interesting feature, Recall. This feature will now be refined a lot more before Microsoft releases it to the world, with way better security than originally intended. You can read [more about the change in plans here](#).

Cloud & AI

We got it wrong it's not AI, it's Apple Intelligence

Apple's WWDC was full of Apple's flavour of AI, but the reaction has been quite varied. Apple is late to the game but is also showing to users that its closed ecosystem does have advantages. A LOT of stories have been written about the WWDC and what was announced. One of the sites summarising the conference [is here](#).

Apple taking a jab at Microsoft's Recall (which is now Recalled) disaster [can be found here](#).

Security

Stay Patched - or you could have been hacked!

This is a scary one! Microsoft issued a "Patch Tuesday" fix that could have allowed baddies to install malware via your WiFi connection. All common versions of Windows are affected. This is a good reminder that staying patched is very important. You can [read more about this here](#).

Beware of emails bearing Gifts (like attachments).

Here is yet another story about a phishing attack that cleverly uses the Windows Explorer search function to deliver a payload. [You can read more about how it works here](#), but the moral of the story is to always be suspicious of emails from strangers. It is especially important to be alert as there is a sophisticated SARS phishing scam going on as well. [Read more about it here](#).

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Movies

Now Playing: [Inside Out 2](#) is turning out that it might be a [bigger success than the first one](#) with [good reviews](#) but what makes this super special is that it has been released in HDR for theatres - [except only 100 worldwide can show it](#) - so do not expect to see this in SA anytime soon! It is really very early days for HDR, but it is the next level in experiencing a movie and will probably be more sustainable than 3D - you can [read more about HDR projection here](#).

Now Playing: [Doraemon The Movie: Nobita's Earth Symphony](#)

Now Playing: [Highway Sheila: Resurrection](#)

21 June: [Girl you know it's True](#) (No reviews yet)
21 June: [Chief of Station](#) (Already Streaming - and getting **pretty "OK" ratings**)

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TOP STORIES #68

- This is a very big week for news, the most important is that there is a possibility for some companies you will not be able to renew your EA going forward. Yikes!
- Software Audits are a concern - more on that below
- Lots of SQL is coming out of support - one of many products coming out of support - will talk about the rest next week.
- More stories below.....

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can [click here](#).

Previous [TOP STORIES #67 is here](#).

Hardware

CoPilot+ Snapdragon PC's are released

The first reviews are coming in, and as is usual, the actual experience is not as "incredible" as what was promised, but what is certain is that going forward there are three different types of PC's to choose from when it comes to notebooks with the Snapdragon CPU's giving overall better battery life, [but Intel is not far behind](#) .

When it comes to the AI features, the reviewers are generally underwhelmed, especially since the most hyped feature, Recall being absent, but what was a game changer was the notebook's ability to go for days without a recharge, [for the first time eliminating "range anxiety" almost all Microsoft notebook users suffer from](#).

If the Snapdragons maintain their lead, this is truly a game changer for Windows PC's and definitely an option for users going forward.

It is REALLY important that you contact your First Tech account manager to connect with our hardware specialists to arrange for evaluations. These notebooks are probably going to be in short supply in SA for a while, so it is important to get on the waiting list.

According to Tom's Hardware, and remember, this is NOT FOR SOUTH AFRICA, [here is a list of Snapdragon Laptops currently shipping](#).

[Here is a short review of the DELL XPS 13](#) (please consider 32Gig, not the minimum of 16).

Microsoft

Audits remain a major worry

[An interesting article has been published](#) that suggests that in more than 50% of companies, IT teams are having difficulty understanding whether their IT investments are correctly utilised, leading to waste and compliance risk.

All vendors are intensifying their audit efforts, and if you have not been audited in the last 3 years, you have more than a 50% chance of getting an audit letter in the next year!

The problem is that installing and then running a permanent Software Asset Management tool can be very expensive indeed, as it requires experienced "SAM people," too.

Sometimes, a point-in-time view could be all you need to be ready for the inevitable audit.

For assistance in understanding how to address this, please contact your First Tech Account manager who will then connect you with our SAM teams to discuss what specific issues you may have.

We do have the tooling to allow for "point in time" assessments, avoiding the ongoing expense of a permanent installation. However, for larger companies a permanent installation is actually a necessity and we also have the necessary tools and systems **including our own very interesting systems** to support your SAM efforts as well.

Almost 32% of SQL Servers will be out of Support by August

The Register, quoting data from LanSweeper, says that 12% of all SQL running out there is still on SQL 2014, which is coming out of support on July 9, so by August, 32% of all SQL running will not be supported! [You can read more here](#).

Our Development Division, First Digital, [has published a paper on the different options available to you](#) to migrate from these older editions of SQL coming out of support. What's especially interesting are the options to migrate your application to Fabric, eliminating your dependency on SQL. [Please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our specialists at First Digital to start discussing your options](#).

This could be your last Enterprise Agreement (EA)

If your EA is bigger than 2399 seats (ie NOT level A) seats then you can stop reading

further!

NOTE! There is no official communication from Microsoft about this, but when Directions on Microsoft publishes a paper [suggesting we can expect changes from Microsoft](#), it is best we pay attention.

Directions on Microsoft has rarely been wrong about changes coming from Microsoft!

Microsoft has been making incremental changes to EA's where it is has been raising the minimum entry point over the years, and it seems that Microsoft may be considering phasing out Level A EA's completely.

If you have just re-signed your EA on level A, you are good for another 3 years, if you are going to be renewing in the next 6 months to a year, there is definitely cause for concern, and **the possible impact of not being able to renew on an EA has to be evaluated.**

The bottom line is that your total licensing bill will probably go up and be more complicated to manage UNLESS you start planning for this possibility now.

It is critical that you meet with our licensing specialists to understand the options open to you going forward (there are many) and what can be done to make sure that your licensing bill does not go up, as there are many issues to consider and plan for including the possible impact of the agreement being deemed as "new" and thus your price for Teams goes up, and many other issues like not being able to renew on SA in MCA agreements etc.....

If we have not contacted you already, please contact your First Technology account manager to make arrangements to start looking at your options going forward—there are many, but we have to get started ASAP to work with you to make sure your bill with MS does not go up. As always, it is very important to try and consume as many features within the suite you are buying as they play a big role in what you end up renewing (or not).

Viva Feature Comparison Table May 2024

The latest Viva comparison table [is available here](#).

It is important to note that most of the features in the Viva Suite are an add-on to M365E3 or E5, so it is **very important that you ask your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our Viva Team to understand how you can take advantage of the features Microsoft is offering in the Viva Suite**. Here is a [2min Microsoft Video on what Viva is about](#).

Power Platform Licensing Guide June 2024

The latest [guide can be downloaded here](#).

Page 23 has a summary of Power Pages entitlements

The AI Builder rate card on page 25 has some changes

Power Pages Capacity licenses accrue to Dataverse Log capacity.

This can get quite complicated and it is very important that you speak to your First Tech Account Manager to connect you with our [Power Platform experts](#) to go through these changes to understand if they may impact you.

Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide June 2024

The latest [Guide can be downloaded here](#). All the different guides for Dynamics [get updated in one place here](#). Note that the dates are not always updated, so you need to actually download the file to check when it was last updated.

To see all the changes, you can go to page 63 for the changelog, but there is one big change on page 43 that is worth noting: the definition of an external user, like a contractor who does not work onsite every day **or** for more than an average of 30 hours per week. **These "external users" do not require a license to access Dynamics 365.**

Please contact your First Tech. account manager to connect you with our specialists in the CRM Team division to take you through all the changes in terms of risk and benefit.

Cloud & AI

A tale of deception

This is an interesting [story told by the BBC](#) about AI taking your job, and another by Linus Tech. on YouTube - and [his story is about AI being a Lie](#).

Both stories, taken together, are worth pondering because, on the one hand, the stories in different ways confirm to us that as we may idealise what AI may be, as presented in Science Fiction, AI IS a lie.

On the other hand, it is a reality that is starting to take people's jobs away unless we adapt as a society, as eventually, AI will become what we see in Science fiction.

For all these reasons it is essential that we dive into AI, for as much as it may appear to be a

"lie", but as with the story told in the BBC article, it IS starting to take jobs away (and create new ones), we MUST be learning what is good and bad about it, and as we learn about it to sift out the lies from the truth.

To be able to do all this, we need to be playing with AI in our lives and in our businesses, and especially in our businesses it is important to prepare allow for AI access to our data securely. It is really important to start.

Please contact your First Technology AM to connect you with our AI Security specialists to work with you on starting the journey with CoPilot securely!

With AI, We are all in R&D

This story connects with the one above. As much as it may be a lie, it is also a reality in some form, so we have to dive in.....

A well known researcher in AI, Ethan Mollick, [has put forward a very important argument that we can't just hang around waiting for the next big AI breakthrough to come knocking.](#)

AI tech is accelerating too fast, and we've all got to jump in right now.

We need to figure out how to make AI work for us, and there is no time for somebody else to tell us how.

What we DO need are people who can help us adopt AI faster by preparing our environments to allow AI to be experimented with safely.

This is what FTG is concentrating on providing. [Please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our AI and AI security specialists \(the Purview Team\) to start talking about how we help you get on with this journey.](#)

Preparing the environment to use AI safely is only one part of the story, the rest of the story is how about you reshape your organisation for AI, and for that story, [here is a very interesting paper to consider for your company.](#)

Security

Microsoft overhauls security, and so must you.

[Directions on Microsoft has published a podcast](#) that addresses Microsoft security issues, and what customers should be doing about them. Microsoft was accused of overselling its ability to securely run large cloud services and lacked transparency.

Microsoft responded by committing to make security its top priority and focusing more on security in the conferences as well.

Customers (you) should also be proactively making sure staff are trained and up to date with security practices and are actively using multiple layers of technologies to monitor logs. [Our premier security division, BUI, is ideally positioned to help you maintain the highest possible security posture.](#)

[Please contact your First Tech account manager to connect you with our security experts—security is something you can never compromise on.](#)

A Powershell Fix that is'nt

This uses fake error messages to trick you into running some nasty malware after accessing what appears to be a legit web site. It is again a reminder to always stay alert and to remind colleagues never to let their guard down. [The Register has the full story here.](#)

Nasty VMware bug

These are two particular nasty bugs for which there are no workarounds, so please patch NOW. [The full story is here.](#)

What's up at FTG

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- New Recommendations in Entra ID
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- Conditional Access Policies Renaming
- Phasing Out Legacy Identity Protection Policies

Movies

A week later and the results are in - [INSIDE OUT 2 is a blockbuster!](#)

This coming week has a solid slate as well that is expected to do well topped by Despicable Me 4

Now Playing: [Girl you know it's True](#) (No reviews yet)

Now Playing: [Chief of Station](#) (Already Streaming - and getting [pretty "OK" ratings](#))

28 June: [Despicable Me 4](#)

28 June: [A Quiet Place: Day 1](#)

28 June: [Treasure](#)

28 June: [He's not ready](#)

28 June: [Kalki 2898 AD](#)

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TOP STORIES #69

Welcome to all the new members of TOP STORIES

This is a busy week again, but the most interesting news is that by the time you read this, **free support will have ended** (see the story below).

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can click [here](#). I apologise, the link I gave last week did not work, this one does - I double-checked!

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #68 is here](#).

Hardware

Fancy OLED Displays Coming to Dell Laptops

Apple released their iPad Pro models featuring stunning OLED displays. These displays feature a 2-stack design for increased performance and brightness. This type of technology is now coming to Dell laptops, starting with the new XPS13.

As I have said many times, it is important to plan your purchases of new hardware carefully and avoid locking yourself into any specific configuration for an extended period. You can [read more about this new display technology here](#).

Please Contact your First Tech account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists so you can make arrangements to get evaluations and plan for your next refresh.

Leaked Intel Lunar Lake Benchmarks look good

It is looking like the Intel Lunar Lake CPUs are going to meet expectations of being high-performance low-power processors that exceed Microsoft's minimum requirement of 40 TOPS.

All going well, [we should be able to get our hands on them before the end of 2024](#).

Again, it is SO IMPORTANT to be planning with our hardware specialists your hardware refresh agendas for the rest of 2024 and into 2025, as things are changing faster than ever. Please contact your First Tech. account manager to discuss the roadmap to align with your plans.

CoPilot+ PC's underwhelming

This reviewer [from Tom's Hardware is seriously underwhelmed with the CoPilot+ PC's](#) but does admit that the Snapdragon PC's are more power efficient. I do think it is early days, and there are going to be many reviews, positive and negative. Still, with so much changing so fast, try to hold off on buying hardware right now unless you really have to.

If you are in the "have to" league, please Contact your First Tech Account manager, who will put you in touch with our specialists to plan what is coming and when you will be able to get your hands on it.

Microsoft

Support Terminated!

As you may have seen in [BREAKING NEWS #2](#), Microsoft has ended free support for Azure. This is quite a big deal because if you have any issues with Azure, the support call is now billable - and though you have a number of [options from Microsoft](#), **First Technology Group is able to offer you support** from South African engineers with full Escalation to Microsoft engineering 24 X 7 X 365, and of course, billed in local currency.

We are the most highly certified company in South Africa receiving "Partner of the Year for South Africa 2024" for the 2nd time in a row - as seen in [BREAKING NEWS #3](#) for more.

Our services range from Enterprise-level Support operations right down to essential and reactive support for smaller businesses.

You have further options for just Microsoft and vendor escalation, cloud and on-premises support, and 24/7 assistance for critical workloads.

No matter how big or small you are we have an option for you.

Please [contact us here](#) or reach out to your First Tech account manager to discuss your requirements.

Also, this situation is similar for most other cloud providers, such as AWS and others, and we are certified to support those, too—talk to us about them as well!

CoPilot Prerequisites expanded, again

Microsoft has further expanded the prerequisites for CoPilot as follows:
Microsoft 365 Apps for business/Apps for enterprise/Business Basic/Business Standard/Business Premium/F1/F3/E3/A3/E5/A5;
Office 365 F3/E1/E3/A3/E5/A5;
[Exchange Online](#);
[SharePoint Online](#);
[OneDrive for Business](#);
[Microsoft Clipchamp](#);
[Microsoft Teams EEA/Enterprise/Essentials](#);
[Planner Plan 1](#);
[Project Online](#);
[Visio Online](#)

You can find this listed in the [Product Terms here](#).

You can also find more news about what new CoPilot features [Microsoft is releasing here](#).

CoPilot comes to "Old" Outlook

If you have the paid CoPilot for the M365Mxx plan, you will get CoPilot in Outlook with all the features you have experienced in Word, for example.

You can read more about how [Microsoft has implemented it here](#).

Teams Room gets multiple camera views

Attendees will be able to switch between multiple cameras to catch all the boardroom action remotely! You can read more about [this feature and others here](#).

You also get Intelligent message translation for chats and [improvements in VDI Optimisation](#).
Zoom [already has the feature](#).

[You can contact your First Tech account manager to put you in contact with our Teams and Zoom Room specialists to talk about enabling more advanced features to make the conferencing experience better.](#)

Security

Malware threats more than ever

We are all at risk and being tricked, checked, misled and tricked into getting compromised. We cannot take our attention off security and be suspicious of EVERYTHING. With all the drama going on in the world, and more all the time, you simply cannot let your guard down. You can read more about [why all things bad are at an all-time high!](#)

Here is an example of a [new Microsoft email scam](#) with some clues on how to spot one.

Azure MFA rollout clarified

Microsoft has provided an update on preparing for MFA across all of Azure starting in July. The changes affect everybody in Azure, [so it is important to be aware of them](#).

Cloud & AI

GPT-5 Coming soon?

Microsoft AI CEO Mustafa Suleyman has hinted that we will be seeing GPT-5 and GPT-6 sooner than expected. Actually, the interview with him has [stirred up quite a storm](#), but it is clear that we are in for another big step change in AI - it's about to get a lot cleverer - [you can read more about the interview here](#).

As I have been urging for some time now, it is SO IMPORTANT to start experimenting with how AI can benefit you in your company, and you need to make sure your environment is secure so the data your AI is working with does not get easily compromised. Remember, the target for hackers may not be the data, but the AI that is working with the data.

We are all trying to figure this out as we go - see the story from last week "[With AI, we are all in R&D](#)"

[To prepare for this, please ask your First Tech account manager to connect you with our Security and AI specialists, who can help you start experimenting with AI.](#)

The Cocktail Effect

You may recall in [TOP STORIES #65](#) I told the story of how AI will contribute to improving the quality of life - and talked about technologies that will soon be available for us to hear clearly in noisy environments. This is known as the Cocktail Effect - and the Sennheiser YouTube ad

beautifully [demonstrates how we can suffer from it](#).

Well, Sennheiser has already released a product with some of this technology. You [can read about it here](#).

They are EXPENSIVE! It will not be long before many other top brands come out with this technology and improve on it even further, so stick around—it's going to get exciting —this is just "v1.0"!

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Movies

INSIDE OUT 2 has continued to [soar to new heights](#) at the box-office. Even Deadpool 3 may struggle to beat it! A surprise is that a Quiet Place: Day 1 is doing much [better than expected](#).

NO RELEASES for the week of 5 July

Now Playing: [Despicable Me 4](#)

Now Playing: [A Quiet Place: Day 1](#)

Now Playing: [Treasure](#)

Now Playing: [He's not ready](#)

Now Playing: [Kalki 2898 AD](#)

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TOP STORIES #70

Welcome to all the new members of TOP STORIES

It is not the busiest of weeks for news because of the 4th of July Holiday in the USA.

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can click [here](#).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #69 is here](#).

Hardware

Huawei Succeeds Where Microsoft Failed

Success is a point of view, but in this case, Huawei has succeeded in creating an operating system that does not depend on Android. The HarmonyOS Next replaces the Linux kernel which will roll out by the end of the year. This now creates a third operating ecosystem with different value propositions from what we are used to. It fragments the market, but it creates more competition. [You can read more about this here](#).

AI PC's - The "Hype-factor"

Right now, I think we can agree that AI is being hyped everywhere; what used to be called a well-written program by a good developer is now called "AI." From a hardware perspective, if you need to buy hardware now, you need to be careful, as it is changing so fast that what you buy now will probably be obsolete in six months. The release of Snapdragon Windows-based CoPilot+ PCs has not helped (in a good way).

So, if you have to buy, buy HIGH - with as much storage and RAM, the most powerful CPU and GPU you can afford, with the minimum being 32Gig RAM and at least 256Gig SSD NVMe storage.

You can read [more about these thoughts here](#).

[Please contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you our hardware specialists to make sure you are getting the right help in planning your refresh cycle.](#)

Microsoft

New Teams supports personal accounts

Up to now the "New Teams" has only supported enterprise accounts. You can now use the same version of Teams for personal accounts. This can at least make things simpler and consume fewer resources if you have to switch between multiple accounts. [You can read more here](#).

Unfortunately, running multiple instances of the "New Teams" does not seem to be possible at the moment.

Excel gets a new look

The web version has gotten a makeover that makes it faster and easier to use. You can [read more about the changes here](#).

NEW! Dynamics Contact Centre

Microsoft has introduced a new product that builds on the capabilities of the previous Voice and Digital Messaging channel add-ons for Dynamics 365 Customer Service, now available as a standalone solution.

Enhanced with Copilot and powered by Generative AI, this Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solution offers advanced features for improved customer interactions.

Here is a [handy YouTube video](#) that gives you an idea of what this can look like.

In terms of licensing, the standalone solution is priced at \$110 per user per month.

Alternatively, it can be bundled with Customer Service Enterprise in a new offering called Customer Service Premium, which is available at \$195 per user per month.

The [Microsoft Announcement is here](#).

The [pricing detail is here](#), and the effective herbal tranquilisers can be [found here](#) now that you have seen the pricing.

[It is very important to contact your First Tech account manager to connect you with our Dynamics experts to help you understand how this CoPilot-based offering from Microsoft can improve efficiency in your contact centre.](#)

RIP Microsoft Publisher

Microsoft has announced that Publisher will reach the end of support in October 2026. Frankly, I

do not think that many still use it, so I doubt there will be an outcry over it's demise. You can find can [find the official announcement here](#) .

Security

The biggest-ever password leak

10 billion credentials are at risk - this is a reminder to make sure you have different passwords for sites and that you do change the ones to sites that are important to you. You [can read more about this here](#).

Cloud & AI

It's not good enough until Suddenly, it is

If you are into AI, or you are tasked with trying to figure out how your company can benefit from AI, I [highly recommend that you read this paper](#) from Ethan Mollick.

He talks about how AI is now crossing the threshold between being a toy and when it is something serious that you can actually use.

He uses the analogy of when digital cameras crossed the threshold of suddenly being better than Polaroid cameras, and goes on to give other examples.

He gives many examples with Claude, GPT-4o (aka CoPilot) and Gemini to show that we are now at this threshold.

His test of the AI's ability to understand the reference to "long purples" in a passage from Hamlet is most intriguing.

For now, only Claude understood fully, and thus, for this test passed the threshold.

This paper is not for everybody, but if you are wrestling with how to use AI in your company, I recommend that you take the time to read this article and the other articles it links to.

If you now need to take the leap and start applying AI to your data in your company it is really important to contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our teams in First Tech. dedicated to both preparing your environment for AI (the security bits) as well as actually using AI within the Microsoft ecosystem.

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Movies

For sheer mayhem and special effects, Twisters looks like a movie made to be enjoyed in IMAX. Fly Me to the Moon is really interesting, especially for the moon landing conspiracy theorists!

12 July: [Blue Lock the Movie: Episode Nagi](#)

12 July: [Fly me to the Moon](#)

12 July: [Twisters](#)

12 July: [Long Legs](#)

Now Playing: [Despicable Me 4](#)

Now Playing: [A Quiet Place: Day 1](#)

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TOP STORIES #71

Welcome to all the new members of TOP STORIES

This is a surprisingly busy week for Microsoft stories - all of them important, from Dynamics to Entra to Teams and No Azure on EA's and more.

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can click [here](#).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #70 is here](#).

Hardware

CPU Version Numbers are misleading - bigger/higher is not better

Linus Tech Tips has [posted a very good story](#) explaining how CPU version numbers from AMD, Intel, NVIDIA, etc are extremely misleading, where the "higher" number does not mean the CPU is better.

The level of deception is becoming quite intense, and it is really difficult to figure out what is actually the better CPU to choose for a given task and/or budget. As you have seen in many stories I have written here over the months new generations of CPU and GPU's are coming out faster than ever before.

Buying hardware - and getting it right when it comes to budget vs. performance is now really tricky. There are many websites where you can check and compare benchmarks of different CPUs, like [Passmark](#). [Toms Hardware also publishes a CPU ranking summary for different categories](#),

So, when it comes to buying the best notebook for your business, there are many factors to consider, and it is just getting more complicated. It is SO important that you contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help you make sure you are buying the best value hardware and that you keep updating the specifications.

Lunar Lake Due Q4

[We have more news from Intel that we can expect Lunar Lake CPUs](#) with a 50% improvement in integrated graphics performance and an NPU coming in at 48 TOPS. More detail is still missing, but we do know that by early next year, we will have a very different range of computers based on AMD and Intel CPUs to choose from—but note that understanding the model numbers will be very confusing—see the article above!

Microsoft

Dynamics Licensing Guide July

Microsoft has updated the guide which you can [download here](#).

The products have now been arranged alphabetically,

There is a new Table with pricing showing Base applications and the qualifying licenses and the brand-new Customer Service Premium and Dynamics 365 Contact Center licences are added across the entire document.

The on-premise licensing guide has only minor changes and can be [downloaded here](#).

NB! ALL the licensing guides are [downloadable from one place here](#).

Please contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to ensure you can benefit from any of these changes in your environment.

External Users Definition change.

I had already sent out a notice about this relating to Dynamics in [TOP STORIES #68](#), but [here is the official announcement](#) from Microsoft confirming the change as of 1 October 2024 listing all the products that are affected - **it is important to note the list as it includes Office for the Web** and more. This is important to note external users **DO NOT require a license**.

It is important to get an update from our SAM teams to understand how this change can affect your licensing and if you could benefit from it - if you are a 24/7 shift worker type business or have lots of contractors, this can be interesting!

Power Platform Licensing guide update July

Microsoft has updated the guide, which you can [download here](#). There are two changes:

1. Dynamics 365 Professional and Teams Members licences can now be used with Managed Environments, not just the Enterprise licences.
2. A new tier of Dataverse Database capacity add-on licenses are available in increments of

1 GB with a minimum purchase of 1,000 units.

Please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Power Platform specialists to check if any of these changes may be of benefit to you.

M365 Gets better compatibility with LibreOffice

This improvement is not just with Libre, but with all programs that support Open Document Compatibility. Microsoft is updating the format to support V1.4

You can [read more about the changes and when to expect them here](#).

Entra Security and Identity Tools are now Generally Available

One aspect of these new tools is **conditional access**, which is very important to understand. In addition, the new tools will help businesses implement a cloud-based security and identity system that should eliminate the use of features such as VPNs, on-premises Secure Web Gateway, and others. [You can read more about this announcement here](#).

[We have the best Cyber Security teams In South Africa to help you understand how you can benefit from these Tools and others from Microsoft.](#) Please see "**Support Terminated**" in [TOP STORIES #69 to understand why I say we are, without a doubt, the best in South Africa!](#)

Why is Microsoft Support so Bad?

[Here is an interesting article published by Redmond Magazine](#) that talks about how bad Microsoft support has become, which can now be even more annoying because no matter what support you need, you have to pay for it. Obviously, there are many reasons for these support issues, and all of them are hard to solve, though AI will eventually go a long way to improving the situation.

Dealing with competent and awake humans that you can actually call and when you speak with them, can understand your problem and speak back in a version of English you can understand can go a very long way toward helping resolve your problem quickly.

[As the Premium Microsoft Services partner in South Africa, First Technology Group is able to provide you with personalised support 24/7/365 - you can read more about our Services that you can get in South Africa here.](#)

Microsoft Says You Are Ready for the New Outlook! Are you?

[Directions on Microsoft has published a detailed discussion](#) on what it means that Microsoft has announced that the "New Outlook" is ready for General availability without a significant number of features critical to corporates being available.

[At this stage, the general availability](#) date is more for planning purposes than anything else. Directions on Microsoft analyst Rob Helm said, "GA's only direct impact on IT managers is that you can get support for new Outlook."

He added: "**However, we project new Outlook will permanently displace classic Outlook from Microsoft 365 Office suites in as little as 24 months after GA.**

So treat GA as a reminder: Get new Outlook rollout into your technology roadmaps and budgets."

[I have been warning about this issue for some time.](#) Please refer to [TOP STORIES #52](#) where you can see where I talk in more detail about this problem and [some solutions to them from our Division, First Digital.](#)

Teams is no longer laying the golden egg

[In a new article from Directions on Microsoft](#), Mary Jo Foley talks about the (expensive) future of Microsoft Teams, and that as a product reaches maturity, Microsoft changes gears, and typically starts charging for features that normally would be included in an update to milk more revenue from a maturing product (Mary Jo explains how this works).

Part of the evidence of this change in strategy is that Microsoft quietly announced last week that the Teams Office feature Connector will be phased out - [the blowback on this announcement has been intense!](#)

[It is really important to Contact your First Tech account manager to understand the implications and make plans.](#)

[The first is to see what your options are if you are using Teams Connectors with our Development teams, and the second is to start re-evaluating whether Teams is the core of your Unified Communications strategy going forward.](#) There are two divisions in the First Technology Group that can help with this important discussion. Both of them are really good with Teams and Zoom.

You want Azure? No EA for you!

According to Directions on Microsoft, Microsoft aims to have new MACC agreements signed under MCAs. This is part of Microsoft's strategy to keep only REALLY large customers on EAs (don't bet on that one). **If Directions on Microsoft posts an article like this, it is very important to pay attention. They are usually right!**

It is VERY important that you ask your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our Licensing Specialists to discuss your options going forward, as to get the best value from Microsoft, you will find a blend of agreements may be the best way going forward, but this needs to be worked out and managed. We have the experience, the tools and access to every single type of agreement Microsoft has to help you come up with the best plan going forward. **For enterprise agreements, this planning needs to start a YEAR before you come up for renewal. If we have not contacted you already, PLEASE get in touch with us - we need to talk about this!**

Security

A reason to upgrade

It seems that the old browser is still used by enough people to deploy malware. Even though a patch has been released, it is a good idea to try to move away from using these really old programs. [You can read more here.](#)

Cloud & AI

What is the right LLM for your company?

AI is developing at an incredible pace, so being too conservative could mean you get left behind. It is important to accept that this technology is moving so fast that we are ALL researchers trying to figure out how AI can make a difference to us as individuals and also as a company. [Here is an interesting article to read and ponder as to how it may apply to your business.](#)

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Movies

We are all waiting for Deadpool and Wolverine at the end of month!

19 July: [The Bad Bishop](#)

19 July: [Gundam Seed Freedom](#)

Now Playing: [Blue Lock the Movie: Episode Nagi](#)

Now Playing: [Fly me to the Moon](#)

Now Playing: [Twisters](#)

Now Playing: [Long Legs](#)



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TOP STORIES #72

Just when I thought we would have a really quiet week because the northern hemisphere is on summer holidays, we ended up with a huge news story!

The Massive CrowdStrike Outage on Microsoft Systems

BUI, FTG's security and Azure Expert division has let me know that Microsoft has JUST released a recovery tool to help with the CrowdStrike Disaster. [You can get the tool here.](#)

The story that overshadowed everything this week was the CrowdStrike debacle, which caused systems worldwide to fail.

This was hot on the heels of a major Azure Microsoft outage.

It's important to recognise that ANY system can fail.

This time it was CrowdStrike, next time, it could be somebody or something else. There are ALWAYS single points of failure in your business that can really hurt you if they stop working, **and at some point, they will.**

If you weren't taken out by this, heave a sigh of relief as you dodged a bullet this time, but there **will** be a "next time," and you might not be so lucky.

What is important to ponder is that in times of crises, when all hell is breaking loose, who can you phone that REALLY has your back 24/7/365? In South Africa, who can do that?

Don't wait for a disaster to "take you out"; make sure you have your DR in place (which we can help with), including backing up everything, not forgetting Azure. [Even W365 virtual machines in Azure](#) were taken out!

First Tech Group does have the engineers and resources to help you 24/7/365 through an appropriate support agreement.

As Microsoft's most certified partner in Africa and home to BUI, the Partner of the Year winner for the past two years, First Tech Group is well-equipped to support you in crises with real resources who can communicate in clear, understandable English.

Actually, it's interesting to note that there were warning signs - [CrowdStrike broke Linux months ago, but nobody noticed.](#)

When Microsoft systems break, EVERYBODY notices!

Of course, there is [always a funny side to this devastating outage!](#)

This is a bit extreme, but SouthWest airlines was not affected because they are still [running Windows 3.1!!!!](#) This is not a typo! read the article!

Of course any company not running CrowdStrike was also not affected (this time).

I suppose this is taking the idea of if it ain't broke, don't fix it a bit far, but in SouthWest's case THIS time they were saved.

Unfortunately for SouthWest, every single bad guy out there now knows that SouthWest is wide open to attack!! I do not recommend downgrading to Windows 3.1 for any possible reason!

[Contact your First Tech account manager to connect you with our Technical and Security divisions to review your 24/7/365 support options.](#)

If colleagues would like to join TOP STORIES, they can click [here](#).

You can find [TOP STORIES #71](#) here - in #71 we talk a lot more about our services.

Hardware

Intel's CPU's to get hotter

It seems a way to boost performance is to allow CPU's to run even hotter, which is fine if they are designed for it. You can [read more about this here](#).

AMD and Intel are back in the AI game

The very first AMD Ryzen and Intel Lunar Lake notebooks are starting to appear, and we will soon find out how well they stack up against the Snapdragon Elite X notebooks. [You can read more here,](#)

[As I have said many times in past few months because things are changing so fast it is really important to be planning your roadmap with our hardware specialists](#) to make sure you do not accidentally lock yourself into a model based on a previous generation for too long (of course price can play a big role in the decision as well!)

Microsoft

Microsoft Designer hits GA

Microsoft's AI-powered design tool has reached General availability, meaning you can get support from Microsoft along with new capabilities for CoPilot subscribers. You can read [more about the announcement here](#).

Office 2021 for Life! (Really??!!!)

How do you tell the truth and mislead at the same time?

Easy - you leave out a critical piece of information!

Here is a once-in-a-lifetime Prime Day deal to buy [Office 2021 FOR LIFE for \\$79.99](#).

This is 100% true - well sort of.....

Once bought, the software will run forever without needing to pay for anything more, but the website making the offer fails to clarify that Office 2021 will [end support in 2026](#). This means you only have 2 years of security updates, and then no more.

That can be a problem because you could be compromised by an attack that takes advantage of the fact that vulnerabilities in Office 2021 after October 2026 may remain unpatched.

There ARE cases where buying a perpetual license makes sense, but they need to be considered carefully while fully understanding the implications. If you are going to buy a perpetual license, it is also important to note that Office 2024 will be [released before the end of 2024](#) so maybe you are able to delay your purchase?

This is an example of how when looking to buy software, especially where the offer is unusually attractive, it is actually a good idea to consult a licensing specialist. There are many in First Tech Group who have been around for years and have seriously good licensing experience that can help navigate these challenges.

[Please contact your First Tech licensing account manager to help you understand your options and whether there are any hidden surprises.](#)

Purview Data Governance Solution Launching in September

This is Microsoft's AI-powered solution that addresses governance and security challenges under one umbrella will reach General availability 1 September. [You can read more about it here](#); if you would like to know more about this, [please contact your First Tech account manager, who will put you in touch with our security experts to take this further for you.](#)

NB! we will be announcing a new workshop for Purview soon.

Security

How to spot and act on an email scam

Here is a [very interesting story from Wired](#) on how to react on a scam. It gives some very good guidance that could be shared with your users.

It is a good read - I recommend it.

Dangerous Cybercrime Update from Microsoft

in line with the Wired article, Microsoft is warning that one of the most dangerous outfits in Cybercrime is getting even more dangerous. [You can read more about this here](#).

Cloud & AI

CoPilot can summarise much longer documents

[Microsoft has announced that CoPilot can now summarise a single document up to 80 000](#) words in length (which would be around 133 pages),

This is a lot more than ChatGPT at the moment which says it can only handle 10 000 words at a time.

It is super important that the correct security protocols need to be in place before activating CoPilot in your environment.

[To ensure you are implementing the correct security protocols and services, please ask your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our Purview Security specialists.](#)

Gigabyte releases AI software to help train your OWN AI

We are going to see a lot more of this where you will be able to use hardware purpose-built for AI being used to train LLM in your own environment and not in the cloud. It will increasingly become more user-friendly. [NVIDIA Chat with RTX](#) is a good example of that.

Now, Gigabyte has released a utility to help you do just that - help train your own AI model on their hardware. You can read [more about this here](#).

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness Workshops

They are available.

You can register for them [here](#) or [here](#).

Copilot for Security

Join BUI, (FTG's Azure, Cloud and Security specialists) for an exclusive one-on-one demo session featuring Microsoft Security Copilot!

This is a prime opportunity for your team to experience the forefront of technology with our latest release. Dive into discussions about defining and understanding the consumption needs specific to your organisation.

Reserve your spot now! [Sign up here](#).

NEW! FTG's BUI Monthly Security Blog

FTG's Azure and security division has launched a blog focused on Security - what's new, what changed and what you need to do to maintain a good security posture. The blog will be published monthly - [and here is the 1st one](#) (unfortunately one member of the team suffered a personal loss - so the 2nd video will only be out next week) - it's only 4mins long, and has some interesting information about:

- New Recommendations in Entra ID
- Entra Admin Center Updates
- Conditional Access Policies Renaming
- Phasing Out Legacy Identity Protection Policies

Movies

Well..... the biggest movie of the year is coming up - at it may even eclipse Dune! Deadpool hits the screens with a bang..... The entire industry is hoping Deadpool will be the blockbuster we all hope it will be..... [Here is an interesting story](#) of how they got Madonna to let them use "Like a Prayer"

Now Playing: [The Bad Bishop](#)

Now Playing: [Gundam Seed Freedom](#)

26 July: [DeadPool & Wolverine](#)

26 July: [The Fabulous Four](#)

26 July: [Storm Crashers](#)

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TOP STORIES #73

If colleagues would like to join TOP STORIES, they can click [here](#).

You can find [TOP STORIES #72](#) here

What is interesting is the fallout from the CrowdStrike meltdown, which you can read about in the reactions and comments below.

Hardware

Intel Admits damage is permanent

If you are the proud owner of a desktop high-performance Intel CPU, this is not good news, as the new update being rolled out by Intel will only stop further damage. This is not good news and something Intel will be really keen to leave in the past as it gets ready for the wave of Lunar Lake processors to compete with AMD. You can [read more here](#).

Rollable Displays, a hint of the near future

Samsung has submitted a patent for a display that can roll out to end up being a lot bigger than in its closed state. Samsung also suggest that the display can adapt to reflect UI's of other devices when brought into close proximity of the primary display. You can [read more here about what we can expect to see in displays in the near future](#).

Microsoft

Office Connectors in Teams retirement delayed

In [TOP STORIES #71](#) I noted that Microsoft had announced that these connectors would be retired in favour of Power Automate workflows with only 3 months' notice, Clearly, there was a backlash big enough for Microsoft to announce a new date, but you have to take note of the new schedule. You can [read about all this here](#).

If you are affected by this, please contact your First Technology account manager to speak with our specialists so they can help you with the migration.

Microsoft M365 plan comparison Documents updated July 2024

Microsoft has updated the plan comparison documents for July to include the Entra Suite which you can [download here](#).

As usual it can get quite complicated to understand what is included, what can be added and then what prerequisites are required for what you want to add. Entra ID replaces things like AD, and have been in the works for a year.

Please Contact your Licensing Account manager to understand more about what you are licensed for (things keep changing), what you can add to your agreement and how you can benefit from the [Entra Suite](#).

Remember "Service Packs"? Seems they are coming back.

They are getting a new name - "Checkpoint Cumulative Updates". These new updates package all changes made since the last update, reducing the need to install multiple separate updates. You can read [more about this here](#).

This is a good opportunity to Contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our specialists to review your system deployment processes to ensure they are optimised for these new updates. Our expertise can help you utilise the latest Microsoft tools, ensuring your systems are up-to-date, secure, and running efficiently.

End Tasks from the TaskBar

Windows 11 now has an option for you to end a task straight from the taskbar. You can read about [how to enable it here](#).

We have an RDS problem

Microsoft has acknowledged that the latest update for Windows Server is causing connection problems for RDS - you can read [more about the problem here](#).

Security

How KnowB4 almost got caught

Here is a story about a company that specialises in security awareness training using its own

tools to prevent an attempt to compromise its own systems. KnowB4 managed to prevent the attack and **has published the story so that everybody else can learn** from these very sophisticated attacks.

First Technology Group actually partners with KnowB4 in South Africa to provide training and tools in addition to what you already have to prevent phishing and other attacks. Please contact your First Technology Account manager to arrange a session with KnowB4 to see how they can help you get smarter in preventing attacks.

CrowdStrike Fallout- in 78 minutes

For several more weeks, we will be hearing about just how expensive this mess has turned out to be. **Here is one story about how much this incident cost**, but what will be more interesting to follow are the stories about what is going to be done to prevent this in future, and those stories are only just starting (Microsoft already has something to say - see below).

Here is a hint of what may be coming with Microsoft moving away from allowing security products to have kernel-level access in future - and more on this further down.....

In the meantime, CrowdStrike maintains that 97% of all Windows devices are **back online**.

Just ONE cup of Coffee!

Amidst all this, offering affected customers a cup of Coffee might only have stimulated CEOs with enough energy (because he is drinking the ONE cup of coffee) to call their legal department. There is an important lesson here. If you can afford CrowdStrike, you probably have a very well-staffed legal department.

You can read about the ONE - **yes, ONE! cup of coffee here**, TomsHardware also feels that trying to repair your reputation one cup of coffee at a time (of which some got revoked) is **not the most clever thing to do** pointing to the still plummeting share price.

CrowdStrike - Lessons Learnt - from Directions on Microsoft

Directions has published its own commentary about how we can all learn from the meltdown, and there is some really good advice - it's a **good read here**.

What is really important to note is that Microsoft has **issued a statement** suggesting that the company will stop allowing third parties to access the kernel in the future.

This is a good opportunity to re-examine what you can use from your existing Microsoft licensing stack rather than spending additional money on third parties, which increases your exposure to a CrowdStrike-like meltdown. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help you review your security portfolio.**

Major Secure Boot Security issue - yes, it's serious

It seems that many vendors did not replace the default key issued by AMI, putting around 800 products at risk. Vendors are going to issue BIOS updates which will be essential to deploy. **You can read more about this serious vulnerability here.**

Daves Garage on YouTube has an excellent explanation of the problem as well. In the meantime, you need to be extra careful protecting yourself, making sure all your other security measures are up to date.

This is a good opportunity to review your security status. If you would like assistance in reviewing your environment, including making sure your tools are correctly configured to protect you right now as these patches are still being rolled out by different vendors.

Please reach out to your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Security Specialists.

Cloud & AI

To Support OpenAI, Microsoft Taps Oracle for More Cloud Power

Oracle has agreed to lend Microsoft capacity in the Oracle cloud meet OpenAI's increasing demands for capacity. Oracle is betting on companies using its infrastructure optimised for AI, a bet that seems to be working so far. You can **read more here**.

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Movies

Well, DeadPool and Wolverine [looks set to break records](#), and I can assure you that it is excellent! Go and see it, if you have not already.

For this week we have quite a crop of different types of movies, so take a look.....maybe there is something you like.

The next big movie coming up is [Alien: Romulus](#) on the 16th of August - it will be a scream!

Now Playing: [DeadPool & Wolverine](#)

Now Playing: [The Fabulous Four](#)

Now Playing: [Storm Crashers](#)

2 August: [Harold and the Purple Crayon](#) (I could use one of these)

2 August: [The Bikeriders](#)

2 August: [The Trap](#) (This one is going to be SCARY)

2 August: [Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha](#)

2 August: [The Exorcism](#)

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TOP STORIES #74

With the August summer holidays in full swing, news can slow down just a little, but in the world of IT, there is never a dull moment!

If colleagues want to Sign up they can [click here](#).

TOP STORIES #73 can be [found here](#).

Hardware

Intel Confirms Lunar Lake Release Date

Intel will now officially launch on 3rd September and is the company's first shot at competing head-on with the Snapdragon and AMD Ryzen AI CPUs.

You can read more about the [Launch here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft releases M365 Backup and Storage

These tools permit businesses to store critical active data which, in the event of a cyber-attack or other disruption, can be used to ensure business continuity at much faster rates than migration-based backup. You can read more about the new [tools here](#).

First Technology has many different backup offerings and solutions in addition to the vanilla Microsoft offerings, one of which is where the company has partnered with Skykick to offer unlimited storage and retention for a fixed monthly bill. You can read more about the service [here](#).

Please contact your account manager to arrange a meeting with our specialists to ensure that the backup solution being offered is the correct one for YOU!

The Add-On Gravy Train & the Mythical "E7" Bundle.

Now that Microsoft has published its Q4 results, it is possible to use what Microsoft has published to look forward to the new FY and try to guess what lies ahead.

You can read the transcript of the presentation of the results [from Microsoft here](#).

According to the [latest opinion from Directions on Microsoft](#), the guessing game continues as to whether we will see a higher "top-level" Suite that eclipses the current E5 bundle.

However, it is starting to look like Microsoft is favouring selling more and more Add-Ons and is happy with this strategy.

Of course, all this needs to be carefully considered when planning to negotiate a renewal and to avoid overspending on immature offerings, which is good advice from Directions on Microsoft.

Preparing for a renewal involves a lot more, and it is very important that you give our licensing specialists the opportunity to discuss the details, including assessing the ACTUAL consumption of the components you are already paying, for which we have custom analytics tools that complement what you have.

Teams channels and text chat to be combined

The separation of these two channels of communication has been a problem and a complaint compared with Slack. Microsoft seems to be making some moves to address this in a new release, which you can [read more about here](#).

Teams is full of tricks, many of them hidden away. It could be a really good idea to talk to your First Technology account manager, who can put you in touch with one of our many Teams specialists to refresh you on all the features in Teams and see if you are missing an opportunity to get more value from what you already own.

New Outlook now Available for Business

Microsoft has announced that Business users can now start Migrating to the "New Outlook", but it is not getting a great reception. [Redmond Magazine has published a story about the New Outlook](#), but you will see they have reservations about some of the features and the absence of others. Windows Central is [even less complimentary about the New Outlook](#), saying "It Sucks", and proceeds to explain why it thinks so!

Microsoft is still insisting that your Old Outlook will be retired completely in a few years, so it is still important to consider what that may mean and prepare for it. There are MAJOR changes (losses), where for example, COM add-ins will no longer be supported.

You can read about that problem and more in TOP STORIES #52. Most importantly, contact your account manager to connect you with our experts so they can start helping you understand

what work is needed to migrate.

Security

Never click on Ads to download software

It looks right, the identity is verified, but it is sponsored. Should I download it?

Answer: NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

Any link that is listed as sponsored or is an Ad should not be trusted. You can read more about how these nasties can [catch you here](#),

OneDrive security warning that is a scam

Here is a story of how you can get tricked into installing Malware while thinking you are repairing your computer from a OneDrive error. [It all starts with an email bearing an HTML attachment.](#) It is super important to keep educating users to be on the lookout for anything suspicious, and companies like KnowB4 make it their business to teach users how to always be alert. [Please contact your FirstTech account manager to see what courses might be suitable to help you improve your security posture.](#)

Cloud & AI

Fall detection using WiFi Signals

Here is a very interesting application of AI where it is used to detect if somebody has fallen just from detecting changes in a WiFi signal. You can read [more about this invention here](#),

What's up at FTG

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Movies

We are having a lot of luck with movies right now. Deadpool has exceeded everybody's expectations. and now we have BORDERLAND's this week and Alien: Romulus coming the week after.

Take some tranquilisers and get ready for Alien!!!

Now Playing: [Harold and the Purple Crayon](#) (I could use one of these)

Now Playing: [The Bikeriders](#)

Now Playing: [The Trap](#) (This one is going to be SCARY)

Now Playing: [Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha](#)

Now Playing: [The Exorcism](#)

9 August: [Big Trip 3: Race Around the World](#)

9 August: [Borderlands](#)

9 August: [The Widow Clicquot](#)

9 August: [My Neighbor Totoro](#)



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TOP STORIES #75

It is a reasonably slow week given that the Northern Hemisphere is seriously on holiday, but there is still enough happening to prevent boredom.

Of course, the [BlackHat conference](#) has just ended (First Technology Group had representatives from our BUI division there), so there will be lots more news on the hacker front in the coming weeks.

If you would like to invite colleagues to join, they can [click here](#).
The previous [TOP STORIES #74](#) is here.

Hardware

Intel releases fixes for it's CPU's

Intel is starting to roll out fixes for its 13th and 14th Gen CPUs, which have caused it a major loss of credibility. As a company, Intel needs to leave behind these problems as fast as possible. You can read [more about the patch's rollout here](#). Intel is also rolling out details about its warranty extension for these troublesome CPUs, which you can [find out about here](#).

Microsoft

Exchange 2016 Extended support ending

Microsoft is increasing pressure on companies to move away from Exchange 2016 ASAP. Microsoft is urging you to move to Exchange 2019, which will support upgrades to Exchange SE. You can read [more about this upgrade here](#).

If you need assistance with the, [First Tech has multiple engineering teams to help with this](#).
[Please contact your First Tech account manager to assist with this](#).

Sticky Notes - like it or not, you have it!

Every user is not getting the new app and it is not being well received by all. Fortunately, you can downgrade to the older versions. You can read more about the new app and [how to downgrade here](#).

New Outlook is NOT ready!

As you have seen in previous top stories, where I have posted many times about the new Outlook's missing features and general unreadiness, Office Watch has published a detailed article explaining why it is not ready, and in summary:

The "dealbreakers" are:

- No offline support - you have to have an internet connection for it to work at all. Worse, it needs to be a decent connection - an erratic one will stop Outlook from working reliably.
- You have to give Microsoft servers the ability to log into your non-Microsoft accounts
- No PST support - for those who use PST's, this is absolutely a deal-breaker!
- It is buggy, and slow.
- The new Outlook is NOT ready just because Microsoft says it is.

You can [read more about these issues here](#).

[Please refer to more details here about the New Outlook, the issues, and what we can do to help support the migration away from COM add-ins.](#)

[Microsoft appears determined to migrate you to the New Outlook, so it is important to start understanding the implications as soon as possible. Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our specialists who can help you assess these implications.](#)

Microsoft Plan comparison Documents updated August

There was not much for this month except the addition of [Entra Internet Access](#) and [Entra Private access](#) components. You can [download the updated PDF here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to show you how these two components from Microsoft can help improve your security. This is pretty important stuff to get familiar with, as this is Microsoft's technology related to the next generation of VPNs—so a workshop around this is highly recommended! You can also sign up for a workshop here](#)

Security

Office zero-day vulnerability, no patch yet

Microsoft has disclosed a serious vulnerability for all versions of Office that needs a hacker to convince a user to click a link for the attack to be successful. [You can read more about it here](#). This again underscores the importance of training users to be suspicious and not to click on any link that comes into their mailbox unless they are 100% sure it is legit (remember, the bad guys are doing their best to trick you into thinking their emails are legit!). Please contact your First Tech account manager to discuss all the options we have for training your users to be alert and help double-check that your protection systems are actually working!

Downgrade Attack!

This is quite a scary attack. Your PC gets downgraded without your knowledge, allowing vulnerabilities in older versions of your operating system to be exploited.

This is truly scary that, unbeknown to you, your computer can be downgraded to make it vulnerable, all the while you think it is fully patched.

Microsoft is working on a fix for this (hopefully in a hurry).

You can read more about this rather [scary attack here](#) and you can read The Register's [take on this here](#).

Cloud & AI

Zoom Launches Word Competitor Infused with AI

Zoom Docs is here to compete with Microsoft, and for it to be noticed, it needs to be competitive and feature-rich. Zoom Docs is included in paid Zoom workplace licenses. You can read more about the [offering from Zoom here](#).

As a major partner of Zoom, First Technology can show you what Zoom has to offer and to consider what others offer as well. [Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange for a discussion and/or a demo of what this new offering from Zoom can do.](#)

What's up at FTG

BUI Cyber Research finds another Zero Day vulnerability in Teams

The Cyber Security and Azure Expert division for FTG has found another vulnerability, which they have [published the details of here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our experts to help you determine whether you need help to check whether you are vulnerable and, if so, what you can do to protect yourself.](#)

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](#).

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Movies

Unfortunately, [Borderlands flopped.....](#) A missed opportunity to turn a great game into a great movie - like what happened with Fallout - except it is a series and ended up being a huge success.

Alien: Romulus is going to be a different story - I do not think that one is going to be a flop!

Now Playing: [Big Trip 3: Race Around the World](#)

Now Playing: [Borderlands](#)

Now Playing: [The Widow Clicquot](#)

Now Playing: [My Neighbor Totoro](#)

16 August: [Alien: Romulus](#)

16 August: [It ends with us](#)

16 August: [Vedaa](#)

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TOP STORIES #76

As always, an interesting week. [TOP STORIES #75 is here](#), and if colleagues want to join, they can [click here](#).

Hardware

New AI Benchmarks

Primate Labs the developer behind the Geekbench benchmarking suite has released a tool to measure AI capabilities of devices. A number of big brands are adopting GeekBench and we will probably see more to follow as well as other Developers releasing different types of benchmarks.

This will go a long way towards standardising how we compare one AI system with another. You can read [more about this announcement here](#).

Microsoft

Exchange Server SE

Microsoft has confirmed the next version of Exchange will be a Subscription Edition which will be available in Q3 of 2025. It follows the same rules as Sharepoint SE - you need an active subscription to use it, and if you end the subscription you get the right to use the last perpetual version - in this case Exchange 2019. You can find the announcement and Migration paths [posted by Microsoft here](#). This also ties in with the article I published in TOP STORIES #75 regarding [support for Exchange 2016 coming to an end](#).

If you have any type of Exchange server deployment on-premise, even if hybrid, it is really important that you ask your First Technology account manager to talk to our engineers to be sure about your roadmap of migrating to the latest version of Exchange.

Mandatory MFA from October for Azure

This was first announced in [TOP STORIES #64](#), so this is really just a reminder that Microsoft is forging ahead.

Phase 1 of the rollout starts in October. You can [read more about the rollout here](#).

It is recommended that you contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Azure experts to assist with any challenges or questions you may have regarding this change.

Security

Make Sure your Outlook is patched.

Infection is easy by downloading a small file from any website, and so is the cure, so please make sure you are patched. You can [read more here](#).

You may as well check out the work-around for the [typing crash bug as well here](#),

Anybody can get Phished

This is a good reminder that no matter how good you think you are at spotting something nasty, you can still get hacked.

You can never let your guard down, but no matter how careful you are, something bad will eventually happen because nobody can be on guard all the time.

Here is what happened to [Linus Tech @ 26:18 time stop](#).

He got caught at the wrong moment when his guard was down.

This is an important reminder to always make sure that no matter how big or small you are if you have data you can lose, you need to have it backed up in a way you can recover from it even if you are completely locked out.

Please talk to your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Backup and security specialists to help you make SURE that your security and recovery processes are in place.

Cloud & AI

New GPT-4o model Released.

OpenAI is making continuous improvements to it's AI model [as you can see here](#). What is important to remember is that as OpenAI improves it's model, so does Microsoft's - and it is very important that you stay up to date with what Microsoft is offering under it's CoPilot brand.

Of course, don't forget Google - there is some advanced stuff coming as well, like [Project Astra, which you can read about here](#).

You will see below that we are having demos showing how Dynamics is enhanced with CoPilot - please contact your First Tech account manager to see if these demos are relevant to your business,

How far have we come?

Almost 2 years later, where are we with AI?

Are we suffering from [Change Blindness](#)?

Ethan Mollick has [written a very interesting blog](#) that helps us realise just how far we have come with AI where the leaps that have been taken from less than 2 years ago are incredible. He also notes how quickly students and teachers have adopted AI. I think the most important and scary point to take away from his article is that if the pace of change continues at the same pace as it has in the last 2 years, our world is going to look very different from today. I have followed how technology has changed over the last 40 years, using Moores Law (which is now dead) as my "North Star" and what you must also note is that change is compounded from one year to the next, so in 2 years time things **will** be really different (again) because of the compounding effect.

I urge you to take time to read [this article](#)- it really makes one realise how far we have come, and it serves as a reminder that you **HAVE** to be playing with how AI can benefit your business. There is nobody that will be able to tell you better than yourself - there **IS NOBODY** that has many more years experience than you, we are literally all in R&D together!

What we can do is show you how to use the AI tools and most importantly how to make sure your environment is secure for the deployment of AI. Please contact your First Tech account manager to connect you with our AI experts (spread across many divisions - AI is everywhere) to start this journey, and if it is already started see if we can help speed it up.

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- New Recommendations in Entra ID
- Entra Admin Center Updates
- Conditional Access Policies Renaming
- Phasing Out Legacy Identity Protection Policies

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[Register here.](#)

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Movies

Alien is proving to be a huge hit, so if you can, go and get terrified in IMAX!

Now Playing: [Alien: Romulus](#)

Now Playing: [It ends with us](#)

Now Playing: [Vedaa](#)

23 August: [Inspector Sun](#)

23 August: [Blink Twice](#)

23 August: [The Crow](#)

23 August: [Spirited Away](#)

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TOP STORIES #77

As always, an interesting week. [TOP STORIES #76 is here](#), and if colleagues want to join, [they can click here](#).

There is a lot going on with FTG's events, with some in person, so please check out that section to see if anything is of interest.

Hardware

Glasses-free 3D Gaming monitor from Samsung Announced

Samsung has announced the new Odyssey 3D gaming monitor with a serious trick - you do not need glasses. Read [more about this monitor here](#), and when you can expect to order one (price not announced yet either) - for hardcore gamers, I suspect!

Intel Arrow Lake expected to ship October

Intel's next-generation desktop CPU's to compete with AMD are expected in October, which you can [read more about here](#).

Intel desperately needs these CPU's out in the market to compete with the AMD Ryzen 9000 series CPU's as AMD is still successfully steadily eating into Intel's dominance across all markets.

Even for corporates, considering AMD as a better-performing and cheaper value proposition is becoming a serious consideration.

Intel having instability problems with their 13th and 14th Gen CPU's has not helped either.

Microsoft

RIP Control Panel?

Are we going to see the Control Panel retired finally? Even now, there are still settings you can only get at via the old interface. It does however look like Microsoft is putting in a big effort to finally get rid of it. You can [read more about Microsoft's efforts here](#).

Text to Speech Avatar server announced

Spoiler - not in SA (yet)!

Microsoft has announced the Azure AI Text-to-speech service that features a human speaking with a natural-sounding voice. Billing will be per second, and the other services used to build it are billed separately as well. You can [read more about this here](#).

[Even though it is not officially available for South Africa, if you would still like to see a demo and explore how this could be used in your organisation, please contact your First Tech account manager to arrange a demo.](#)

Skype Business Server SE for Q3 2025 Release

This is a reminder that the Next version of Skype business Server will be a Subscription Edition along exactly the same lines as the next releases of Exchange and Sharepoint where if you stop paying your rights fall back to the last On-Premise edition, namely 2019. You can find the official announcement with [upgrade path recommendations here](#).

[If you have Skype for Business in your environment, I do recommend that you speak to your First Tech account manager to connect you with our experts to help look at your migration options for the future.](#)

Office LTSC 2024 update

I first published the news about the new Office in [TOP STORIES #55](#) where nothing much has changed (including the price increase). Visio & Project 2024 will be released around the same time. Microsoft has [published an update here](#) reflecting this information and more, including confirming that the Publisher is dead.

Dynamics Licensing guide update for August

The August Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide, [which you can download here](#), has been updated with a few changes.

Firstly, the prerequisites for Copilot for Sales and Service have been revised on pages 34/35. Secondly, the entitlements for Contact Center and Customer Service have been adjusted throughout, [where shifting from a per-tenant basis to a per-user basis may have licensing](#)

implications going forward.

Additional minor updates include changes to the Finance Capabilities table on page 21 and the replacement of the term "**seeded capacity**" with "**included capacity**".

Please contact your First Tech Account manager to put you in touch with our Dynamics specialists to help review if these changes could impact your licensing costs going forward.

Security

August Patch Tuesday should not be ignored!

Have you checked if IPv6 protocol is enabled? Do you know if you need it?

You might not like the answers to those two questions, and if you don't please continue reading!

Although there is much drama with [Patch Tuesday breaking Dual boot systems](#), there are also many security vulnerabilities that really need to be patched urgently, in particular one that is not being exploited in the wild; it will certainly be soon. The [YouTube Channel Daves Garage](#) has posted a really good explanation of this very serious vulnerability with a very important lesson.....if you do not need to use IPv6 (you probably don't) **switch it off!**

Please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our security experts, such as in our security division BUI, to help you evaluate your security posture along with working with you to reduce your "attack surface" - like switching services off that you don't need but make you more vulnerable to attack.

Cloud & AI

Why enterprise CIOs need to plan for Microsoft gen AI

CIO Magazine has [published an excellent article](#) about how important it is to plan for the adoption of AI - in particular, CoPilot in the corporate environment, while there are many AI alternatives available, CoPilot is the most frequently considered because of the integration into the rest of the Microsoft ecosystem. HOWEVER the biggest thing now delaying faster adoption of AI is data governance and security.

This is the No.1 issue that has to be addressed, and it is complex - corporate environments are mature - maybe 20-30 years old and will have documents that are just as sensitive to the company today as they were decades ago, but there was never a need to classify them. Letting an AI loose on this vast pool of unclassified data can have unintended consequences!

You also need to guard against AI's being prone to employee manipulation which you can read more about here - the [Anatomy of an AI Jailbreak](#).

It is SO IMPORTANT that you contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our Purview and security experts to start help crafting how you go about preparing your environment for the deployment of AI as well as putting in the processes to test for and avoid AI Jailbreaks.

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- [3:14] XDR Incident/Alert queue UI enhancements - <https://tinyurl.com/29smrte3>
- [4:23] MDO Bulk Senders Insight - <https://tinyurl.com/22x7nde9>
- [5:00] MDO Quarantine release integration with hunting - <https://tinyurl.com/27hcdkm9>
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Movies

Not much on the movie front, but you can give Hounds of War a try for a bit of action.

Now Playing: [Inspector Sun](#)

Now Playing: [Blink Twice](#)

Now Playing: [The Crow](#)

Now Playing: [Spirited Away](#)

30 August: [Hounds of War](#)

30 August: [Into the Mortal World](#)

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TOP STORIES #78

As always, last week's [TOP STORIES #77 is here](#)

If colleagues want to join, they can [click here](#).

This is a quiet week as we have a Labour Day Holiday in the USA, and the [IFA trade show](#) is due to open from 6-12 September.

It claims to be the world's largest consumer and electronics show (CES may have something to say about that).

What this means is that many announcements and press releases are going to coincide with the show.

Intel and many others have a LOT riding on IFA, so expect next week's TOP STORIES #79 to be very busy!

Hardware

End of an Era - AnandTech shuts down.

This marks the end of an era. A 15-year-old teen started AnandTech with a passion for technology, who went on to pursue other opportunities but left the site in very capable hands.

The good news that the site posts and forums will remain online.

Most of the staff have already moved over to TomsHardware. You can [read more about the web sites passing here](#),

Intel Panther lake to rival AMD Strix Halo for Notebooks

We have yet to see a Lunar Lake based laptop that we can actually buy, and already we are hearing about the next generation in 2025.

It does, however, look like 2025 will be the year to take a big leap in power consumption and processing capability. Whether you need to buy computers for work or home, 2025 looks like the year you will be able to go big - Q3 2025, though - not the beginning.

You can read [more about what is coming from Intel and AMD here](#) .

This REAL basketball court is a giant LED display

Sometimes, you must just admire something for just being totally crazy cool!

I never would have thought I would see a real basketball court turned into a giant LED display.

Yes, you can actually walk and play games on it! Read [more and watch the video here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft is retiring the Action Pack and Learning Pack for partners.

This move from Microsoft is not a surprise, as Microsoft tried to remove internal use rights before but had to back down because of a serious backlash. The Action pack is still available to renew up to January 2025, but after that, you will have to pick one of Microsoft's new, more expensive options. You can [read more here](#).

Exchange Server 2016 and Dynamics PSA losing support

I have been warning for a while that Exchange Server 2016 will end support in October 2025, necessitating a migration to Exchange 2019 or other more cloudy plans. However, Dynamics PSA will also end support in March 2025, with the upgrade path to Dynamics 365 Project Operations. You can [read more about this here](#) .

If any of Microsoft's products are coming to the end of support that are in use in your business, advance notice is important, especially for Dynamics, so if you have this situation, please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Dynamics specialists to help you plan the Migration.

Security

Voldemort abuses Google Sheets

Here is yet another lesson in have to alert for anything suspicious and NOT TO CLICK on links.

[Here is a story of how the Voldemort malware tricks you](#). As always, this serves as a reminder of how careful you need to be ALL THE TIME!

Please contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our specialists to provide user training on how to be alert for these attacks.

Code released to exploit IPv6 security hole

If you have not installed the August patches, it may be a good idea to hurry up. Code to exploit it has been released. You can [read more here](#).

As I emphasised in [TOP STORIES #77](#), it is also a great opportunity to contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security experts. We have some of the best in the country to review your security posture and attack surface. This vulnerability reminds you that you have to be patched, and your attack surface needs to be as narrow as possible, where you switch off anything you are not using.

Cloud & AI

It's Strawberry Season!

It seems ChatGPT5, known as Project Strawberry, is about to launch no later than November. It is supposed to be way better at maths and reasoning. There are a lot of rumours about what the improvements will actually be, but we will not have long to wait to find out.

You can [read more here](#).

What is clear is that AI capability is increasing at an exponential rate, and it is VITAL that you start experimenting with it, in particular, making sure your company is ready for AI to be deployed by ensuring your data is secured and classified as best you can before you let your the AI loose on the data. Please talk to your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our data platform security specialists to start planning this with you.

You have no way of knowing if an AI wrote a document (or helped).

AI is capable of passing most tests and completing almost all homework assignments. The same applies to its application in the workplace.

Detecting AI does not work, and if you have spent money on trying to detect it, you have probably wasted it.

People are very good at finding ways of getting out of things that they do not like doing - and for that AI is heaven-sent!

AI is a reality, and by embracing it in college and the workplace, we need to encourage thinking WITH AI, not using AI to replace thinking.

I think it is very important to ponder this as you consider deploying AI in your company and encouraging staff to use it.

Maybe think about how more productive and competitive your staff could become through using an AI to enhance what they do. Expect **more** because they use AI.

Read [more about this challenge and possible approaches to embracing AI here](#) .

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Movies

It seems "The Crow" is competing with Borderlands to be the worst movie of the year! Is it even possible that a movie can be worse than Borderlands?

Now Playing: [Hounds of War](#)

Now Playing: [Into the Mortal World](#)

6 September: OZI: Voice of the Forest

6 September: BeetleJuice Beetlejuice

6 September: Greatest of All Time

6 September: Howl's Moving Castle

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TOP STORIES #79

Well, [IFA is in full swing](#) (ends 10 Sept.), and there are already some [videos on YouTube](#) about all the cool tech that has been launched - and, of course, Intel's Lunar Lake is dominating the news.

However, the [TimeKettle is getting a lot of attention](#)—it is the closest thing I have seen to the Babelfish! It might be the coolest device at IFA, though the vacuum cleaners are pretty impressive as well!

It seems Lenovo has gone [really big on it's announcements at IFA](#), but every vendor has a lot to say!

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #78 is here](#).

if colleagues would like to join, they can [click here](#).

Did You Know?

First Technology is probably South Africa's best-kept secret.

Did you know the company is 40 years old?

Did you know it has the most Microsoft certifications compared to any other company in Africa?

Did you know the company provides services across the entire breadth of the IT industry?

Did you know we are developing advanced solutions for clients worldwide?

[From next week, every fortnight, we will start lifting the veil of secrecy and start telling you about what the company is actually doing with technology and services all over the world!](#)

Hardware

Lunar Lake is here!

Intel has announced the new Lunar Lake Core Ultra 200V Processors.

All these new computers will be eligible for the CoPilot+ features that have currently only been reserved for the Snapdragon ARM-based computers.

The change in battery life will be **massive**.

You can [read more about the announcement here](#) - and there is a [YouTube video you should watch](#) as well. **This is a BIG deal - these are the machines one should be looking at very carefully indeed** - this has been a long time coming, and I suspect along with all this we may see Windows 24H2 launch around the same time - ie not later than November.

[It is really important that you check with the First Technology hardware specialists to find out when these new computers will be available in SA. Globally, you can already pre-order them, but be prepared to pay the "early adopter tax."](#)

BEWARE—buy these computers with enough RAM upfront for the life of the PC. These devices are not upgradable because of [how they are designed](#) (3:34 timestamp). You can take a deep dive into the insides of the CPU [with this YouTube video here](#).

So... PLEASE consider your minimum to be 32Gig going forward—this is the optimal choice for the life of the computer. It's important to note that not much uses the NPU today, but in the near future (and definitely during the notebook's life- like Microsoft's Recall releasing soon), this will change, along with increased memory demands.

[With these new computers that will have Microsoft CoPilot+ features enabled, it is very important to talk to your First Technology hardware specialists to plan your roadmap in migrating to the new hardware with the Intel "Core Ultra" naming convention - i5, i7, i9 is all in the past now - so your RFQ's need updating. I have written some guidelines that include AMD on this, so if you are interested please talk to your account manager.](#)

More details Leak about Intel's "Panther Lake"

Panther Lake is the Generation of Intel Processors that will be released toward the end of 2025 and will replace Lunar Lake. Again, this looks to be a significant boost in performance over Lunar Lake, so don't get too attached to the Lunar Lake Core Ultra notebook that you can't even buy yet!

You can [read more on Panther Lake and what to expect here](#).

Dell Launches Intel Core Ultra 200V series laptops

Dell is one of the earlier adopters of the new Intel Lunar Lake AI CPUs in its newest XPS 13 model. The selection of ports is very limited, and as I stated in [TOP STORIES #64](#), paying careful attention to what docking stations you should be standardising on is quite important (USB-4 and Thunderbolt are different). For example, with this Dell, there is no HDMI port. You [can read more here](#). HDMI is not a given on these new notebooks anymore.

It is really important to ask your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to assist in planning the hardware refresh roadmap taking into consideration USB Hubs and monitor types as well. Monitors that double as USB hubs can be a good option.

Microsoft releases new range of Surface Laptops

Microsoft has [also released an expanded range of surface devices](#), just like all the other major manufacturers. These are premium devices aimed at corporate users.

What notebooks you choose are further complicated by the fact that ARM based CoPilot+ versions are increasingly attractive for professional corporate use. It is early days, and support for important native apps is still a [work in progress](#), but even so, it is still important to start seriously evaluating these machines for certain types of users in your environment, especially since even cheaper [8-core based Snapdragon-based machines are coming](#). You can also read about the [Qualcomm announcement here](#).

Bluetooth 6 Announced

This comes with some improvements over the 5.x standard, the most interesting is the ability for BT6 devices to find each other with great accuracy - down to 1cm! [You can read more about BT6 and what else it will be able to do here](#).

Paper, but not Paper is now in Colour.

If you like taking notes on paper or just like scribbling notes on paper, but would like to get more "techy" while still preserving the look and feel of paper, take a look at the Remarkable Paper Pro - it is now capable of doing paper type stuff in Colour. You can [read all about this amazing device here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 AI features for Intel PC's in November

This overlaps with the Lunar Lake announcement above, but [here](#) is more detail on when Microsoft will release different pieces—and it is still confusing.

Right now, it looks like Microsoft will be pushing updates incrementally from September through to November, but we will have to wait and see exactly what is released. [You can read more here](#).

Microsoft Office 2024 to disable ActiveX controls by default And will disable them in O365 by April 2025

This change has been prompted by some well-known vulnerabilities.

While some existing ActiveX objects will continue to appear as static images in Office documents, users will no longer be able to interact with them. You can read [more about this change here](#).

[These controls have crept into documents and spreadsheets over the years and may be critical to some of your internal processes. If you feel this might be an issue, or you are not even sure if you have an issue, please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists. They can assist you in evaluating your situation and recommending alternatives for the future.](#)

"New Outlook" can now be opened Offline.

This is a good example of how far the New Outlook still has to go before it has any hope of replacing the "Old Outlook." Microsoft has only announced now that the "New Outlook" will be able to be opened or restarted without an active internet connection towards the end of September. [You can read more about this and other additions to the roadmap relating to Teams here](#). I have been warning about Microsoft's determination to replace the "Old Outlook" with the new Outlook going back to [TOP STORIES #52](#), which goes even further into the past. Please heed the warning in [TOP STORIES #52](#) and contact your First Technology account manager to address the issues that may become a real problem in the future if not addressed now.

Security

CrowdStrike - lessons learnt (reading the fine print)

This fiasco has ended up being a really good reminder for companies and their legal departments to always make sure that contracts from vendors are read and understood very well.

It is really important to make sure you have a complete database of all your contracts, preferably

in machine-readable digital form. [Here is a very interesting article](#) that talks about the fallout and what you can do to try to limit your risk (spoiler: the smaller you are as a company, the less leverage you have vs. a much bigger company).

We have more than one SAM team that can help you navigate the mountain of contracts and inventories and capture that information into your existing systems like Flexera or SNOW, or if you do not have anything, our own system. Please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our SAM specialists to see if we can help you.

Critical Vulnerability in Windows Wi-Fi Drivers

[This vulnerability is being taken advantage of in the wild](#) even though Microsoft released a patch in June 2024. This serves as a reminder that it is critical to keep computers patched and always re-evaluate and check your security posture. [First Technology has some seriously good specialists in this field, so please ask your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with them to review your position, even if your security appears to be OK - having somebody else take a look can be a very good idea!](#)

[Here is quite a detailed story](#) on the surge in Zero Day attacks.

Cloud & AI

Using AI to Vacuum your house

With the IFA show in progress, you are bound to see some crazy stuff, and one of the things getting a lot of interest are the latest generation of vacuums - these things are SMART and really expensive - If I was told 5 years ago I could be spending R28 000 on a vacuum cleaner I would have packed up laughing. Well, that is not a joke anymore!

Take a look at [this Robot](#) that in the near future might be climbing stairs!

Here is a [different brand that lifts and lowers itself](#) to fit under low furniture

This unit - the [Eureka J15 Pro Ultra](#)- probably gets the award for the "coolest" vacuum with the most powerful suction and a lot of AI smarts!

What's up at FTG

BUI builds Security Solution to enable client to grow internationally

BUI, First Technology Group award-winning security division, played a crucial role in helping Omnisient expand globally by providing expert support in cloud architecture and data security. By leveraging Microsoft's Azure platform, BUI enabled Omnisient to scale rapidly while ensuring compliance with international data privacy regulations.

[The partnership not only helped Omnisient streamline operations but also set them up for future growth and success on a global scale. This collaboration showcases BUI's dedication to empowering businesses with leading technology solutions.](#)

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BUI Cyber Research finds another Zero Day vulnerability in Teams

The Cyber Security and Azure Expert division for FTG has found another vulnerability, which they have [published the details of here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our experts to help you determine whether you need help to check whether you are vulnerable and, if so, what you can do to protect yourself.](#)

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 - 2nd Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI has launched a blog focused on Security - what's new, what changed and what you need to do to maintain a good security posture.

All BUI videos have been moved to one YouTube channel which you can find [here](#).

The Security Blog Video #002 is [now available to view here](#).

It deals with the following subjects (the Tinyurl links are for more information):

- [0:25] Entra ID certificate-based authentication enhancements - <https://tinyurl.com/2d5wx2a6>
- [1:24] Entra Security Service Edge now GA - <https://tinyurl.com/2alrc6j5>
- [2:38] MDI New detections - <https://tinyurl.com/2y595kry>
- [3:14] XDR Incident/Alert queue UI enhancements - <https://tinyurl.com/29smrte3>
- [4:23] MDO Bulk Senders Insight - <https://tinyurl.com/22x7nde9>
- [5:00] MDO Quarantine release integration with hunting - <https://tinyurl.com/27hcdkm9>
- [5:28] Sentinel - Run playbooks on demand in the unified portal - <https://tinyurl.com/25of2r6l>

Data Security in the Age of AI

Join BUI for an enlightening session on Data Security, along with an exhilarating Cyber Security Escape Room.

An interactive experience that will keep everyone on their toes and fully immersed.

Ignite your enthusiasm with a custom-designed escape room, where critical cyber security concepts come to life through exhilarating challenges.

Where: Johannesburg - Garden Venue Hotel

When: 10 September 2024

[Register here](#).

Where: Cape Town - 12 Apostles Hotel & Spa

When: 19 September 2024

[Register here](#).

Movies

Now Playing: [OZI: Voice of the Forest](#)

Now Playing: [Beetlejuice Beetlejuice](#)

Now Playing: [Greatest of All Time](#)

Now Playing: [Howl's Moving Castle](#)

13 September: [The Forge](#)

13 September: [The Showerhead](#)

13 September: [Speak no Evil](#)

13 September: [GREYTOWN GIRL](#)

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TOP STORIES #81

This week was a crazy week! The Internet is flooded with opinions on [what iPhone 16 to buy](#) and, of course, [lots of discussion on iOS 18](#). The IBC Show came to an end ([you can watch an overview here](#)), and now [NAB New York](#) is a few weeks away!

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #80 is here](#).

Note the New O365E1 Plus license from Microsoft below.

If colleagues want to sign up they can [click here](#).

Did you Know?

The First One was published in [TOP STORIES #80](#) - It's a very interesting story!

The Next one Will be Published in TOP STORIES #82 Next week

Hardware

Intel beats Apple's battery life

Battery life is a big deal, and it looks like Intel's new Lunar Lake CoPilot+ capable CPUs are going to give Apple a good go. Intel has completely redesigned its CPUs, including dropping Hyperthreading and prioritising efficient cores.

Time will tell if Intel can match Apple in terms of performance and battery life in the real world but it does look like the gap with Apple is starting to narrow. You can [read more here](#) and [even more detail from Techradar here](#).

Planning your notebook refresh is getting really complicated, and thus it is so important that you Contact your First Technology account manager to engage our Hardware specialists to help make the correct decision based on what is available in South Africa.

Microsoft

O365E1 Plus available 1 October

Microsoft has announced that this special flavour of O365E1 is available. It adds additional security and management features and is, of course, available with and without Teams.

Pricing and SKU details will be available for [Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia](#) on [October 1, 2024](#) and **only for customers willing to purchase between 100 and 2400 licenses**. The [official Microsoft announcement is here](#). The [Microsoft FAQ is here](#). You can read more in the [partner centre here](#) (scroll to the bottom).

Please check in with your First Technology licensing account manager to see if this special SKU interests you. However, note that it is only effective from 1 October.

Dynamics Licensing Guide updated

The guide has been updated on page 31 that confirms the Sales CoPilot is a rebrand of Viva Sales (see last entry on the table), and the Trials and Support information section on page 58 has been cleaned up. You can [download the Licensing guide here](#).

Please ask your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to help with any aspects of Dynamics Licensing - it can get quite murky, and a refresh can be useful, especially when it comes to Microsoft's tendency to rename products.

Python Add-on for Excel

Microsoft has announced the Python Add-on for Excel, enabling users to access Python analytics directly from Excel. Python in Excel brings the power of Python analytics into Excel. You type Python directly into a cell, the Python calculations run in the Microsoft cloud, and your results are returned to the worksheet. Microsoft's introduction to [Python in Excel is here](#), and the [product terms are here](#).

Note that this is an ADD-ON!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to discuss how you can take advantage of this new capability for your business.

WSUS is now EOL

Windows Server Update Services (WSUS) is now deprecated but current functionality will be maintained.

Going forward, businesses should adopt cloud-based solutions for client and server

updates, such as Windows Autopatch, Microsoft Intune, and Azure Update Manager – you can read [more about this announcement here](#).

Please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security and hardware deployment specialists about your plans to migrate to new services that will replace the vulnerable WSUS.

Microsoft also goes Nuclear

This news is all over the internet. Microsoft [has signed a deal to get over 800MW of power](#) for its datacenters. We will see all the big players such as Amazon, Google etc... all joining the rush to secure environmentally friendly power to feed increasingly hungry datacenters. It is incidentally interesting that a company backed by Bill Gates [has started construction](#) of a new type of “affordable” Nuclear Power station.

Security

New Ransomware group effective in record time

This group has only been operating since February, and the NSA is already issuing warnings. Attacks are increasingly sophisticated and executed faster than ever. [See this article from KnowBe4.](#)

It is critical to always be alert for attacks and to do your best to ensure that your users are trained to spot the latest phishing attacks.

Please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to show you what options you have for training your users to be more adept at spotting dodgy emails!

Cloud & AI

Public cloud breaking your Piggy Bank? Private Cloud cheaper?

After the initial excitement for cloud services, **many organisations are reassessing their value, with over a third finding that cloud transitions have caused them to cough up financial blood.**

[A report from Civo](#), a UK-based cloud company, reveals that over a third of organisations feel their cloud transition did not meet financial expectations.

Rising electricity and tech support costs from public cloud providers are driving higher bills. Of course, [The Register has its own opinion](#) on this.

The hybrid cloud model combines on-premise, private, and public cloud solutions and is increasingly seen as the optimal approach which we advocate.

[FirstNet](#), First Technology Group’s Datacentre & infrastructure division offers Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), providing fully managed private cloud solutions that reduce capital expenditure.

This enables businesses to focus on growth with services hosted in the right place— not always the public cloud!

OpenAI is not better than CoPilot; You just using it wrong

According to research from Microsoft, the disparity is due to a lack of prompt engineering practices.

Microsoft has launched the CoPilot Academy, which is broadly available to Businesses with CoPilot licenses. The academy’s goal is to help businesses learn best practices for interacting with CoPilot. [You can read more about this announcement here](#).

The Microsoft announcement and how you get [access to CoPilot Academy is here](#). What is paramount is making sure your environment is secured and ready for CoPilot to be let loose so you can start experimenting with it. An [interesting article about the importance of experimenting is here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help ensure your environment is ready.

What's up at FTG

BUI builds Security Solution to enable client to grow internationally

BUI, First Technology Group award-winning security division, played a crucial role in helping Omniscient expand globally by providing expert support in cloud architecture and data security.

By leveraging Microsoft's Azure platform, BUI enabled Omniscient to scale rapidly while ensuring compliance with international data privacy regulations.

The partnership not only helped Omniscient streamline operations but also set them up for future growth and success on a global scale. [This collaboration showcases BUI's dedication to empowering businesses with leading technology solutions.](#)

CoPilot Security Demo

BUI, FTG's security division, is now able to present CoPilot for Security information-sharing sessions, workshops and demos. [Please contact your First Tech Group account manager to make arrangements to attend, or you can request a session here.](#)

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This video introduces you to KC7 - a Cyberdetective game!:

Movies

Private School Holidays: 21 September to 8 October 2024
Public School Holidays: 21 September to 30 September 2024
Heritage Day: 24 September 2024

Now Playing: [Never Let Go](#)

Now Playing: [Greedy People](#)

Now Playing: [Wild Robot](#)

Now Playing: [Bad Genius](#)

27 September: [Bagman](#)

27 September: [Transformers One](#)

27 September: [Lee](#)

27 September: [Panda Bear in Africa](#)

27 September: [Devra Part 1](#)

27 September: [Hellboy: Crooked Man](#)

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TOP STORIES #82

As always, there is lots of news, the most significant being Intel's release of its XEON 6 generation of CPUs (see story below).

As promised, the second "Did you Know" story is published below, and I bet you did not know our SAM capability was that extensive!

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #81 is here](#)

Colleagues can join this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

Did you Know?

First Technology has a software asset management team that turns 20 next year and boasts over 100 years of experience (not a typo)!

The team is 100% South African (but works globally), everybody in the team works full time for First Technology Group, **has 72+ current certifications** (these are REAL certifications - being able to count MS-DOS licenses is not a "certification"!) AND has **the most Block64 certifications in the world!!!**

Block64 is not "yet another SAM tool." It is one of the few tools recognised by Microsoft, which counts for a lot when presenting results.

Block 64 is an extensive discovery and analytics platform that is an agentless, cross-platform discovery tool that optimises, reduces risk, and drives down the cost and complexity of managing a bewildering diversity of applications.

The SAM team is by far the biggest and most experienced in South Africa. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with this team and see how they can help you with your SAM challenges!

Hardware

Intel Launches XEON 6 family

These are the 1st CPU's manufactured based on the 18A (Angstrom) node. With this generation, Intel hopes to maintain its leadership over AMD. The YouTube channel Serve The Home has a [very enthusiastic review of the new CPUs here](#) and some [background on the CPU's here](#). It will be a while before we will be able to get to play with these new servers, but the specs look very impressive indeed, and if you are still running workloads on-premise, these new servers should definitely be in your plans with your next refresh.

In terms of planning, it is important that you contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to start making these plans!

Microsoft

Microsoft's Recall to be re-released with improvements

Microsoft is now trying again to release Recall with security features based on user feedback. Microsoft is now prioritising security, making it opt-in-only, with added encryption layers, and requires Windows Hello for access. You can [read a great summary here](#) with links to further details from Microsoft,

Dual Use rights for Power BI report server return

Microsoft has quietly added Power BI Report Server dual-use rights for high-end Fabric deployments, **which will help customers avoid a significant budget increase.**

Mary Jo Foley of Directions on Microsoft explains: *"Dropping dual-use rights had a big impact on customers already using the benefit. It meant that when Premium P customers migrated to Fabric, they would have to purchase expensive SQL Server Enterprise edition core licenses with Software Assurance to license their existing Power BI Report Server deployments back. For a Power BI Report Server licensed for eight vCores that would be an upfront cost of US\$60,492 for SQL Server Enterprise and an annual SA subscription of US\$15,123. Considering the licenses were already included in a Premium P1 subscription that cost customers US\$60,000 per year, this would result in costs more than doubling for the first year and a 25% increase for subsequent years. Not a minor change".*

You can [read the full report here](#).

NB! Power BI reporting server is basically a new name for SQL Reporting Services.

Please contact your First Technology licensing specialist to understand if you are affected, and if so that you have obtained confirmation from Microsoft in writing, and further to see if possible, that you are benefiting from the Power BI Reporting Server dual use rights.

Self-service purchase feature for Copilot customers

Microsoft has announced that starting in early October 2024, customers of Microsoft 365 Business Basic, Standard, and Premium will be able to purchase Microsoft 365 Copilot through the self-service channel.

The Microsoft guide for administrators (which includes the ability to block this) [can be found here](#), and the announcement from Microsoft [can be found here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to assist in understanding the implications of this announcement.

Microsoft CoPilot Wave 2 - Overview

There has been a lot of press around this announcement, so now is a good opportunity to summarise where you can find all the important information on Wave 2

Firstly, there's a new addition to the broader Copilot family called Copilot Pages. This is essentially a workspace where you can easily store content generated by Copilot and collaborate on it with colleagues. You can find more details about Copilot Pages, [along with a demonstration video, here](#).

Next, there's another new member – Copilot Agents, designed to allow anyone to add new knowledge and skills to Microsoft 365 Copilot. [Details about Copilot Agents can be found here](#).

Existing features of the Copilot family, such as Copilot in Word or PowerPoint, have been enhanced, and [further information is available here](#).

Additionally, there's a rebranding: the previous Copilot for Microsoft 365 is now Microsoft 365 Copilot, and this change extends to Microsoft 365 Copilot for Sales, Service, and Finance. [Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange demos of these new CoPilot features and to discuss progress and plans for deploying CoPilot in your environment so users can start experimenting.](#)

Security

When hiring Remote Workers is a bad idea.

New research from Mandiant has revealed that workers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have been posing as other nationalities in order to get hired by Western companies and infiltrate their systems.

It is a reminder that it is a very good idea to make sure you have measures in place to make sure you are actually meeting the prospective employee "in the flesh".

Also, if you have a remote work policy, have measures in place to be able to check that the employee is not running two jobs from home at the same time! [You can read more here](#).

Scammers Use QR Code Stickers to Target Motorists and Shoppers

Though this scam has not reached South Africa, it will get here, and this is yet another attack vector that we simply might not realise we are being tricked.

Beware of posters being stuck up with QR codes that promote an easy way to pay for a parking ticket or get access to a special promotion in the Mall the QR code is stuck in - it could be a phishing attack - Users need to be made aware of not being trusting of a QR code stuck up in a parking lot or a mall. You [can read more about this new attack here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss the various training options for your users to make them aware of these new attacks and others appearing daily.](#)

Cloud & AI

OpenAI may increase Pricing.

This poses an interesting question as to what Microsoft and Google may do, as so far the "baseline price" has been pegged at \$20 per month.

Increasing to \$22 per month by the end of 2024 and then to \$44 per month by 2029 seems a lot, but then again, what will AI be capable of by then?

Will "the others" follow?

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

With these price increases coming, it is crucial to experiment with AI as soon as possible, putting

you in a better position to understand its value in your company going forward.
Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to start assisting you on your journey with AI.

What's up at FTG

Invitation to Register for Zoomtopia by GaldonData

You are invited to register here. Please take a screenshot of your registration and send it to marketing@galdon.co.za for a chance to win a **Yealink BH70 Wireless Bluetooth Headset**. **Zoom is recognised as a Customers' Choice** in the Gartner® Peer Insights™ "Voice of the Customer" for "Unified Communications as a Service" report, so even if you are standardised on Teams because of strategy or licensing benefits (or both) it is still always good to see what the "other side" is doing.....

When: 10 October

Where: Online - [Register here](#)

CoPilot Security Demo

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Movies

Public school kids are back at school this week...

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Public School Holidays: 21 September to **30 September 2024**

Now Playing: [Bagman](#)

Now Playing: [Transformers One](#)

Now Playing: [Lee](#)

Now Playing: [Panda Bear in Africa](#)

Now Playing: [Devra Part 1](#)

Now Playing: [Hellboy: Crooked Man](#)

4 October: [Aftermath](#)

4 October: [Joker: Folie A Deux](#)

4 October: [Woman of the Hour](#)

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TOP STORIES #83

The biggest news of the week is that Microsoft is finally rolling out 24H2, and you can read more about that below.

Last week's [Top Stories #82 can be found here](#).

Colleagues can join this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

Did You Know?

The next "Did you Know" will be published next week, and again I'm sure it will be a surprise!

Hardware

Intel Sets a new record price.

Intel's flagship XEON 6 128-core CPU is priced at an eye-watering \$17800! Though this is an exceptionally high record-breaking price for just the CPU, it brings an even higher level of compute density, which is important to consider as you can now squeeze even more compute into the same space than you could previously.

Clearly, this is only one factor of many that needs consideration, but as you consider your server refreshes and wonder if running in the cloud is really as cost-effective as you were originally sold on, planning what you could be running in your private cloud with the latest CPUs from Intel or AMD could be worth a rethink. You can [read more here](#).

It may be a good idea to talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Server hardware specialists about planning your server refresh for 2025 as these new systems will be able to give you compute capacity that you could not have dreamt of a few years ago!

Microsoft

Windows 11 24H2 is rolling out now.

If it's not showing up in your Windows update, be patient. 24H2 is the biggest update in 2 years and it still has a [fair amount of problems](#). If you really REALLY want 24H2 NOW, then [here is a guide on how to get it](#), but I really recommend that you wait.

Additionally, Microsoft has confirmed that Recall will be rolling out to Intel and AMD CoPilot+ computers in November. You can [read more about this here](#).

[RedmondMag has an excellent summary of what you will get in 24H2](#) and what you will get in Windows CoPilot+ PC's.

One feature that could be really useful in addition to the Recall feature is the Natural Language Inexact search query capability, which will even work offline.

Unfortunately, it will only work on a CoPilot+ computer.

All this means that there will be increased interest (and pressure) from users and executives in companies to get these new shiny CoPilot+ notebooks, so it is more important than ever to [speak to your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our hardware specialists to plan what models you would like to procure - it's more complicated - you have AMD, Intel and Snapdragon based machines to choose from - but regardless of type - PLEASE make sure you are buying with at least 32Gig RAM.](#)

Microsoft Office LTSC 2024 begins rolling out

As it is an on-premise LTSC edition, it will only receive security patches for 5 years and excludes Teams and Publisher (which is being retired). Directions on Microsoft has a [nice summary of the release here](#).

Security

CrowdStrike Aftermath Lessons learnt

Techradar [published a good article on some of the lessons learned](#) from the CrowdStrike incident and how to react when something like that happens again, as, unfortunately, it will.

What's important to note is the guidance relating to maintaining heightened vigilance and a measured response to the vendor that "stuffed up."

Don't Put Real Answers Into Your Password Reset Questions

A really easy way to get hacked is for somebody to guess or research the answers to your password reset questions, as you have probably exposed the honest answers on the internet somewhere, waiting for a hacker to find them. [KnowBe4 has published a very good guide](#) on

how to deal with this issue and to make hacking your account just a little more challenging. Please contact your First Technology account manager to understand what User awareness training courses are available - you always have to be aware of the next trick the bad guys are cooking up to to gain access and AI is making them even smarter.

Cloud & AI

AI in Organisations: Tactics to Experiment

[Ethan Mollick](#) has published an excellent paper on ways to get employees to experiment with AI and, through learning from the experimentation, use AI to benefit their jobs and, ultimately, the company they work for. He makes a very important point here: "*Experimentation is hard and expensive for outsiders trying to develop new products, but very cheap for workers doing their own tasks. As users are very motivated to make their own jobs easier with technology, they find ways to do so.*"

He urges you to listen to what Google's NotebookLM did with his paper. It is incredible, especially because it is an early experiment in what is possible.

There are other examples on the [NotebookLM site](#) - go take a look and listen!

I know that I repeat myself every week, but it is so important that your organisation starts embracing AI, which starts with preparing and securing the environment to ensure the AI has secure access to the data that you want it to have access to and that access to the AI is also secure. We are all in this learning together. Nobody is that much ahead of the other, but if you do nothing, you will certainly be left behind. Please ask your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our AI and security specialists to start talking to you about how we can help you secure and prepare your environment for the deployment of AI.

What's up at FTG

Huawei Cloud Summit

First Technology and Huawei invite you to the 2024 Cloud Summit, which will be held at the Gallagher Convention Centre.

When: 24 October

Where: Online - [Register here](#)

Invitation to Register for Zoomtopia by GaldonData

You are invited to register here. Please take a screenshot of your registration and send it to marketing@galdon.co.za (remember to remove the dash if the email address is wrapped to the next line) for a chance to win a [Yealink BH70 Wireless Bluetooth Headset](#).

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Now Playing: [Joker: Folie A Deux](#)

Now Playing: [Woman of the Hour](#)

11 October: [My Hero Academia: You're Next](#)

11 October: [Homecoming](#)

11 October: [Silent hour](#)

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TOP STORIES #84

Again, we have had a busy week. Elon Musk dominated the news with his driverless (and hopefully not clueless) cyber cab, and news just in is that SpaceX has [successfully caught \(recovered\) the Super Heavy booster](#) after Sunday's Starship launch. Amazing!! Also, the [Nobel Prize in Physics went to the Godfather of AI](#), and the Nobel prize in Chemistry had a [lot of help from Google DeepMind](#), and Intel is slowly edging towards its [Arrow Lake launch](#).

Last week's [TOP STORIES #83 can be found here](#).
If colleagues want to [Subscribe they can click here](#).

Did you Know?

First Technology has a division called [First Impact](#), an [advanced Content Creation and Digital Events company that has been operating for five years!](#)

For those who know me, you'll understand my passion for cinema and movie production, which is why I'm especially excited about this division. They are deeply embedded in the content creation space, with a focus on AI-driven solutions, leveraging our advanced certifications from across the broader First Technology Group.

[Unlike most PR and media companies, First Impact has an edge—access to First Technology Group's unparalleled engineering expertise, with the most certified IT professionals employed in Africa.](#) This gives them the resources to take content creation to an entirely new level.

What they're doing with deep fakes, [AI-generated avatars](#), and advanced video production is amazing.

Their ability to craft engaging, customised experiences—whether for immersive events or dynamic webinars—is truly impressive.

Are you curious to see this in action? [Reach out to your First Technology account manager, and they'll put you in touch with the First Impact Team.](#) They recently created a deep fake of an executive for a South African company delivering a live presentation—it's really impressive to witness firsthand!

First Impact's specialised division, [Impact Gifts](#), redefines SWAG by creating unforgettable, high-impact branded experiences that elevate corporate gifting to new heights—[check out their website to see how](#).

Hardware

More powerful Core Ultra Notebook CPU's launch start of 2025

Intel has managed to confuse things even more. New Arrow Lake Core Ultra CPUs with powerful GPU performance will be released, but they will have an NPU that performs way below the minimum requirement to run CoPilot+ features. I think the rulebook is going to change again in early 2025, so unless you really really need a new notebook NOW, waiting for all this to settle down might be a good plan.

Of course, Snapdragon-based machines are already fully CoPilot+ compliant so still worth considering. Do not forget that they cannot run many x86-based applications, but they might still be good machines for corporate use.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help you navigate the challenges of users asking for these new fancy CoPilot+ computers. See more below.](#)

Microsoft

Dynamics Licensing Guide Updated October 2024

This guide has been updated to reflect the price increases in effect from 1 October which range between around 10% to almost 17%. The announcement about the price increases [can be found here](#). The [complete table of all the increases is listed here](#).

You can get the [October Guide here](#).

[Please Contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to help review if you are impacted by this increase or will be impacted by this when your agreement comes up for renewal in the future and to see what can be done to mitigate these increases.](#)

Will CoPilot on Windows 11 persuade you to change?

[Directions on Microsoft has published a detailed discussion](#) on what you will actually get in Win11 24H2, and how Microsoft has dialled back what CoPilot can do for you (including now being able to use the CoPilot key for non-AI functions).

There is also detail about Win11 Enterprise, Education and LTSC editions for special deployments.

Of course, Microsoft is also trying to persuade you that you need new hardware to get access to all this AI "coolness," but don't expect to actually benefit from all this until early next year.

Of course, Snapdragon-based machines are ahead of AMD and Intel and possibly worth considering. You will only be able to start testing Recall on the latest AMD and Intel Core Ultra CPU's via the insider program from November.

I still think one of the really useful features will be the natural language updates to Windows Search, but will need an NPU (latest CPU) to work.

You will undoubtedly receive a lot more requests for new notebooks, so I recommend reaching out to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists. This will help ensure you are in a good position to answer these requests for new hardware, which will be tough (and expensive) to obtain for the next few months.

Windows 11 24H2 Cleanup not deleting temp files

It looks like Microsoft has changed to "checkpoint updates", which means future updates are smaller, but the downside is that you lose about 8 gigs of storage to the Operating system.

Hopefully, Microsoft is going to explain what this change means and clarify if it is a bug or not. You can [read more about this 8 Gig issue here](#),

For me, this confirms that you should not be in too much of a hurry to get this 24H2 update until the dust settles, which could take months!

If you are finding yourself updating to Win11 24H2 - BE PATIENT - [read here about how long the update can take](#). Expect it to take around 2 hours.

Rolling out Win11 24H2 is going to be a necessity for most companies by mid-2025 at the latest. Starting to plan and test now is a good idea so that when you get to February 2025, hopefully, you (and Microsoft) have most issues resolved.

Please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our engineers certified in helping with these deployments to start talking about planning this massive upgrade which is sure to include a hardware refresh or upgrade in some form as well.

Security

File Hosting services used in email attacks

Microsoft has [warned of an attack that uses legitimate file hosting services to deliver files](#) in a read-only state to a specific recipient who is asked to verify their identity to access the file, which allows redirection to another link to view the contents so getting your password and 2FA token. These attacks are becoming really sophisticated, and you need to constantly be alert to anything that may be suspicious - use common sense to help you stay alert.

It is more important than ever before to be constantly alert and to be taught what to look out for.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to find out what training courses are available for your users to help keep them ahead of the bad guys - who keep getting more and more clever.

Cloud & AI

Exploring your Future You

Imagine being able to use an AI using as much information about you that you can give it (and that is becoming a lot) to see what you could look like many years into the future, not just how you look but what you could do and the decisions and choices you made to get to that future point. What if you can play with the data to see how that could change your outcomes?

Well, MIT have a project called "Future You" to see what these types of futures could look like.

Imagine as a kid in school being able to play a game with an AI that knows everything about you (because it is embedded in your phone) to see what possible futures could lie ahead for you based on the types of choices you make today. You can [read more about this project here](#).

What's up at FTG

Huawei Cloud Summit

First Technology and Huawei invite you to the 2024 Cloud Summit, which will be held at the Gallagher Convention Centre.

When: 24 October

Where: Online - [Register here](#)

CoPilot Security Demo

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The Security Blog Video #003 is [now available to view here](#).

This video introduces you to KC7 - a Cyberdetective game!:

Movies

If you look at the releases for this week, you can see everybody is back at School and and work!
Take a look at White Bird - looks interesting

Now Playing: [My Hero Academia: You're Next](#)

Now Playing: [Homecoming](#)

Now Playing: [Silent hour](#)

18 October: [Smile 2](#)

18 October: [White Bird: A Wonder Story](#)

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TOP STORIES #85

It is a bit of a mixed bag this week, but with one highlight being the OpenAI app now available on Windows and a reminder that many key Microsoft products are coming to the end of support in 2025. There is a LOT of planning to be done between now and October 2025!

[TOP STORIES #84 can be found here](#)

If colleagues want to Subscribe, they can [click here](#).

Did you Know?

There is a brand new "Did you Know" next week, and once more, I am 100% sure that you will be surprised again with what you will learn!

Hardware

Intel Shows off Panther Lake

While we still cannot lay our hands on a Lunar Lake Core Ultra notebook (unless you really lucky), Intel has shown off the generation that will succeed Lunar Lake!

The Intel CEO used the Lenovo Tech World event to announce Panther Lake and to talk about Intel's and AMD's new collaboration. You can [read more about the announcement here](#).

New Technologies with dramatically improved specifications are going to continue to be released at a bewildering pace, so it is **more important than ever to make sure you are keeping your hardware refresh cycles up to date with the latest changes**. Please contact your First Technology account manager to ensure you have a regular update cadence in place and that you are always up to date.

Powerful but expensive!

A PC for R2 million?? Yes, it is quite possible to have a machine for that amount of money purring away next to you at your desk. The latest CPU's from Intel and AMD are insanely powerful compared with anything you have encountered in the past, but have prices to match. [Here is an example of how you can customise a computer like this](#).

Microsoft

Installing Windows 11 24H2 NOW!!!!

If you really, REALLY want to install it NOW, you can force Windows Update to offer it immediately to your computer if deemed "safe" - that there are no known safeguards in place to prevent it from installing on your computer. [The guide on how do it is here](#). I have tried it, and it works, but I'm still not brave enough to do it on my primary work computer.

WARNING!!!!!! Proceed at your own risk!

However, it is really important to start planning the rollout of 24H2 for next year before Windows 10 comes to the end of support. Though the OS will keep working, running it in production without patches will become increasingly risky, so **please make contact with Your First Technology account manager to connect you with the right consultants for your business plan for this rollout and, for some, a simultaneous hardware refresh**.

Microsoft Plan Comparison Document Updated October

Microsoft keeps updating the plan comparison document, so it is important to have the latest on hand, [which you can get here](#).

There are no major updates this month, but if you are looking at buying add-ons, renewing your agreement or generally wanting to make any changes to your BOM, **please contact your First Technology account manager to take you through the tables to be sure that you are considering all pricing options and agreement types like EA/CSP/NCE etc.....as there are many different ways to buy the same license**.

The support clock is ticking for Office 2019 and 2016

Both these version come to the end of support October 2025, so it is important to consider your options - some of which are:

- Office 2024

- O365
- Google Workspace (formally G Suite)
- Libre Office
- Many other Microsoft Office look-alikes

However, the publication Office Watch makes an important point that though Microsoft will no longer be releasing security patches, the software does not stop working. You can [read more here about how long they think you can keep using it](#) for.

It is still really important to consider your options NOW and start planning, so it is recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists in licensing and Office to help you look at all your options.

Word is getting an online coach.

It seems Word Online is getting CoPilot as a writing coach (along the lines of Grammarly) to help you with your writing skills. It is only available in Word Online and in the USA for now. You can [read more about it here](#), Of course you need a CoPilot license to use this.

It is so important to start experimenting with AI in your business, and only through experimenting you will become an expert with AI in YOUR business, there is nobody to do it for you. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to talk about making plans to get your business ready for AI to be switched on securely.**

Security

AI Enhanced Cyber Attacks are the biggest risk

AI is going to be increasingly used to trick employees into being caught in an attack where the "angle" is so legitimate, that only specific training on what to look out for can stop the attacker. You can [read more about this trend for 2025 here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to see what courses are available for your users to prepare them better for the attack that will inevitably come.

AI Generated scam call almost worked.

[Here is a story of a Microsoft consultant who was almost tricked](#) into giving up his Gmail account login details. It is interesting that he only realised he was being scammed when he noticed the AI-Generated voice call was "too perfect" and one of the email addresses was disguised under a non-Google domain. Just imagine how many people will get caught!!!

Cloud and AI

OpenAI releases Windows App

This is not the final release, but if you have an OpenAI Plus subscription, you can download the app from the Microsoft Store. You can [read more here](#).

What you need to know about Anthropic (CLAUDE)

When I talk about AI I'm usually referring to OpenAI and CoPilot, but there is another that should not be ignored - and that is Anthropic - which I'm not a user of, but it is still good to know more about it, and [here is a good summary](#).

AI Arms Race heats up

NVIDIA has released an LLM that outperforms Anthropic and OpenAI, and not only that, but it has also opened the doors to companies experimenting with their own LLMs based on what NVIDIA has released. [You can read more about this here](#).

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Movies

Only one really good movie to look forward to - **Venom!**

Now Playing: [Smile 2](#)

Now Playing: [White Bird: A Wonder Story](#)

25 October: [Venom: Last Dance](#)

25 October: [Gracie & Pedro: Pets to the Rescue](#)

25 October: [Goodrich](#)

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TOP STORIES #86

We have the 4th instalment of "Did you Know", a 515-question Licensing FAQ from Microsoft and a concerning change in Ransomware tactics.

The Previous week's [TOP STORIES #85 can be found here](#).

If colleagues would like to subscribe, they can [click here](#).

Did you Know?

FirstNet is one of the oldest ISP's in South Africa!

What is described here is only a small part of the business that does backups, hosting, Telephony, call centres and more we will tell you more in future issues.

FirstNet is part of the First Technology group that has the **highest ISPA membership status**, Data Centres in all the major centres in South Africa and one of the lowest latency backbones (which gamers love - as that means it is FAST).

FirstNet has just completed the latest ISO 27001:2022 re-certification.

FirstNet has 10 full-time certified engineers supporting Mimecast and Sendmarc, AND has a real 24/7/365 support infrastructure manned by humans and not bots!

FirstNet is one of Fortinet's longest-standing partners and the **only one** in South Africa qualified to deliver Fortinet's complete range of solutions of managed security, cloud-based services, and full integration.

FirstNet has one of the largest Forti-analyser deployments in the country.

9 certified Fortinet engineers are employed full-time (2 of which have architect-level certification) to help craft any solution that works best for you.

Contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts in FirstNet to understand what they can do for you - even if you are happy with your existing service provider, see what FirstNet can offer - you may be surprised!

Hardware

Apple M4 is delayed but will stay "The One"

As much as we are seeing amazing power/performance gains in the latest releases from Intel and AMD, Apple, with the release of the M4 early next year, looks like it will comfortably remain the leader in performance.

This is great news as it will keep Apple users happy and keep the pressure on AMD, Qualcomm, Intel, and Microsoft to keep pushing the performance envelope. [You can read more about this here](#).

Microsoft

Modern Work Licensing FAQ updated

Just in case you may have thought Microsoft licensing is getting simpler, here is a 515 Question 58 Page FAQ that proves otherwise! You can [download it here](#).

The portal for [all M365 documents is here](#).

This is a reminder that it is VERY IMPORTANT to engage one of First Technologies licensing specialists when trying to make a decision on the most optimal way to license your business as it can get really complicated. This FAQ does not even cover all of it!

Windows Enterprise LTSC 2024 is available.

Microsoft has published a blog that talks about the special LTSC edition for situations that require long-term stability and is supported for 5 years.

Windows 11 IoT LTSC has a 10-year support term.

You can [read more about these special editions here](#).

It is very important to have both a licensing plan and a deployment plan for LTSC, as LTSC is really not meant for general deployment. Please contact your First Technology licensing and Windows Operating system specialist to plan how your rollout of Windows 11 24H2 will be structured - as you **HAVE to plan it - Windows 10 is coming to the end of support in October 2025!**

Microsoft 365 Apps Licensing Brief October 2024

Microsoft has released an updated brief that includes the Flexible Virtualisation Benefit and confirms that you can deploy M365 on Amazon Workspaces (right at the end of the PDF). You can [download the document here](#).

Security

Black Basta Ransomware poses as IT support in Teams

Now you don't just have to be alert for bad guys coming at you through your email, you now have to be equally vigilant over your Teams. They craft a social engineering attack where they impersonate the IT HelpDesk on Teams to trick the user into installing AnyDesk or allow access to Quick Assist. You can [read more about this attack here](#).

I think we tend to trust Teams more than email, and this is a reminder that you trust NOTHING!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to see what training courses are available for your users to help them be alert for the bad guys and NOT to get tricked.

Ransomware tactics are changing - Just Steal & Sell it

There [appears to be a shift in tactics](#) where ransomware gangs are finding it more cost-effective to simply sneak into a company's network and steal the data to sell to the highest bidder, and where the company that had the data stolen is blissfully unaware!

This is a very scary reminder that you cannot EVER take your eye off the ball of security. Always work on maintaining the best possible security posture by utilising ALL the tools at your disposal.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help you make sure you are using all the tools that you may already own to better secure your environment.

This is especially true for Microsoft where you may have invested in suites like M365E3/E5 but are not making use of every component already available to you.

Cloud & AI

When Claude gets a Mouse

Anthropic has released an example of what an AI working in a human context as an agent can be like.

This AI now "looks" at the screen (screenshots), types virtually and moves a mouse the way a human would do.

Ethan Mollick has [published a very interesting perspective of this new AI agent](#) and shows examples of how it has been put to work.

Of course, Microsoft has also just [announced the launch of its autonomous agents](#) in November, but these are focused on automating business processes, so this is more about AI with Microsoft Dynamics set of business products.

It is so important to make sure you are experimenting with how AI can help you and your employees to work smarter and more productively, but first, your environment needs to be secured and prepared for an AI to start accessing your data.

Please also contact your First Technology account manager to arrange for us to demonstrate the agents Microsoft is launching in November.

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This video introduces you to KC7 - a Cyberdetective game!

Movies

Private Schools Grp 2 ½Term break 25-28 October

Venom is now in theatres but [not having a great weekend](#). I think it was a lot of fun to watch - and [here is a pretty good review](#) (warning - spoilers) - just go and enjoy it. It's not even 2 hours long!

It has TWO easter eggs - don't leave early. The second one is at the very VERY end.

Now Playing: [Venom: Last Dance](#)

Now Playing: [Gracie & Pedro: Pets to the Rescue](#)

Now Playing: [Goodrich](#)

1 November: [Rebellious](#)

1 November: [Conclave](#)

1 November: [Subservience](#)

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TOP STORIES #87

The week's big news is Apple's release of the new M4 hardware, with which Apple [reclaims the performance crown](#).

Some reviewers believe the [M4 MAC Mini is "IBM PC" moment for Apple](#), and changes the game for high-performance computing at a very low entry price - below what Microsoft can offer with Intel and AMD.

You can find the previous week's [TOP STORIES #86 here](#)

If colleagues want to join, [they can click here](#).

Hardware

Intel Lunar Lake Integrated RAM will be a Once-Off

It seems that the idea of integrating the RAM with the CPU is turning into an expensive one-off for Intel, and after this, it will go back to off-package memory solutions.

If you are buying a Lunar Lake notebook, make sure you buy it with 32 Gig RAM, and with that, you are getting a super-efficient integrated package that will not be repeated. You can [read more about this here](#).

This gives new life to the CAMM2 connector standard that has been ratified by [JEDEC](#) and is already [supported by Dell](#).

However, with this news from Intel, it looks like the CAMM2 standard will be broadly adopted across all major vendors in 2025.

All this emphasises the importance of planning your hardware refreshes for 2025 now to align with the release of Win11 24H2 and the increasingly broader adoption of AI across all aspects of how we interact with computers, driving more extensive memory requirements. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to help you plan what will be a very busy 2025!**

It's Finally Over!

With the release of the M4 range of Apple MACs, Apple has finally acknowledged that 8Gig is insufficient (note the article above).

The "new" minimum is 16Gig, and as much as this applies to Macs, it also applies to PCs. In fact, **you should regard 32 Gig as the new minimum for PCs**. You can [read more about Apple's change of heart here](#).

ASML shipping A10 lithography machines

It looks like in a few years, we will be seeing chips made with the A10 (10 angstroms) lithography process.

We will see a minimum tripling in transistor density over the next few years based on density alone. [You can read more about the announcement here](#).

Add in all other developments in parallel we will likely see processors from all manufacturers will be at least **FIVE TIMES** more powerful than anything that exists today by 2030.

Based on this roadmap, you should replace hardware every 2 years to stay current! Yikes!

Microsoft

Windows 11 24H2 bug list grows.

As I have stated in previous TOP STORIES, you must not be in a hurry to upgrade to 24H2 - the [list of bugs is getting bigger](#).

However, Microsoft will fix these issues, and we should have a stable, less buggy version to roll out early next year.

Because Windows 10 is coming to the end of support (yes, you can buy extended support for 1 year for \$30), it is essential to start planning your upgrade to Win11 24H2, and your hardware refreshes now.

Please talk to your First Technology account manager to assist with planning the Win11 24H2 rollout now and the accelerated hardware refresh cycle in 2025!

Windows 10 ESU for personal use announced

Microsoft has announced that you can buy **Extended Support** for \$30 per year, but there is a catch - this is only for personal use.

As I have repeatedly stated, it is important to plan to upgrade to Windows 11 24H2 now so

you are ready when Windows 10 comes to the end of support. You can [read more here](#).

Windows Server 2025 released.

System Centre 2025 was also announced at the same time. Along with the release of the latest Server operating system, Microsoft has also published the list of supported CPUs for the operating system. You can read [more about the announcement here](#).

A significant change is that Windows Server for on-premise use is only available as a subscription, so it is important to plan where you need Windows 2025 vs still running older editions or migrating to the cloud (you can find a [summary of what's new here](#)). The official [Microsoft announcement is here](#). You can find a [comparison between the editions here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to help plan your Premise/Cloud/Hybrid strategy, including your deployment of Windows Server 2025 and System Center 2025 if necessary - it is now more critical than ever!

Microsoft takes the Teams out of Teams.

Microsoft is now bringing all text communication to the Teams chats section. This is quite a big change, which you can [read more about here](#).

This is also an opportunity to review your Teams usage and see if you are getting full value from all the features you are licensed to use. Teams is a major ecosystem and it can sometimes take work to be sure you are getting full value from it for your business. **First Technology has probably the most experts on all aspects of Teams in the country. I recommend you speak with your account manager to connect you with our experts to review your Teams usage, especially Teams Phone, included with your E5 license.**

Security

KnowBe4 impersonated by bad guys

This takes it up a notch! A customer of KnowBe4 successfully blocked an attempt to phish them by sending mail purporting to be from KnowBe4 to click on a link to complete assigned training. You can read [more about the attack here](#).

This is a reminder that no matter how you trust, you must always keep your guard up and be suspicious of emails that may be dubious.

Training users to be aware of indicators is so important; they need to be regularly retrained, as the bad guys keep adapting their tactics.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to attend training to keep up to date on spotting a possible attack, as it constantly changes!

Is it too good to be True?

Jobseekers worldwide are increasingly targeted by scams, especially those in finance, IT, and healthcare. As you stay alert for phishing attacks, be wary of any job offer that seems incredibly appealing - like it's your "dream, too good to be true job". Treat every part of the offer with caution. [More information is available here](#).

Do your homework, consult friends, and stay suspicious, ALWAYS!

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT advanced voice mode comes to PCs and MACs

The experience is very similar to the mobile version, and I recommend you try it. You can read [more about the release here](#).

CoPilot is not meeting expectations.

Even though Microsoft's Q1 2025 [earnings report was excellent](#), and [AI is already Microsoft's fastest-growing business](#), there are concerns that AI will not bring in the returns that justify the current spending and even more spending to come, which you can [read more about here](#).

However, Microsoft still [cannot build data centres fast enough](#) to meet demand for inferencing and training.

Though adoption may lag behind expectations, **deployment of AI in your environment is inevitable**, and it may be good that adoption has slowed as that allows you to prepare.

It is critical to ensure your data is secured and classified before you let an AI loose on it, and the entire ecosystem to do this exists in the Microsoft suites of products, particularly [Purview](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to start going through the process (if you have not started already) to ensure your environment is prepared to allow for CoPilot to be deployed so you can start experimenting with AI and how it can benefit your business.

Giving AI a grounding

First Digital, part of FTG, has been experimenting with improving AI responses by adding context—essentially grounding the AI in First Technology's website data and team information.

This approach creates a more consistent, human-like experience for users.

Explore how they built it [here](#), and, if you have an OpenAI account, try the experimental bot [here](#).

First Digital is actively exploring practical ways AI can benefit businesses, and this bot shows how added context makes a difference. Are you curious to see what they could build for your business based on existing material? Contact your First Technology account manager to connect with these AI experts.

What's up at FTG

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In light of the CoPilot story above, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to make arrangements to attend a session, or you can [request a session here](#).

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Movies

Apart from Red One, which is a bit of an outlier regarding the subject matter, let's see [how it does at the Box Office](#), So far this year, we seem to have had [more low lights than highlights!](#) [Here is the complete list for 2024](#)

Now Playing: [Rebellious](#)

Now Playing: [Conclave](#)

Now Playing: [Subservience](#)

8 November: [Overlord: Sacred Kingdom](#)

8 November: [Magpie](#)

8 November: [Red One](#)

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TOP STORIES #88

This was a packed week, with a lot of exciting things from Apple, Drama from Microsoft and security becoming an increasingly bigger problem in our lives. [There is also an interesting story from First Digital doing Native Marketing using AI.](#)

You can find Last Week's [TOP STORIES #87 here](#).

Colleagues can join the newsletter by [clicking here](#).

Did you Know?

Did you know we have completed FOUR "Did you Know" stories already? I have already got four more lined up, but before we start with the next four stories, let's update you on the stories so far.....

No.1 - [TOP STORIES #80](#) - First Digital, Experts in IoT solutions, AI and a lot more In addition, FD has been working with MAHLER to prevent you from getting a leaky radiator; they are also working with [OpenAI on Azure to show how AI can be used to find information about services using AI to do some fascinating work helping customers position their products as preferred choices within a natural language response.](#)

No. 2 - [TOP STORIES #82](#) - First Tech. National, the most certified SAM partner in SA! The certifications keep on coming - they now have 2 more, totalling 74. Block64 is getting more sophisticated, and the [SAM team has just completed an Azure cost optimisation assessment](#) and is bringing back a more advanced SQL and Windows Server on-premise compliance assessment process.

No. 3 - [TOP STORIES #84](#) - First Impact, Advanced AI Content Creation and Delivery They have just completed a CoPilot awareness campaign using avatars to an audience of over 2000 people with resounding success [leading to some real use cases for AI to help staff improve service delivery.](#)

No. 4 - [TOP STORIES #86](#) - FirstNet is one of SA's oldest ISPs and security specialists They have the highest number of Fortinet, Mimcast and Sendmarc engineers permanently employed in the country, and now they have added [Netskope, the leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant and in the Forrester Wave for the Security Service Edge platform.](#)

Hardware

Don't Sit/Stand - MOVE!

I have been thinking of "upgrading" to a sit/stand desk, only to see [this article telling me that it will do nothing for my health](#) and may [even be harmful!](#)

That made me ask GPT to do some more research for me, and yes, it appears to be true - standing only burns slightly more calories than sitting, but it may [improve your mood.](#)

What will improve your health is moving around more, and you do not need to change your desk for that. You are better off investing in a more comfortable chair.

So I guess a fancy sit/stand desk is off the er... table!

Apple M4 takes the performance Crown.

Apple has taken the crown as the leader of the [most efficient and high-performance computers](#). It is such a leap in performance that it may take AMD, Intel, and Qualcomm more than a year to catch up (and then Apple will pull ahead again). So, if you have a preference for MAC's, now is the time to make an investment!

With such a lead, I also do not see Apple reducing pricing anytime soon; in fact, it may [update its entire lineup with M4 CPUs.](#)

This is in stark contrast with what is happening to Intel - [which is not good at all.](#)

Microsoft

New features and performance Boost for System Centre and Windows Server 2025

Microsoft [shared more details about the improvements in System Centre and Windows Server 2025](#), though Windows Server was released a bit overenthusiastically

by Microsoft - [automatically installing on Windows Server 2022 installations](#) as an update!

System Centre 2025 Licensing Datasheet

Microsoft has published a handy licensing datasheet, which you can [download here](#). Please contact your First Technology licensing specialist, who will take you through this document and make sure your licensing aligns with your premise/cloud roadmap.

D365 Licensing Guide updated

Microsoft has [updated the licensing guide for November](#) to include Customer Voice as a standalone product (Page 17)

Next, there are updates to the Business Performance Management table on page 22 to clarify rights for Operations-Activity and Team Members licensed users.

Lastly, amendments for [Dynamics 365 Contact Center Voice specify that Intelligent Voicebot minutes require a bot created with Copilot Studio, and any generative AI features need separate Copilot Studio capacity licensing.](#)

M365 Plan comparison Tables updated

Microsoft has updated the plans by adding some frontline working licenses to match the product terms. You can [download the PDF here](#).

The only thing that is constant is change, so it is very important that you [contact your First Technology Licensing specialist to review your entitlements and the options available to you when looking at renewing your agreement, as you have a variety of contracts to choose from over and above your product choices.](#)

Why \$30 Windows 10 ESU for Consumers is bad for companies

Directions on Microsoft has [published a warning about Microsoft's \\$30 Extended Security Update \(ESU\) offer](#), suggesting it's a risky move.

The publication suggests most people will likely skip paying for an extra year of updates, opting instead to stick with their old devices with no updates, which still work "just fine".

This decision could leave a massive number of computers vulnerable to attacks after October 2025.

With these unprotected systems on home networks where employees connect their work devices, the security risks multiply. Directions on Microsoft is of the opinion that Microsoft should provide these updates free for home users and invest in better incentives to drive upgrades to Windows 11.

This is not a problem yet, but by the end of 2025 will probably start developing into a major security issue. [It is very important that we start planning for this disaster \(unless Microsoft does something smarter\), so please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our leading Security experts to work on a plan to contain this developing drama.](#)

Security

Phishing attacks surge with the help of AI

Attacks are becoming more sophisticated and harder to detect. There has been a 52% increase in attacks that have successfully bypassed secure email gateways (SEGs). A notable increase is with attacks that impersonate well-known brands to trick you into clicking on fake promotions. You can read more about [this surge in attacks here](#).

Even your DocuSign-ed bill may be dodgy - [read more here](#).

These attacks give attackers the necessary information to simply log in, there is [actually no hacking happening at all!](#)

[It is more important than ever to ensure that you contact your First Tech account manager to arrange for training of your users in partnership with KnowBE4 to be ever more alert for increasingly sophisticated and devious attacks.](#)

Rare programming language used to evade detection

On top of being tricked, malware is evolving, where the bad guys are writing malware using a programming language that is slipping by most detection systems. It is critical to make sure that your system is being [continuously updated to ensure that these new attacks are detected in time.](#)

[This is a good reminder to contact your First Technology account manager to connect you](#)

with our security experts (and we have the best in the country) to recheck your security posture and close any gaps that may be found. **There are always gaps.**

Cloud & AI

Microsoft really wants you to buy AI themes for "New Outlook"

To be clear, this is for the New Outlook, which nobody likes much. So, you need a CoPilot Pro license to get these themes, which [you can read more about here](#). But it gets more interesting, which you can read below.

CoPilot comes to M365 whether you like it or not

At the moment, this is limited to 6 countries (excluding SA), but it is likely that it will be rolled out to the rest of the world. Microsoft is now including CoPilot in M365 family and Personal plans, along with a big (20%) price increase and a bunch of restrictions that are limited to the subscription owner **and not the family members**.

OfficeWatch has published a very good summary of what Microsoft has launched - [you can read it here](#) (go to the bottom and read the "quick thoughts" - we hope Microsoft will not roll it out in its current form to the rest of the world, including SA - it's a trial, right?).

If you have family in Australia, you will [not be happy to read about their special price increases](#).

Where is this heading?

This is speculation, but if Microsoft can remove Teams (triggered by an EU ruling) to charge for it separately for companies (leading to an overall price increase), Microsoft can just as easily include CoPilot in some flavour for companies with a mandatory price increase (because of added value), exactly like it is testing right now.

Let's see where this goes.....

Using AI to refine your native marketing skills

Generative AI is reshaping how consumers find products, making it possible to influence buying decisions in subtle yet effective ways. **The First Digital AI team is already leveraging this capability to benefit our clients. Here's how:**

Imagine a search tool recommending your client's product over competitors simply because it's optimised with AI-driven preferences. Our recent work with an LED client fine-tuned a bot to promote their "FirstBulb" as the top choice over competing bulbs — embedding product preference directly into natural language responses.

Now, each search subtly endorses the "FirstBulb", creating a seamless, influential presence that feels like genuine advice.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to set up a session with First Digital to show you how this Subtle type of Native marketing can be employed by your company to market it's products.

If [Hostetters](#) could [do this in 1901](#) and still be around today, they must have done something right!

AI is so good at doing this that you have no hope of detecting whether the content was AI-generated.

OpenAI [gave up on their own project](#) to detect AI content. They say they will be back with a better tool, but detecting AI content runs counter to the whole AI agenda anyway, so let's see for how long any detection tool remains effective!

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Security Demo

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

In light of the CoPilot story above, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to make arrangements to attend a session, or you can [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](#).

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The Security Blog Video #003 is [now available to view here.](#)
This video introduces you to KC7 - a Cyberdetective game!

Movies

Red One is getting a favourable reception and is still to be released in the USA. Worth going to see with the Kids (and your Inner Kid).

Now Playing: [Overlord: Sacred Kingdom](#)

Now Playing: [Magpie](#)

Now Playing: [Red One](#)

15 November: [Gladiator 2](#) - looks to be quite an epic

15 November: [Hydan](#)

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TOP STORIES #89

The biggest news of the week is the price increases Microsoft has announced for next year and the inability to renew with Teams - now extra. Also, customers under 2400 seats will not be able to renew their Enterprise Agreements, which will make it more complicated. [Read more below.](#)

The hype around CES 2025 is already starting with lots of speculation on what is going to be announced, with the most anticipated announcement being the launch of the 5000 series GPU's - Nvidia [will be giving the Keynote](#), so I think the 5000 Series GPU's will be announced.

You can find last week's [TOP STORIES #88 here](#)
If colleagues want to sign up [they can click here.](#)

Hardware

Ultrawide Displays coming to AppleVision Pro

Looking for a mega-sized 10K display? Soon, Apple users will be able to project their MAC screen on the AR headset at 10K resolution! You can [read more about this here](#), This is the first time the size and quality of the display will exceed anything you can get from a ["normal" type of display](#).

Huawei has developed its own 72TB storage system.

As the company is restricted from obtaining high-end HDDs from American companies, it has embarked on developing its own storage solutions that can replace HDDs. A very interesting development is it's [MED technology, which you can read more about here](#) and is more power efficient than HDD's.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to learn more about this and other Storage solutions from Huawei.](#)

Microsoft

Power BI Price increase

Microsoft is increasing the price of Power BI Pro licenses to **\$14 per user per month from \$10 per user per month**. Power BI Premium Per User (PPU) licenses will cost \$24 per user per month, up from \$20 per user per month. This price increase will be effective from April 1, 2025, and will apply globally to new and existing commercial customers. [You can read more here.](#)

Price Hikes for M365

In addition to the price increase for Power BI, Microsoft will increase prices by 5% for M365, D365, Teams Phone and other products. Additionally, you will have the option to pay for CoPilot monthly, but also with a 5% price increase, and of course Power BI. You can [read all about these increases here](#).

[If your agreement is coming up for renewal in the next 8 months, it is REALLY important that you sit down with our licensing specialists to review your options, as you may not be able to renew your agreement "as is" - reviewing what to do next and making sure you are getting the very best value proposition from Microsoft can get quite tricky. Please contact your account manager to put you in touch with our specialists to review your options.](#)

You will not be able to renew your EA!

[Directions on Microsoft has published a blog](#) explaining how Microsoft will start moving companies off Enterprise agreements and over to MCA-E and/or CSP agreements. It looks like companies with less than 2400 users are going to be moved for sure and be in for a bunch of unwelcome surprises, one of them is discovering that your renewal excludes Teams, which will now cost extra.

[As I have already implored above, PLEASE reach out to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to help you review your options, to ensure you are getting the best value proposition from Microsoft going forward because if you do nothing and DON'T prepare you are guaranteed to have a significant price increase for your renewal](#) - it is better to be prepared. Even companies that are bigger than 2399 seats are also not immune to some of the changes. Just changing from monthly to annual billing or vice versa can result in an expensive surprise!

Security

EMails abusing Exchange spoofing flaw

Microsoft has disclosed a vulnerability in exchange servers that allows the bad guys to impersonate legitimate senders, making malicious messages more credible. Exchange servers will now flash up a warning that an email may be dodgy. It is really important to make sure your Exchange servers are up to date, and users are educated on what to look out for and to take warnings seriously. [Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our Exchange specialists and ensure your user awareness training is current.](#)

Daisy, the AI Grandma keeps scammers busy

71% of people in the UK would like to get their own back on scammers. [O2 has created an AI that keeps scammers busy](#) on meandering calls that go nowhere, preventing them from using the time to scam real people.

It is important to note that South Africa is not immune to scam calls, dating scams and other nasty stuff. Please take a moment to educate your less tech-savvy relatives to be careful. This also serves as a reminder to ensure your awareness training of your users never lets up. [Please contact your First Technology Account manager to arrange for up-to-date awareness training on how to spot the bad guys!](#)

Microsoft Visio Files is used to carry out phishing attacks.

Just when you think you are well protected from being attacked, another way is found by the bad guys to steal your credentials to launch phishing attacks. Companies are being targeted worldwide, so it is important to be alert against being tricked into clicking a link that you should not. You [can read more about how this attack plays out here](#).

[As with the previous story, please contact your First Technology Account manager to arrange for up-to-date awareness training on how to spot the bad guys!](#)

Cloud & AI

Sam says AGI by 2030, Anthropic disagrees

The rate of technological progress is not letting up, it is possibly speeding up even more. It is mindblowing to think that we may even achieve AGI (given it is flexible definition) as early as 2027! you can [read more about this here](#).

We are in for one hell of a ride for the next 5 years - beyond that - you can only imagine..... With the breakneck acceleration in AI capability, it is more important than ever to make sure you are, at the very least, preparing your company for the deployment of AI to allow employees to start experimenting with AI to enhance what they do. [Please contact your First Technology AM to connect you with our specialists to start preparing your business for AI - it is inevitable.](#)

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22 November: [Arthur's Whiskey](#)

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TOP STORIES #90

The biggest event of the week was [Microsoft's Ignite conference](#), where Microsoft made many announcements, mostly about AI. Cnet has made a [15 minute video summarising the highlights](#). The [full keynote is here](#). One of the announcements was the Windows 365 Link, which [Linus Tech Tips has quite an amusing view of!](#) A lot more news below as well.

You can read [TOP STORIES #89 here](#)

If colleagues want to join the newsletter, then can [click here to subscribe](#).

Did you Know?

PEXA has just won two awards!

This award-winning groundbreaking AI-powered HR assistant from [First Digital](#) is built to streamline and enhance employee interactions with HR policies. This advanced chatbot, developed for the City of Cape Town using Azure AI services, delivers precise, policy-grounded answers, eliminating the frustration of navigating complex HR documentation.

From managing leave requests to addressing nuanced queries about career progression, PEXA provides swift, accurate, and transparent responses in multiple languages.

Now production-ready, PEXA is a shining example of how AI transforms internal processes, saving time and improving efficiency.

If you are wondering, "PEXA" stands for "Policy EXplanation Assistant"!

Curious to see the magic in action? Contact your First Technology account manager today and schedule a demo to explore how PEXA or similar solutions could revolutionise how your staff and customers can get intelligent answers in their home language to complex questions!

P.S. Links to all the previous "Did you Know" stories can be [found here](#).

Hardware

AMD Builds a custom CPU for Microsoft

Microsoft announced these CPU's for use in it's HBv5 virtual machines for extreme performance requirements.

The specifications are quite impressive! [You can read more about this here](#). With Microsoft constantly changing its Azure infrastructure, it is very important to review whether what you are hosting in Azure is optimal for the workload. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts who provide these optimisation services.**

NVIDIA RTX 50 Series info leaked

The 50 Series is going to bring significant performance and price increases across the range and it looks likely that we will find out more at CES 2025. You [can read more here](#).

Now the question is - if you need a GPU - will you buy a 40 series now?

It seems there might be a shortage of the 40-series anyway - so your efforts to get anything may get frustrated! Read [more on that here](#).

Microsoft

New Security efforts at Ignite

In the wake of the CrowdStrike debacle, Microsoft has been working on rehabilitating it's image as part of it's Secure Future Initiative. Further updates have been announced at Ignite to bolster Windows 11 and CoPilot security. You can [read more on all these announcements here](#).

With Microsoft constantly adding new layers of security along with new features, it is so important to review if these can help improve your security posture (or not), so please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to review your position.

Microsoft Ignite: What you need to know

Directions on Microsoft has published a really good summary of all the key announcements at Ignite that companies may find interesting. As much as CoPilot was

getting attention, there were other important announcements relating to SQL, Windows Server, and most importantly, Azure Stack, which was being upgraded to Azure Local. You can [read more from Directions on Microsoft here](#).

New Teams features to affect Millions.

Meeting transcription will support 51 spoken and 31 translation languages (careful about muttering under your breath in your language about what you really think about the meeting!). Meeting recaps will be generated automatically in the language of your choice. You can [read more about these features here](#).

Even more impressive is that you will be able to clone your voice to speak with others in their language with real-time speech-to-speech translation! Of course, there are going to be significant security risks that we still need to understand fully. You can [read more about this translation tech. here](#).

To learn more about these features that were announced, please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our Teams specialists to review these features and many others and see which of them could help your business work more efficiently.

Azure AI Foundry revealed

Microsoft has announced that it is consolidating all its generative AI tools into a single management portal and console. You can [read more about all the new advanced features arriving in this new platform here](#).

Concerning the PEXA story above, which uses these tools, it is also a great opportunity to contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI experts in First Digital to take you through all the tools available on Azure that can do amazing things for your business. You "don't know what you don't know" until you actually have a chat about what might be possible!

Everything at Ignite about Teams gadgets

[RaVe publication has an excellent summary](#) of all the product launches and announcements with videos related to Teams, especially all the new Teams gadgets from Crestron, Jabra, Yaelink, HP Poly, etc.....

If you would like to know when you can get these products in South Africa, an idea of pricing and to understand more about any one of the technologies you see demoed at Ignite, FTG has multiple divisions specialising in different product segments that will be able to advise you. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with the best specialists who are most qualified to address your specific interest.

Security

Fake AI generators used to steal ALL your passwords

There is a social media campaign promoting a fake editor called "EditPro" with a supporting website. What it actually does is install a credential-stealing program that hovers up all your credentials! This affects Windows and MacOS devices. [You can read more here](#).

This is a reminder that you have to be SUPER careful as to what programs you install and to be really careful that the source is legit. **As always, your users need constant reminders and training on what to look for. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our trainers to make sure you are regularly refreshed on what the bad guys are up to. They never rest, nor should you!**

Scammers up to their old tricks with new twists

Attackers are leveraging voice, images, and deepfakes featuring celebrities to endorse fake schemes, all targeting the vulnerable [which you can read more about here](#). These vulnerable people are not companies but our friends and family. As the silly season approaches, now is the time to take a moment to help make your family aware of scams that do their best to trick them.

Of course, companies are not immune, and as always, they have to ensure their users are being trained to be alert for the next devious trick to catch you out. The more aware you are at work, hopefully, you will be more aware at home. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists to ensure that your training is up to date.**

Cloud & AI

Send your clone to attend a conference call

AI is going to create challenges for employers - both good and bad. [Here is news about a startup that can create a clone of yourself](#) after 5 mins of training. After that, it will attend meetings for you while you relax in bed or take time out on the beach while to everybody else in the meeting, you are smartly dressed "at the office".

Now, imagine if you give that clone access to all your data and work mails, it may even be able to answer questions better than you in the flesh!

It is scary to think where this will end up!! You can read [this story on The Register](#) which will give you an idea of just how deep the rabbit-hole will go!

AI improving the eyes, ears and voices of contact centres

A Deloitte study highlights that service innovators leveraging AI outperform others, achieving higher customer and employee satisfaction. You can [read more here](#).

By automating management tasks, AI ensures adherence to regulations and company policies, allowing agents to focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences. **This is what First Digital is demonstrating it can do in practice TODAY with PEXA. It is a good idea to start exploring what AI can do to enhance the quality of your service to your employees AND your customers. It is highly recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our experts at First Digital to start having these discussions. Maybe there is a PEXA just for you!**

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The Security Blog Video #003 is [now available to view here](#).

Movies

School holidays from 6 December to January 25! 50 Days! Yikes!!!!

All three movies being released for 29 November look to be very good and completely different from each other. Take a look at the trailers.

Now Playing: [Absolution](#)

Now Playing: [Wicked Part 1](#)

Now Playing: [Arthur's Whiskey](#)

29 November: [MOANA 2](#)

29 November: [Elevation](#)

29 November: [Heretic](#)



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TOP STORIES #91

This week was dominated by ThanksGiving and Black Friday, but I hope some of you managed to snag some good deals [amidst the trickery](#). Of course, there is still tech. news and several clarifications from Microsoft about what was announced at the Ignite conference.

You can read the Previous Week's [TOP STORIES #90 here](#)

If colleagues want to subscribe, you can forward this to them and ask them to [click here](#).

Hardware

Dual Screen Notebooks - a new trend

This is new trend to watch out for driving by increasing performance density. Processing capabilities, along with increasingly thinner and more power-efficient displays, are permitting manufacturers to come up with notebooks that are exceptionally powerful AND pack two displays. I do not think that corporations will be rushing out to buy them just yet, but I do think these types of machines are worth considering for certain types of workloads - especially for creatives. [Take a look at an example](#) of one of these types of notebooks here.

Expect quite a few to get launched during 2025 - a single display could end up being quite old-fashioned!

What does an AI PC do?

Gartner predicts that by 2026 AI-enabled laptops will dominate in companies where today they only account for 14% of global shipments and probably waaaay less for South Africa.

This underscores we are in a faster release cadence than anything we have experienced in the past (**see ChatGPT Hype to Hope below**). How you spec your notebook in 2026 will be very different from how you do it today. **The problem is what you buy today will still be around in 2026 - so it is important to be aggressive with your specifications.**

AI-enabled computers will be able to help you perform tasks more efficiently like:

Search your emails and data with:

- Natural language queries of everything!
- Perform real-time transcription and translation
- Remember everything you did on your computer (Work in progress with MS)
- provide advanced image processing and search capability
- Enhance security
- Do things that we cannot even imagine today!

You can [read more about these new PC's here](#) .

It is very important that you review your hardware refresh plans and maybe reconsider your minimum specifications for machines you buy going forward from next year. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help review your refresh.

Microsoft

Microsoft Places launched

Microsoft has announced the general availability of Microsoft Places, a new technology built on Teams and Microsoft 365 Copilot. Designed to enhance the office work experience, it helps users easily coordinate in-person meetings or connect spontaneously with onsite colleagues on the same day.

From a licensing standpoint, there are three feature tiers: core, enhanced, and additional. Users with a Microsoft 365 Business Basic/Standard/Premium, Office 365 F3/E1/E3/E5, or Microsoft 365 F3/E3/E5 licence have access to the core features—though a Teams licence is required if it's not already part of the plan.

Enhanced features are unlocked with a Teams Premium Add-on licence, while the additional features also require a Microsoft 365 Copilot licence.

Explore the [announcement here for insights on Microsoft Places](#) , or check the [Learn documentation for practical guidance](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Teams experts in our multiple divisions to take you through all the options available to get the most out of Places. It can get complicated (which is typical for Microsoft Licensing), so it is really important to consult with our experts to help you implement the technology as it

applies best to YOU!

SQL Databases in Microsoft Fabric

Microsoft has introduced a new addition to the Fabric workload family: SQL databases. Like other Fabric workloads, they utilise the same Fabric Capacity Units, with storage and backups billed separately. However, SQL databases in Fabric can be used at no cost until 1 January 2025, when charges for computing and data storage will take effect. Backup billing will commence from 1 February 2025.

You can find more information about this announcement with some of the features from the [official Microsoft site here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Fabric experts in First Digital to see how these SQL Databases in the Fabric family can be implemented in your business.

Windows 365 Link

You will recall last week that this was announced at Ignite and that Linus Tech tips had an amusing perspective on this ([see last week's story](#)), but notwithstanding, this is something that will probably be important for companies to consider, so it is important to take it seriously.

You can find the [official announcement here](#), the [Learn material is here](#) and a more [technical video is here](#).

Even though this will only be available next year, it is important start planning to see if this super secure "thin client" offering from Microsoft has a place in your future strategy of trying to up the game on security.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our experts, who will be able to help you figure out where this technology makes sense. This could be to review and have a good understanding of it before you get a visit from your enthusiastic Microsoft account manager with a target!

Azure Local

Microsoft has unveiled Azure Local - [see the announcement here](#), allowing customers to run Azure services directly on their own infrastructure. Powered by Azure Arc, Azure Local delivers cloud-connected capabilities tailored for distributed locations.

Think of it as the next step from Azure Stack, with Azure Stack HCI now rebranded as Azure Local.

For existing Azure Stack HCI customers, there's good news: pricing and licensing remain unchanged, and new Azure Local features will roll out as they become available.

For now, Azure Stack Hub and Azure Stack Edge continue as-is. However, Azure Local already has preview solutions for lower-spec hardware and disconnected operations, hinting at a future localisation of these Azure Stack components.

It is recommended that you start exploring the possibilities of Azure Local and how it could simplify your operations. Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our experts to start reviewing how Azure Local can improve efficiency and reduce costs on-premise while retaining a foot in the cloud.

Security

"Old" never goes away

As much as we worry about AI making the bad guys smarter and attacks getting generally more sophisticated, you must never forget the old-fashioned way of getting malicious stuff into a company - the good old USB drive!

[Here is a great article that reminds you about how important it is](#) to still make sure you are secure from USB based attacks!

Please contact your account manager to connect you with our security specialists to show you how they deal with USB drives to ensure your attack surface is as narrow as possible.

Public WiFi is risky!

It is urgent that you rethink your casual use of public Wifi (that includes in hotels, conference facilities and ALL public spaces **and even your home**) and always make a point of using VPN to communicate to improve your security. [Here is a good article the goes into more detail on the increasing risks](#).

When it comes to Microsoft, there are multiple ways to ensure you connect with the "home base" and the global Microsoft network, and of course, there are numerous solutions from

other vendors. It is really important to review what technologies you are already licensed for or what could be easily implemented, and it is recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with some of the best security experts in the country to help evaluate your position. Even if you are happy - having somebody else with a different perspective take a look and be very handy!

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT - from Hype to Hope in 2 Years

Happy Birthday, ChatGPT! You are 2 years old, and still only a toddler taking your first uncertain first steps.

ONLY TWO YEARS!!!!????? Can you imagine!? This kid is SMART!!!!

It is hard to believe how the world has changed so much in so little time and to think how much things will change again in the next 5 years, given the pace of change we are now experiencing in just the last 2. [Here is a great article that talks about some of the ways](#) that ChatGPT is starting to become part of people's lives.

I have spoken a lot about how the spreadsheet replaced the slide rule and the calculator and how many people were threatened by that new technology, but the most important message of all is that you must figure out your own way to experiment with AI to see how you can use it to give you a SuperPower, and [I talk more about that here](#). Remember, nobody (yes, there are exceptions) is any more of an expert than you by more than 2 years. You have to figure this out as much as everybody else.

What you CAN NOT DO, IS DO NOTHING - it is essential to actively experiment with AI in any way you can to see how you can use it to enhance your life some way.

40 years ago, if you had used a calculator all your life, only by playing with new technology like a spreadsheet would you have discovered new possibilities.

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts and talk to you about how you start this journey in your business, even if it is just to see a demo of the award-winning PEXA to get ideas flowing!

What's up at FTG

Attend a Quickie! Nintex K2: Innovating Workflow & Governance

First Digital is hosting a webinar specifically aimed at our existing Nintex K2 customers, and those looking at this amazing technology. Discover the future of workflow and governance with Nintex K2 and join us for this exclusive webinar where we'll dive into:

- **Enterprise Project Governance Best Practices:** Learn how to implement and sustain robust governance strategies.
- **Engaging Mobile Workflow Experiences:** Unlock the secrets to building user-friendly mobile workflows.
- **Exciting Roadmap for K2 5.8:** Explore upcoming features, including localisation and translation capabilities, to support your global operations.

When: 3 December 2024 10:00 - 10:30

Where: Online Webinar - [Register Here](#)

If you join this webinar, you'll be eligible for a FREE Workflow Health Assessment from First Digital. Optimize your workflows and drive business efficiency!

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Movies

School holidays from 6 December to January 25! 50 Days! Yikes!!!!

We are now in Holiday Season, and we are in for a bumper batch of movies like Kraven the Hunter, Sonic 3 and Mufasa. Please

Now Playing: [MOANA 2](#) - It's **EXCELLENT** - With this movie, the Disney of old is back with none of the "The Message"!

Now Playing: [Elevation](#) - A middling action movie - good entertainment

Now Playing: [Heretic](#) - Scary but good!

6 December: [Solo Leveling](#)

6 December: [Reawakening](#)

6 December: [HitPig](#)

6 December: [Lord of the Rings: The War of Rohirrim](#)

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TOP STORIES #92

First, a warm welcome to all the "newbies" who have joined this newsletter.

I hope you find this distillation of the volume of news out there (with some of my own opinions) of value.

This edition marks the start of the Christmas season, but the news does not stop. The industry players are busy preparing their announcements for the biggest consumer electronics show in the world, [CES 2025](#), in Las Vegas. Of course, most of the news will "leak" before the show starts, so do not stop checking out TOP STORIES during the holiday season!

You can read the previous week's [TOP STORIES #92 here](#).

If you would like colleagues to sign up they can [click here](#).

Did you Know?

There is ONLY ONE certified Teams and Zoom phone partner in SA!

Finding that you have to renew your Microsoft agreement without Teams included, and now you have to pay extra for Teams?

This is actually a good thing, as it allows you to consider Zoom either as an alternative to Teams or to run alongside Teams in a hybrid environment.

For example, with Zoom, you get AI meeting summary capability for free - no need to pay more for CoPilot. **With Galdon as your premium Zoom partner, you have the option to pay only for meeting organisers**, so you can save SIGNIFICANT money by taking a hybrid approach to your collaboration and UC requirements - or migrating completely to Zoom and potentially saving even more!

However, if you are a Microsoft ME5 customer with Teams and Teams phone already bundled, [Galdon Data, a premium certified partner](#), can help you squeeze every drop of value out of your Microsoft investment.

[Galdon Data](#), a 25-year old division of the First Technology Group, is able to help you get the most out of Teams or Zoom or **both**, with capabilities that extend beyond meetings into Phone Systems and Contact Centres for **both** platforms. **Galdon is also an expert in WhatsApp** for Business so it may be useful to talk to them about how WhatsApp can be added to your portfolio of how you communicate with your customers and/or staff.

Even if you are happy with what you have, it is HIGHLY recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with the UC experts in Galdon. They can advise you on Zoom, Teams, Contact Centres, and WhatsApp for business. No other company in South Africa has Experts in all these fields to give you the best advice for your business.

Hardware

Beyond Silicon, Beyond 2030

Intel will unveil next week its R&D on how it will continue to break barriers in scaling processors into the future.

This means using different materials from copper and different ways of interconnecting transistors. You can [read more about Intel's research here](#).

Of course, to increase density and compute speed even further, other companies, such as [LightMatter](#), are working on ways to use light to move data faster and in less space.

There is a [great YouTube video on this technology here](#).

With all these developments already underway, we can look forward to computing systems that will be so powerful in the 2030s that, compared with what we see today, they will seem like science fiction!

Microsoft

Outlook is Dead, Long Live Outlook!

I have been warning for more than a year that Microsoft is dead set on retiring Classic Outlook in favour of the New Outlook, even though it lacks support for PSTs and many other features we are used to in Classic Outlook.

It is confirmed that by April 2026, Microsoft will REALLY encourage you to switch to the New Outlook unless you have specifically elected not to. You can [read more about this here](#).

April 2026 may seem far away, but a year passes in a blink so it is so important to engage

with our messaging specialists now to start planning this migration and all the implications, some of which I have addressed in [TOP STORIES #52](#).

PLEASE contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our specialists to discuss what this migration will entail. For certain parts of your business, such as marketing, accounts, R&D and others, the implications could be significant.

Recall finally coming to Intel and AMD PC's

This is still only for insiders, but you can now for the 1st time start experimenting with Recall on CoPilot+ plus PC's with the Intel Core Ultra (Lunar Lake) and AMD Ryzen AI processors. It is still very glitchy but still worthwhile testing out. You can [read more here](#). Other useful features, such as a natural language search of EVERYTHING on your computer, will be added, so next year, the number of requests for new computers from users wanting these new features will increase significantly. Please contact your First Technology Account manager, who will connect you with our hardware specialists to help you spec and then plan for the availability of these new "AI" CoPilot+ plus computers. Please ensure they have a minimum of 32 Gig RAM and 512 Gig of NVMe storage.

Security

Your AI Clone could target your family or work colleagues.

This would have been a crazy idea a few years back, but now the [threat is so real the FBI is warning that to protect yourself - \(read here\)](#), you need to have a secret word or passphrase that only you and those closest to you know.

If something feels "off," TRUST YOUR INSTINCT and ask for the passphrase. Be careful not to be tricked into revealing it or continue talking without the passphrase being provided! Attacks are becoming more devious every day, and you need to be prepared for them as best you can. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists, who can review your staff's training and ensure it is up to date.

Cloud & AI

\$200 a month?

With OpenAI announcing a "Pro" plan for \$200 a month, it has left many in the industry puzzled. Is it an experiment on how much people are prepared to pay for a super-intelligent, less error-prone AI? Is it a marketing mistake?

Is this the price you will pay for access to an AGI? Does this create a new baseline that competitors will aspire to? Will we see a new version of CoPilot for that price? [You can read more about this announcement here](#).

However this will end up, it is very important to start experimenting with AI to support you in whatever you do in your work or in your private life today.

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI experts to get you started on your AI journey today - the longer you wait the more you will fall behind, and remember, ChatGPT has only just turned 3, so you still have time (but not much)

Microsoft moves to stop M365 Copilot from 'oversharing' data

As Microsoft pushes companies to adopt CoPilot, increasingly, a problem with CoPilot is that it is surfacing data that it is not supposed to, which is, ummm a BIG problem! Fortunately, Microsoft is very advanced in releasing tools to help companies ensure that data is appropriately categorised and protected, so this happens less often, like using Purview.

For some organizations, this has resulted in employees gaining access to confidential data in Copilot's responses: payroll data, confidential legal files, even top-secret company strategy documents any information Copilot can access. [You can read more about what Microsoft is doing here](#).

DO NOT DELAY! Start the process ASAP by engaging with our security specialists in First Technology to help you start securing your data as much as possible to be ready for AI. If you do not start, you will increasingly fall behind.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our teams to get you started on this journey.

What's up at FTG

Pure Storage event - Special Guest speaker - PSG Wealth

This is a special in-person event to start the new year that introduces the Pure Storage and First Technology partnership and takes you under the hood of the technology and how you can benefit from it and what the future looks like with Containers and Kubernetes.

When: 23 Jan 2025 at 8:00am

Where: Pencil Club, 1 Ncondo Pl, Umhlanga Ridge, Durban, 4320

[Register Here](#).

There are limited seats, so please register ASAP

CoPilot Security Demo

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TOP STORIES #93

News about what we will see at CES 2025 is already starting to leak, notably from NVIDIA and Intel (there are no big surprises yet). Of course, you [cannot miss the guide to the hottest keynotes and parties at CES!](#)

If you would like colleagues to join this maillist, they [can click here](#).
The previous week's [TOP STORIES #92 is here](#).

Hardware

Panther Lake on track for 2025

With volume shipments of Lunar Lake CoPilot+-enabled computers just starting to arrive, Intel has announced the first working engineering samples of Panther Lake. This probably means we will only have production volume in 2026, but we now know for sure that Panther Lake on the 18A node is coming! You can [read more about this here](#).

Dell Arrow Lake High-Performance Workstation Laptops Announced

After a brief experiment with onboard RAM with Lunar Lake, the next generation of CPUs will return to offboard RAM. Dell will launch high-performance workstations with up to 256 GB of RAM, 16TB of Storage, and TB5 ports! We will learn more about these beasts at CES, but you can [read here for some preliminary news](#)

NVIDIA GEFORCE 50 Series at CES 2025

It's going to happen! The new RTX 50 series GPUs will launch at CES 2025. It looks like everything will be revealed on January 6th. You can [read more about what to expect here](#). Take a look at [The Witcher IV trailer](#), apparently rendered on a RTX 5090! In [another leak](#), it seems the BlackWell 5090 will require 600W alone! Yikes!

10K, the final Next frontier - HDMI Standard gets upgraded to 2.2

It seems that [HDMI may release the next cable interconnect standard](#) for displays at CES which will support 10K monitors (HDMI 2.2), just when we were getting used to 8K! Imagine a 10K resolution monitor from SAMSUNG to beat the [57" 8K Neo G9](#)? I wonder what that beast will look like?

Microsoft

NTLM removed from Win11 24H2 and Windows Server 2025

This is actually a good thing, as this is a legacy authentication system that is quite vulnerable to attack, so removing it is actually a good thing. [You can read more here](#).
If you have NTLM in your environment, please contact your First Technology account manager. They will connect you with our security specialists, who can help you finally abandon this legacy system.

Installing Win11 24H2 on unsupported CPUs - DON'T!

There is quite a lot of "noise" going around on the Internet and YouTube that Microsoft is "OK" with installing Win11 on "unsupported hardware". Unless you are doing this at home, **PLEASE DO NOT DO THIS for the computers in your company**. It is very important that you follow the [official Microsoft guidelines](#).

It appears that Win11 will install on machines with TPM 2.0 but with older CPUs than those on the approved list. You can [read how that works here](#) and more [here, which links you to new Microsoft support pages](#).

Linus Tech Tips also [has a video explaining where this story may have started](#).

Also, installing Windows 11 on a really old computer with 8 GB of RAM will probably be a terrible experience, so please consider carefully before doing this.

If you are serious about doing it, try upgrading the RAM to 16 GB and replacing the HDD with an SSD.

It is becoming more important than ever to start migrating to Win11 (and it should be 24H2). Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware and Operating System experts to assist with upgrading older machines to run Windows 11 for the best possible experience and then to plan your hardware refresh roadmap for the next few years, given Windows 10 is coming to the end

of its life October 2025.

Security

Prometheus Leaking Like a Sieve

Thousands of servers hosting the Prometheus monitoring and alerting toolkit are probably leaking information and are open to remote code execution attacks. Though this is mainly used on Linux environments, it can also run on Windows Server.

If you are running Prometheus, you must pay attention to this major vulnerability, which [you can read more about here](#).

Shipping companies most popular for Phishing

Almost half a billion emails sent in 2024 were malicious! DHL and Fedex top the list for being most impersonated for phishing attacks. This is only going to get worse. It is more important than ever to ensure that your users are trained and refreshed on what to look out for. Attacks are evolving, and so must users. [You can read more here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to review your Training schedule for your users to keep them up to date and looking out for ever-increasing clever Phishing attacks.

Microsoft confirms Password Deletion for 1 Billion users

Microsoft is now blocking 7,000 password attacks per second, making it clear that passwords are no longer secure. Accelerating the adoption of better security such as passkeys is more important than ever. [You can read more about this here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to start the URGENT migration from being password-centric to newer systems such as passkeys. Even 2FA using SMS is still very vulnerable and best avoided going forward.

Cloud & AI

OpenAI Launches Sora

This was first teased 10 months ago. [but now it has been released](#). What I find so amazing about what it can do now, is to imagine what we will see in 5 years time! With the release of Sora, the \$200 a month ChatGPT subscription is now making more sense.

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Microsoft AI Tour in Johannesburg

First Technology Group will have a major presence at the Microsoft AI Tour in Johannesburg. You will be able to meet our experts in all fields of AI. These experts from First Technology, BUI, CRM Team and First Digital will be there to introduce, explore and demonstrate business centric AI-powered solutions to boost creativity and productivity. These include out of the box solutions as well as custom designs developed by First Technology Group companies.

When: 23 Jan 2025 7:00am to 1:45pm

Where: Sandton Convention Centre

[Register here](#)

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