

TOP STORIES #103

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years! As a user of Microsoft technologies, you're receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more. I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" below to see if you may have missed something coming to End of Support (EoS) that may impact your business.

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

Last week's [TOP STORIES #102 is here](#)

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

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

ISE 2025 has ended, but the story is not done. The coverage of this show has been exceptional, and [here you can find an excellent recap](#) of the highlights of the show by rAVe.

It is a really good summary that also identifies trends and new technologies.

An interesting trend is occupancy detection, automated room reservations, and more immersive experiences. The official TV channel for the show [can also be found here](#).

[Mobile World Congress \(MWC\)](#) will kick off in Barcelona from **3-6 March**. This is a significant event for the mobile connectivity industry with a focus on 5G, 6G, AI, and the Internet of Things.

[NAB](#), the Show for the Entertainment & Education Business and Movie Technology geeks, kicks off in Las Vegas from 5-9 April. AI is going to play a very big role at the show.

This is the 3rd mail using **firsttech.news** - I hope you are still getting it!!!!

Account Manager?

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

Did you Know?

Microsoft Teams has a feature not available in Zoom or Google (Yet)!

This technology in Teams, similar to that from Waves.com that I discussed in [TOP STORIES #65](#) (*AI improves quality of life*), was actually developed in-house by Microsoft. This ability to isolate one voice using a voiceprint is a game changer for people with impaired hearing - and many of us are not even aware our hearing is deteriorating - ([you can do a simple NHS check here](#)). There is another test from a South African company [here](#) (I failed the test). **Please note that this does NOT replace hearing tests done by a professional. It just tells you if you need to be tested properly.**

As we age, many of us have this problem: You are at a party, and you just cannot make out what the person is saying to you because all the noise drowns out his/her voice. This is known as the "[cocktail effect](#)." Products using technologies [like this](#) are starting to appear, and we will see many more.

What's really interesting is that this Voice Isolation technology is employed in Teams to ensure that even if somebody is talking right next to you (maybe saying something you don't want the other party to hear) while you are in Teams call, ONLY your voice is heard by the party on the other end.

This is NOT Noise Reduction or Noise Cancellation, and Teams still offers three levels of

that as well.

This similar technology from Waves can be "bolted on" to Zoom, Google, etc., using [OBS](#) and [Clarity Vx](#) (Broad 2) in professional audio production solutions.

However, there are many technical hoops and significant computing resources needed to get this working.

As this is not enabled by default (you have to teach Teams to recognise your voice), please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Microsoft Certified Teams experts to assist you in enabling this feature for your company and, additionally, to educate your users on how this feature works.

This is an excellent technology for open-plan offices .

Hardware

That shiny new Seagate HDD might NOT be new!

This is a great reminder that when buying hardware, it is very important to get it from an authorised dealer or distributor that you can trust will honour your warranty. Fraudsters are selling used HDDs as new and are getting very clever about tricking you by even modifying the serial number. You can read [more about this here](#).

If you are unsure about the origin of the HDDs you are buying, please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our hardware specialists to assist you.

Microsoft

Power Platform Licensing Guide Feb. 2025

The February 2025 update of the Power Platform Licensing Guide includes useful new tables on pages 16-19. These provide additional details on how messages are billed in Copilot Studio and Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat, specifically covering the new Tenant Graph grounding for messages. You can download the latest guide [here](#).

Figuring out what licensing you need to ensure you do not pay too much for your required functionality can be very complicated. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Power Platform experts, who can help you navigate this complexity!

CAL Suite Bridges and Base/Additive CAL overview guides updated

Microsoft has updated these two guides, which you can [download here](#). The documents include an overview, scenarios and tables taken from the Licensing Terms. It is important to note that these documents are GUIDES; they do not override the product terms, which is the ONLY official document of your terms of use.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our SAM and Licensing experts to address any questions or concerns about the practical application of these guides. **The CAL bridge document can get especially tricky as it deals with the GAPS in licensing in your transition from on-premise to subscription.**

Hidden Traps in Classic M365 Plans.

I first warned of the price increases in [TOP STORIES #89](#), and of course, Microsoft delivered on the increases, which South Africa did not escape. However, you can still renew your subscription as a "Classic" plan, which excludes CoPilot. The story does not end there. It is essential to stay vigilant, as you may be excluded from "certain new innovations or features" in the future. You can read [more about this here](#).

Microsoft is working on a PC migration tool

It seems Microsoft is working on a PC migration tool that will ease the pain of Migrating from an old PC to a shiny new one. Some Windows sleuths have found references to the tool buried in a recently announced insider build, [read more here](#).

Many third-party tools, such as [PC Mover](#), have been around for a very long time, but it will be interesting to see what Microsoft's own tool can offer.

Security

Ghost Ransomware hits over 70 countries.

The groups are targeting infrastructure, healthcare and other verticals, and South Africa is

not excluded from this list. It is important to remain vigilant; you cannot ever let your guard down. You can read more about this [global attack here](#).

February Patch Tuesday. CISO's must act

Every patch Tuesday is essential, but this one is especially important because there are two vulnerabilities being actively exploited for Windows Server.

You can [read about the whole story here](#).

It is extremely important to review your patch management and security update regime regularly and conduct an inventory of your environment to check for licensing compliance while also checking that everything is being patched.

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our SAM, ITAM, and Security specialists. They will then determine the best program for you to have your environment checked.

Cloud & AI

Here comes GPT-5

It looks like OpenAI is about to release GPT-5, which will include the o3 reasoning models.

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

AI, as a very intelligent tool for your business is inevitable, and it is extremely important that you start planning to see how you can use it.

We have many examples that have actually been implemented to show you what AI can do. It would be great to spend time looking at what can be done and understanding how you prepare and secure your data to be ready for AI that is getting smarter every week!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI experts to start this journey.

Don't Forget

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

Note that this list is not complete.

The Microsoft Product Lifecycle Page

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

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

Microsoft Office

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

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

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

Unlicensed OneDrive accounts to lose data

As advised in [TOP STORIES #95](#), as of now, OneDrive accounts will be archived after 93 days.

After another 93 days, they get PERMANENTLY deleted. Up until then, you can still re-activate the accounts. You can [read about how all this is working here](#). **THE FINAL DEADLINE (for a price) is before 29 July 2025!**

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

Windows 10 - End of Support (EoS) October 2025

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

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

Plan "C" will come from a company called [Opatch](#), but we have no technical expertise with this company's offering to assist.

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

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

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

Windows 11 - End of Support (EoS)

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

Win 11 22H2 October 2025

Win 11 23H2 November 2026

Win 11 24H2 October 2027

Win 11 Ent. LTSC 2029

Windows Server End of Support

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

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

SQL Server End of Support

2012 SP4 ESU July 2025

2014 SP3 ESU July 2027

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

2017 Oct 2027

Azure AD and MSONline End of Support

Both these services come to **end of support on 30 March 2025**

Microsoft has posted detailed information about this [here](#).

What's up at FTG

Navigating the Cloud: Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI

With 63 healthcare facilities in southern Africa, the security of Life Healthcare's data is paramount. A move to the Azure Cloud, facilitated by BUI, became the clear and strategic choice.

As a leading South African private healthcare provider, Life Healthcare plays a key role in the health of our nation. While their primary business occurs in wards, theatres and consulting rooms around the country it is underpinned by a solid IT foundation.

Read more about how BUI enabled Life Healthcare's move to the cloud..... [Navigating the Cloud: Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI - BUI](#)

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

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

Municipality Solution Demonstration

Join the CRMTeam at Microsoft for an event that showcases how cutting-edge technology can transform the way municipalities handle service delivery, from ticket management to AI-powered insights. You can [read more about the event here](#).

When: 19 March 2025 from 10H00 - 12H30 ([RSVP by March 12](#))

Where: Microsoft Offices, 3012 Winnie Mandela Dr, Bryanston, Sandton.

CoPilot Security Demo

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

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

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

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

BUI blog - 4th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI, has launched a blog focused on Security—what's new, what's changed, and what you need to do to maintain a sound security posture. The 4th Video in the series is [available here](#). **This video covers some of the Purview announcements at Microsoft Ignite 2024.**

Movies

Grp 1 Pvt School Holidays 21-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

Public School Holidays 29-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

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

Human Rights Day 21-MAR-25

The Line-up for 21 March is going to be INTENSE!!

Now Playing: [Paddington in Peru](#)

Now Playing: [September 5](#)

Now Playing: [Inheritance](#)

Now Playing: [Unbreakable Boy](#)

28 Feb: [Brave the Dark](#)

28 Feb: [The Monkey](#)

07 March: [The Great Lillian Hall](#)

07 March: [A Scam Called Love](#)

07 March: [Mickey 17](#)

07 March: [Rule Breakers](#)

14 March: [Buffalo Kids](#)

14 March: [Cleaner](#)

14 March: [In the Lost Lands](#)

21 March: [Disney's Snow White](#)

21 March: [Som Van Twee](#) - **Please support your local cinema!**

21 March: [Black Bag](#)

21 March: [Novocaine](#)

21 March: [Last Breath](#)

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