

## TOP STORIES #123

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

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

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you are receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.

I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" which is now a separate document for you to download - it was making TOP STORIES too long to read through.

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

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

Check out the **official movie release** dates in South Africa for all studios at the bottom of this email.

The schedule provides you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate! **I believe this is the only place in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.**

There are some really interesting announcements in the "What's up at FTG" section this week, with some new events and a **major bombshell** from our CyberSecurity division - go take a look below....

Last week's [TOP STORIES #122 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 at the bottom of the mail.

## Upcoming Shows

With summer holidays in the northern hemisphere, the number of large shows slows down, but there are still a few worth paying attention to.

### **AWS Summit is up next in New York**

This is a **major event for AWS** on 16 July to showcase to customers and developers what is on the roadmap for AWS.

### **Black Hat USA 2025**

This is a **major security conference for 2-7 August** that is a "Must Attend" for everybody who is serious about security.

### **CEDIA Expo - Denver CO - 3-6 September**

This is the premier event where System Integrators for residential and commercial customers come together to see the latest technologies. You can **read more about the show here**.

It is likely that these shows will fade into the background of the bigger shows like Computex, CES, NAMM etc... as the technologies to transmit audio and video merge with the same tech to transfer data - see the story in [TOP STORIES #120](#) of the frog starting to boil.

## Account Manager?

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

## Don't Forget

This is a list of **ALL Microsoft services and products that are "expired" for whatever reason for the next year.**

The downloadable documents are very detailed, spanning 24 pages, so I recommend searching for what you need within them to stay up to date.

The material is presented in a way for you to copy the relevant pieces and send them to teams focused on different aspects of Microsoft technologies.

**The guide for July 2025 to July 2026 can be downloaded [here](#)**

The July guide is focused on the changes relating to the end of Windows 10

This should be read in conjunction with the [previous guide here](#).

**The most critical update to note is that Microsoft has announced that [security updates for Microsoft 365 Apps \(e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook\) running on Windows 10 will continue for three years after the Windows 10 end-of-support date.](#)**

This means Microsoft 365 Apps **on Windows 10** will receive security updates until October 10, 2028. Now, how do you do that while not supporting the host operating system?

**UPDATE:** It appears we are receiving a partial answer to this, with Microsoft now stating that you will receive free security updates for 1 year under certain conditions (see the Microsoft section below). However, this still does not address the issue for enterprises where the "brick wall" of Windows 10 Support ending remains.

### Important Caveats

- This extension applies to security updates for M365 Apps only. The Windows 10 OS itself still reaches end of support on October 14, 2025 (unless ESUs are purchased for the OS).
- If an issue with M365 Apps occurs only on Windows 10 (and not on Windows 11), Microsoft support will advise moving to Windows 11. Troubleshooting assistance may be limited if unable to move to Windows 11.
- Bug reports or feature requests for M365 Apps on Windows 10 will not be accepted after October 2025.

This significantly impacts planning for organisations, offering more flexibility for the M365 Apps component while still necessitating a Windows 11 migration strategy for the underlying OS. More on this below.

## Hardware

### Intel Arrow Lake refresh to meet 40TOPS NPU rating

Good news from Intel is that it appears we will be getting an upgrade (refresh) for Arrow Lake, which will specifically increase the TOPS NPU rating to a minimum of 40 TOPS, allowing these CPUs to be used in Copilot+ PCs. This is a big upgrade and is desperately needed, as Intel did not impress the Industry with Arrow Lake and, due to its weak NPU rating, was losing ground to AMD. You can [read more about this here](#).

Intel has lost significant ground and may no longer be among the top 10 semiconductor companies, leaving it [with considerable work to do](#).

This could trigger a major refresh from all vendors. Dell, in particular, has at least eight models that could get refreshed in a hurry.

For interest, Dell appears to be the only company that has currently committed to making super-advanced AI Notebooks with Qualcomm AI NPU's. [See this article here from Dell on the Pro MAX AI Notebook](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Hardware specialists to update the specifications for your refresh cycles of notebooks, in particular, the higher-end units.

### Careful with your Server Licensing!

Intel is planning to release it's Diamond Rapid XEON CPU's in 2026 with up to 192 cores per socket!. **This could mean ending up with 768 cores per server.**

You can [read more about these new XEON's here](#). This could have a very interesting consequence when it comes to your Windows Server and SQL Server licensing, making it very important to carefully select the CPU that is most optimal for your workload while minimising your licensing exposure.

Many companies, for a variety of reasons, cannot run their workloads in the cloud, and they have to pay careful attention to the hardware in relation to how efficiently they are applying their licenses.

This can be an immensely complicated subject to navigate, but done correctly, can save significant amounts of money on licensing. The days are long gone when randomly buying a XEON CPU and hoping you will get the best performance will work!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Licensing and Hardware specialists who will work together to help assess the best solution for your Windows

## Microsoft

### SharePoint Licensing Document downgraded

Microsoft has released a new licensing document that includes minor updates for SharePoint SE, but has downgraded the document by removing some helpful diagrams. You can download the [latest SharePoint document here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to review your SharePoint licensing and your roadmap to subscription licensing and the cloud, or if you like, just to ask for a copy of the older and more useful guide!

### The "Macro problem" of Office 2016 & 2019 nearing the end of support.

As these older versions near the end of support, migrating the macros and templates that have appeared in your business over the years is another problem that has to be addressed and often underestimated in its complexity. You can [read more about these issues here and the measures to mitigate them](#).

Every business that has a spread of older versions likely has Macros, templates, documents, spreadsheets, Projects and Visio drawings that need to be located, assessed and migrated as needed to new systems.

We have a multitude of skills to help you with this, so please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists who can assist with these sometimes tricky migrations.

### OneDrive for the Web - a guide

OneDrive is a powerful tool for making your files portable.

Drop a file into File Explorer on Windows 10 or 11, or save it into the OneDrive web page, and—voilà—it pops up on every other gadget signed in with the same Microsoft ID, whether that's an Android handset, an iPhone or iPad, or even a Mac running the OneDrive app.

In short: save once, fetch anywhere. However, as convenient as this is, note the story under security below. [Here is a detailed guide on how to use it](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our M365 and security specialists to ensure that these technologies are securely deployed, as it is these repositories of data that you will be giving CoPilot access to, as well as ensuring that all your devices with OneDrive (and other) access are fully secured.

## Security

### The Billion Dollar Celebrity Scam

[This is a difficult read](#). It is hard because it is quite sad, and because it could happen to you or your loved ones.

The story starts with "Margaret" leaving her husband of 10 years, convinced Kevin Costner was driving down to meet her.

The scammers made off with her life savings.

Swap Costner for any idol, and you have an impostor-fraud machine worth \$2.7 billion a year (FTC 2023) - and a LOT more in 2025 with AI!

"Never me," you say? Perhaps — but note who else is falling for this: finance directors who click a spoofed authorisation, or teenagers pressured into "just" opening Mum's or Dad's WhatsApp or OneDrive, or staff who log on to a fake OneDrive prompt.

Same pig, different lipstick!

Whether the lure is love, fame, or an "urgent payment", the entry point is always trust. **Lose your compass on whom to trust for a moment**, and ransomware, account takeover or extortion walks in.

I recommend you [read the whole story here](#).

**The takeaway for organisations and individuals alike is sobering: vigilance against phishing and impersonation is more critical than ever, as most of today's costliest cyber-threats begin by exploiting human trust.**

Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange training for you and your staff to be more aware and prepared to deal with these extremely devious attempts to win your trust. This is also about helping you be more aware of how to protect your family as well.

## Cloud & AI

### OpenAI to release Web Browser, GPT-5 coming this summer

OpenAI is preparing to release a browser with Operator capability to fill in forms and complete routine tasks without user intervention.

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

Along with the new browser capability, OpenAI is planning to simplify its range of models to a single multimodal GPT-5 which we can expect sometime this summer - [read more here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to assist you with planning your deployment of CoPilot in your environment. It is crucial that you start experimenting with AI before you fall too far behind.

## What's up at FTG

### First Digital Makes AI History

First Digital just became the first SA-headquartered company to earn [Microsoft's Advanced Specialisation for Building AI Apps on Azure](#).

**This confirms what we already knew: our AI isn't hype. It works. And now Microsoft agrees!**

Please contact your First Technology account manager to explore what we can do for you. The AI you use to query the TOP STORIES archive(TSAI) is one of those apps!!

### BUI Just Dropped a Bombshell: South Africa's First Cyber Warranty

While other companies are saying you should have this, **BUI has done it!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division, has become the first Microsoft Cloud Solutions Partner in South Africa to launch a Cyber Security Warranty.

That's right — they're so confident in their security operations, they're backing it with a financial warranty.

**Think of it as putting your money where your Security is. If you suffer a cybersecurity incident, they will assist your organisation up to the value of R1,000,000.00.**

It's the kind of assistance customers didn't even know they needed — until now.

**You can read more about the [announcement on ITWeb here](#).**

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with the BUI team to discuss how you can take advantage of this new level of protection.

### Cloud costing you more than expected?

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

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

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

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

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

### Free Microsoft Support Ends

Microsoft has ended free technical support for Azure.

The only free support you now get is for billing and subscription issues.

**Microsoft now charges \$650 per support incident - NB! Not a typo!!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division has introduced a new support model that mitigates some of this impact - you can [read more and sign up for more information here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss your support requirements, as First Technology group can provide [GLOBAL SUPPORT 24/7/365](#) for a wide range of vendors, **including Microsoft**.

## New Asset Visibility Assessment Available

**The most certified SAM team in the country has announced a new service**, which every company should be interested in, even if it is to validate inventories that you already have.

- One scan, full picture of every on-prem, cloud, HW & SW asset
- Block64 tech → shows what's installed, licensed and actually used
- Pin-point over/under-licensing & the real cloud cost drivers
- Built-in FinOps actions to kill idle spend, right-size, reserve & save
- Results land in a single Power BI dashboard

You can also contact the SAM division to participate in a 7-10-day PoC with First Intel and apply Real World FinOps practices.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our SAM specialists to see how their service can best be applied to the challenges in your business, to gain insight into all assets.

## 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.

## 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 - 8th, 9th and 10th Videos Available

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted 3 new videos focusing on Entra ID. It is highly recommended that you review these videos as they give you an understanding of how to squeeze value out of the Microsoft suites as opposed to buying alternative products which may not be necessary.

**No. 8:** Streamlining employee onboarding

**No. 9:** Modernise Remote Access

**No. 10:** Secure Internet access based on business requirements.

## Joint Standard 2 on Cyber Security and Resilience

BUI has published a 1-page guide for you to gauge your compliance and, if you have concerns, to reach out to the BUI specialists for assistance. The [guide is available here](#).

## Movies

Superman is getting good reviews - go see it!

11 July: [SMURFS](#)

11 July: [Superman Legacy](#)

18 July: [I know what you did last Summer](#)

18 July: [Four Letters of Love](#)

25 July: [Fantastic Four: First Steps](#)

25 July: [Don't let's go to the Dogs tonight](#)

25 July: [Lucky Fish](#)

1 August: [Bring her Back](#)

1 August: [The Bad Guys 2](#)

8 August: [Freakier Friday](#)

8 August: [Tin Soldier](#)

8 August: [Weapons](#)

8 August: [Sketch](#)



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