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12th January #149

Happy New Year!

As most of us are only back at work today, I left our New Year's well wishes from last week in again for this week.....

As we step into 2026, trust in digital content, systems, and supply chains will be tested globally. Hardware scarcity and economic pressures mean technology teams must do more with less. Geopolitical instability has become a very real factor in IT planning, underscoring that creative adaptation and resilience will define success.

In the face of these challenges, working with First Technology Group is a strategic advantage. Our federated model and deep redundancy across divisions ensure robust support with no single point of failure.

With certified expertise and an unmatched breadth of skills across our teams, we bring the creativity and agility needed to help you thrive in 2026.

On behalf of everyone at First Technology Group, we wish you a successful and resilient 2026. We enter the new year with quiet confidence and stand ready to support you every step of the way.

New for This week

- 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.
If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the

bottom of the mail.

- **CES 2026 is a wrap!** See below for links to highlights from the show.
- **2026 is going to get very interesting! New Tech and price increases - how they mix**
- **Microsoft EoL section** published to see what's EoL'ng up to December 2026
- **3 New vendors Wonde, Solution-Soft & ninjaOne** added to FirstMarketplace
- **Panther Lake** - the biggest News of CES - lots on it in this issue.
- **Biztalk - the end of the road** - we have the best team in Africa to help
- **Modern Work Plan Comparison Guide.** Nothing (new) to see.
- **Dynamics New Teams phone Rules** - some detail on the changes
- **Linux under attack** - go find your Linux servers - they are suddenly a problem!
- **Attackers mimicking Google Support** - Watch your (Gmail) back!
- **Zoom Security Scare on Windows** (It's fixed) - please read more to check!
- **AR Glasses one of the BIG CES Trends** - If you wear glasses your MUST read!
- **A knife turned into a tech. gadget?** Only at CES! You must read!

CES 2026 - Digesting the Announcements

Intel's Panther Lake announcement was by far the most impactful, but announcements from Dell, NVIDIA, AMD, Lenovo and hundreds of other companies were also major, and over the next few weeks I'll be analysing the announcements, the articles on the internet on how all this will impact what is important for CIO's to plan around for 2026. The biggest change for 2026 is that it is now certain that you simply cannot trust any single cloud or even a region to be completely resilient. 2026 is the year where Zero Trust is your only constant!

Upcoming Shows

See this page for a summary of some of the technology announced at the biggest tech show of the Year. Biggest news is Intel's Panther Lake CPU release that beats AMD.

Panther Lake Impact

DRAM prices have already tripled.
Read how Intel's Panther Lake changes the game now that CES is done.

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Click button above for last weeks news.

SA RAM price madness

Visit FirstMarketPLace

Wonde, Solution-Soft & ninjaOne have been added for this week.
There is now a LinkedIn Page for you to follow as well.

Visit our LinkedIn

Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa.
Coming up:
28 years Later: The Bone Temple
Next big movie for 2026 is **Mercy.**

Microsoft EoL

Summary of what to know up to December 2026.
Detailed document available for download

The News Winner of CES 2026- Intel's Panther Lake

CES did not disappoint at all this year! As is always the case with CES, you can encounter many new technologies and ideas that may look good but end up going nowhere. *That story* is for another TOP STORIES!

Intel is bringing HUGE performance improvements to its new range of CPUs, which you will find inside notebooks from every single vendor that makes a computer!

For now, Intel has scored a win over AMD! However, Intel may run into trouble if it can't supply enough of them!

Most of the rumours have proven to be true, and Panther Lake is a massive improvement in performance, especially for the GPU, and will allow you buy notebooks that are thinner, smarter (CoPilot+), and way more power efficient. Because of these huge changes, it may be possible to soften the impact of price increases - in Software as well - don't forget Microsoft's price increases midway through 2026.

What is VERY clear from the announcements at CES is that you urgently need to completely revamp your RFP's for new hardware in 2026!

There ARE going to be shortages which we are already experiencing, so the quicker you start planning, the better off you will be!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help with planning your roadmap with this new hardware and to implement a program to extend the life of existing hardware through debloating and optimisation.

[Panther Lake CPU Models](#)[Gaming Performance](#)

Microsoft News This Week

BizTalk - Finally, the end of the road

Microsoft has confirmed BizTalk Server 2020 is the final BizTalk release. The successor path is Azure Logic Apps, part of Azure Integration Services, a cloud and hybrid workflow automation platform that connects apps and data across Azure, SaaS, and on-premises systems.

Host Integration Server is not going away, it will continue as a standalone product, with Host Integration Server 2028 planned to keep Microsoft to IBM connectivity on the roadmap.

- Mainstream support ends 11 April 2028
- Extended support runs to 9 April 2030
- End of support is 10 April 2030, no further updates or support

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists who are the BEST IN AFRICA to meet with you to talk about your roadmap to replace BizTalk with alternative services.

HIS needs discussion as well!

[BizTalk - EoR Announcement](#)

Microsoft has published new guides, like they do every month, except that, because of the holidays, there are no new updates.

The link below is an evergreen link that should hopefully always allow you to download the latest guide.

Other guides have been updated as well, but nothing significant has been changed or added, but you can access all the guides by clicking the button below right.

**Modern Work Plan
comparison Guides**

Microsoft Licensing Guides

Dynamics Licensing Guide - New Teams Phone rules

Updated Dynamics 365 licensing resources are out for January 2026. The key change is new licensing rules for using Teams Phone in Dynamics 365 Contact Centre, so reps get a simpler, built-in calling experience.

The guide now makes it clear you need licensing on two sides

- The Contact Centre phone setup, using a Teams resource account plus a way to connect to the public phone network, calling plan, Operator Connect, or Direct Routing
- Each Contact Centre rep, needs Contact Centre licensing plus Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Teams Phone

Microsoft's [setup article](#) covers the practical steps and prerequisites for configuring Teams Phone in the voice channel.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with our Dynamics and Teams Phone specialists to help you get the most value from these changes and how they impact your licensing bill!

Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide January 2026

Security



Linux under Attack

The GoBruteforcer botnet is increasingly compromising internet-facing Linux servers by **exploiting weak and reused credentials**.

Check Point estimates over 50,000 servers are at risk due to exposed services and reused credentials, with newer GoBruteforcer variants adding stealthy obfuscation, resilient C2, and cryptocurrency theft capabilities.

That FTP server you forgot you had running? Better find and check it ASAP!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help ensure you are finding and securing ALL internet-facing devices on your ENTIRE network, and not just your Windows servers!

Attackers mimic Google support to steal logins

A new attack is tricking users into giving up their credentials by impersonating Google Support notifications. It uses multiple channels, including Google's own infrastructure, to trick users, and is doing it with exceptional success.

The attackers use a sense of urgency to build trust. If you are being contacted by "support" to do something urgently - even if it may seem unimportant, DON'T do what you are asked - CHECK with somebody you know and trust to verify the legitimacy of the request.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to update your staff on how to look out for new ways you could be tricked into doing something that could have terrible consequences!

Google Phishing attack to Steal Logins

Security Scare with Zoom on Windows

Zoom is critical to many customers, as it is regarded as a credible competitor to Teams and is more flexibly priced. However, it can still encounter vulnerabilities, which is an important reminder to make sure ALL your applications are kept up to date. This latest flaw, which Zoom has already patched, left customers exposed to having their data stolen.

Contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our Zoom and security experts to help you ensure that your security and patching protocols are up to date for all your applications, including Zoom!

Zoom bug enables Data Theft

Cloud & AI

Gmail gets a Gemini infusion

Google is adding more AI smarts to Gmail, with some features available only in Pro or Ultra. Some of these are quite advanced, bringing capabilities similar to Grammarly. Though you may be using Microsoft at work, you may be using Google at home, and it is worth taking a look at what Google is releasing.

Gmail getting Gemini Smarts

If you are interested in what Google can do in the workplace, especially in picture and video generation, please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Google specialists for a demo of Google Ultra capabilities.

AR Glasses were a big deal at CES

Bifocals could be a thing of the past!

Every year, one picks up a new trend that can eventually lead to fundamental changes in how we interact with technology daily. In tandem with voice becoming a more important way of communicating with your computer, AR glasses incorporating video, Audio, and AI integration were all over CES - one thing is for sure, in the next few years, many of us will be wearing these glasses that seamlessly augment (and record) our interaction with the world around us. How we will be impacted by this will be a subject I will dedicate an entire article to. Apart from this eyewear changing how we engage with reality and AI, it will also significantly impact our quality of life by improving our eyesight. A French company demonstrated at CES glasses that focus as naturally as the human eye!

By tracking the wearer's gaze, the glasses switch between a distance prescription and a reading boost almost instantly.

Making Bifocals obsolete

Ultrasonic Knife

Just when you think there is a utensil that will never feature at CES as being techy, you get surprised. The world's first Ultrasonic knife was demonstrated at CES, which makes slicing through squishy fruit a breeze, and you can order it now!

At \$399 it is quite pricy, but if you are into super cool gadgets, this is a "must have"!!!

Ultrasonic Knife

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