

TOP STORIES #130

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.

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 independent place in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.

Read the story at the bottom of the mail about how a South African movie title got this email completely blocked by some email filtering systems! At least you know they're working!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #129 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](#).

There is big news this week with us announcing a refined version of our Universal Support Agreements. See under "Did you Know"

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.

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.

AWS re:Invent 2025 - 1-5 December Las Vegas

This is a "MUST ATTEND" for any organisation that uses or competes with AWS. [Register here](#). **It is the single most important event for understanding the future of the world's recognised cloud platform.**

The product announcements made during the keynote addresses can have immediate and far-reaching implications for technology stacks, budgets, and competitive positioning. The event's structure is notably dual-focused: it provides deep, practical technical training for practitioners who need to implement AWS services, while simultaneously offering high-level strategic sessions and executive networking for leaders making long-term technology decisions. This makes re:Invent a multi-layered and highly efficient event for entire technology teams. **Of course, First Technology Group will have representatives attending and will report back on how AWS's announcements will impact business and opportunities in particular for South Africa.**

CES 2026 6-9 Jan 2026 Las Vegas

CES is the event that sets the **consumer technology agenda for the entire year**. Its primary

value is not in enterprise strategy but in product launches, generating media buzz, and forming partnerships within the consumer product ecosystem.

If you want to attend, you need to plan now! [Sign up here](#). A more hidden and serious part of the show is that it is also a major destination for startups, with a dedicated area called **Eureka Park** that hosted 1,400 in 2025 - this is actually the most exciting part of CES - what is announced in the main halls, is usually leaked to the internet weeks in advance so attending physically unless you have a specific reason is actually pointless - TOP STORIES gets quite busy for December with all the news leaks!

Account Manager?

In many cases, the stories below recommend that you contact your First Technology Group account manager. If you are not sure who your account manager is, [click here for us to connect you](#).

Don't Forget

Legacy MFA and SSPR to Authentication must migrate NOW!

September has arrived, and you may soon be experiencing authentication issues. This may be the reason. [You can read more here](#).

SSPR = Self-Service Password Reset

We all know about the end of Windows 10, which has been documented repeatedly in TOP STORIES over the past year, but there are also changes that have been missed along with new updates, all summarised in the "Don't Forget changes August 2025-2026 complete" document, [which you can download here](#).

Here are a few changes you should pay attention to:

- [The end of trust-based licensing for Dynamics is explained on Page 11](#)
- Note the retirement of the Azure AD Graph API 31 August on [Page 7](#)
- CoPilot Feature enhancements for August 2025 [Page 4](#)
- Azure Services being retired are updated on [Page 7](#)
- Windows Server 2022 ends mainstream support in October 2026 [Page 16](#)
- The end of Windows 10 has implications for Office, summarised on [Page 10](#)

Did You Know?

[You can have Microsoft-certified Consultants supporting your company 24/7/365?](#)

Universal Support gives you always-on, human support. Real consultants across Azure, Modern Work, Dynamics, Purview and more, using support credits to resolve issues end-to-end, with seamless escalation when required.

Add our Concierge service to enhance any Microsoft Unified Support agreement you may already have: we drive escalations, eliminate the follow-the-sun handoff pain, prevent downgrades, and extract more value from what you're paying.

We then help you consider alternatives when you are ready. We are **ISO-certified**, CSM-led, and extend beyond Microsoft (yes, AWS too), with no chatbots at the front door, just real certified consultants speaking your language who pick up the phone, day or night.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our dedicated Universal Support consultants to craft a support agreement tailored to your specific requirements.

Hardware

NVIDIA releases the ultimate Supercomputer for Robotics

A new era of robotics is starting with the release of a supercomputer that is small and powerful enough to drive a new generation of robotics that is "cheap enough" to give millions of developers access to mind-boggling processing power. Unfortunately, this power will also be used for advanced weaponry and is going to have a fundamental impact on how wars are fought. You can [read more about this new generation of AI here](#).

Intel is not out of the race with AMD

It seems that with cash injections from the US government, and new news about what to expect from Nova Lake in 2026, Intel is going to be able to match AMD in the price/performance stakes for Desktop and Mobile processors. Again, the landscape is shifting back to some healthy competition between the two chip giants, which is really good news for us as consumers, which you can [read more about here](#).

What it means is that we have to stay up to date with the changes and how they will impact the pricing and availability of new computers. [Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to schedule an update session with your hardware supplier, ensuring you are up to date on upcoming releases and their timelines.](#) It is also important to start planning to accommodate AMD in your standards going forward, as there will be many cases where AMD may be a much better choice.

Microsoft

Preview of tool to convert VM's from VMware to Hyper-V

This is a tool that is going to get a lot of attention given the challenges many companies have been encountering with their VMware contracts. Microsoft says this tool conducts a non-intrusive discovery of all the VMs without requiring agents. The tool enables replication while the source machine is still running, and then once the source is powered down it does a pass to capture any changes. This minimises downtime.

10 VM's can be migrated at a time. Microsoft that one of the key differences is that checks and tests are carried out before the conversion process starts. You can [read more here](#).

[Like with all tools, nothing is perfect, so please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our experts who can assist with the conversion and, at the same time, look at optimisation of the VM's as well, possibly helping you save even more money!](#)

Bluetooth Audio quality to improve

Microsoft is going to improve the quality of Bluetooth audio in the coming releases, but you will need new(ish) hardware, Win11 24H2 and driver updates set to roll out over the coming months. This IS a big deal as the quality of audio over Bluetooth will improve to the point where you will not be able to tell the difference in quality between wired and wireless connections. This will also make a big difference to hearing aids as well. It will also finally do away with the requirement for your device to have a dedicated Bluetooth dongle.

[If you are looking to purchase a high-end headset, it is HIGHLY recommended that you choose one supporting LE Audio. You can read more about this here.](#)

Win11 25H2 will be ready soon

Microsoft has released a new preview of 25H2 that is also being made available to commercial users, but it appears that this will not be a huge release, and it is thus important not to delay any rollouts of Windows 11 to replace Windows 10 that is coming out of support.

You can read more about the [Preview of 25H2 here](#).

[It is VERY important that you continue with upgrading your computers to Windows 11, but if you are having challenges, please contact your First Technology Group account manager for assistance, as October is approaching, and we do have resources that might be able to help!](#)

Security

The Passwords most likely to get you hacked

Even though we are migrating to new forms of authentication, passwords aren't going away, just think of how many services you log into that still depend on JUST a password! Even Google has warned that [billions of email accounts are vulnerable](#) after a massive data breach as a result of a phishing attack (a human got tricked).

A study has just been released that talks about the most commonly used passwords. [Please read it and change your passwords](#) if you recognise you are part of the vulnerable group.

As a company, you should have already implemented MFA and additionally take measures to protect yourself from the new, [dangerous MFA relay attack \(see the BUI Blog below\)](#).

However, making sure everybody continues to apply common sense to strong passwords is something you should not forget.

[Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists, who can help ensure your MFA implementation is resilient to these MFA](#)

Relay attacks.

Beware of Fake PDF editors - they are NASTY!!

Please be extremely cautious of free PDF editors - multiple advertising campaigns are running that encourage you to download a trojanised app. What is particularly sneaky is that it waits for 56 days before activating and then starts causing havoc on your computer, and is even more damaging if it is your work computer. You can [read more about these attacks here](#).

This is a reminder that the weakest link is the human being who gets tricked into doing something they should not have done (and deeply regret).

It is crucial to ensure that your users receive regular training updates on how to identify scams or tricks, which are becoming increasingly convincing due to the advancement of AI.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss the available training courses that can help keep your users up to date with the latest security threats and best practices.

Cloud & AI

CoPilot is learning new tricks

Microsoft is introducing several new features to its AI assistant, including the ability to create documents with prompts, an enhanced OneDrive browsing experience, the removal of 50 CoPilot Dashboard license restrictions, and the capability to reference a Loop or Page when creating a PowerPoint presentation. For more information, [please read here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI specialists to start planning how to deploy AI in your environment, beginning with categorising and securing your data, arranging workshops to show how AI can support your users to be more efficient and also to see where Sovereign AI can be implemented on your data to further empower your users or drive a better customer experience.

Microsoft launches its own AI Models

Microsoft has just announced two of its own models developed separately from OpenAI, and are slated to roll out for certain use cases in CoPilot in the coming weeks. [You can read more here](#). Microsoft has always been a very good follower of technology, and when it comes to AI, it is a fast follower, meaning that CoPilot is becoming more robust and smarter every week. It is also the only AI that is part of Microsoft's zero trust architecture that can be securely integrated with a company's data.

It is very important to explore these new AI's and what can be done with CoPilot and in Azure. Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI specialists, who were the first company in South Africa to receive Microsoft's advanced Specialisation for building AI Apps on Azure (announced in [TOP STORIES #118](#))

What's up at FTG

FirstMarketplace.com has launched

Companies spend on average more than \$4500 per employee per year on SaaS.

You can be efficient and spend less!

Added this week: Darktrace and more -[read here](#) for the complete list of additions and who to contact for support.

Check with your account manager to see if you can get a better deal!

We are adding new products every day - [check with us](#) before you procure ANYTHING!

- **SIX routes to market** (Azure, AWS, Huawei, private offers, local aggregation and more) – utilising a central catalogue.
- **Procurement in any Geo**, in any currency.
- **For South Africa, Rand-based invoicing**, BEE credits.
- **Zero credit card drama** means finance signs off in minutes, not months.
- **Always-on price intelligence** auto checks your existing cloud commitments and applies the best deal – we'll even work to beat your current quote.
- **Hard to find title sourcing specialists** hunt them down to your exact requirements while you get on with what's really important in your day.

Why wrestle with the how, where and when of software procurement, when **First Marketplace does it all?**

Book a 5-minute meeting with your **First Technology Group Account Manager** and watch “advanced” procurement become effortless.

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 Group 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!

The END of free Microsoft Support

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 Group 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 Group 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.

BUI blog - MFA Relay attacks - how they work

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted a very important video explaining how an MFA relay attack works and how to protect yourself.

You can **watch Video #11 here**.

Please contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our security specialists to help implement ways that are best suited for your company to protect against these attacks that are going to become increasingly common.

Need Branded Gifts?

Sometimes it is a mission for companies to find year-end gifts for their clients.

You need to find some decent and relevant gifts, have them branded with your company logo,

ensure that you are not getting ripped off, place the order, and hope to receive them in time for year-end in packaging that matches your expectations, as seen in the mockups.

So, if you are looking for gifts and for people who do this all day to do the heavy lifting, you can go here: <https://impactgifts.co.za/> and look through some options, and of course, you can also call the [Gifting Hub](#) to discuss your requirements.

You can also contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with the "Gifting Experts" to help come up with the perfect gift for your clients!

Movies

It seems that many email scanning systems have decided that a certain South African movie being released this weekend is a big No-No and blocked you from receiving TOP STORIES! Unfortunately, September does not have any major blockbusters lined up, but there is the 50th Anniversary screening of Jaws.....

Now Playing: [The Roses](#)

Now Playing: [Caught Stealing](#)

Now Playing: Jaws 50th Anniversary - [watch the documentary here](#) .

Now Playing: [Afterburn](#)

Now Playing: [My \(can't use this word\) Marelize](#)

5 September: [Disney Junior Cinema Club](#) - not much information - yet!

5 September: [The Stolen Girl](#)

5 September: [Conjuring: The Last Rights](#)

5 September: [Red Sonja](#) - Critical Drinker has some [interesting things to say about it!](#)

12 September: [Demon Slayer: Infinity Castle](#)

12 September: [Code 3](#)

12 September: [Downtown Abbey: The grand Finale](#)

12 September: [The Long Walk](#)

19 September: [Chickenhare & the secret of the Groundhog](#)

19 September: [Threesome](#)

26 September: [The Strangers: Chapter 2](#)

26 September: [Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie](#)

26 September: [One Battle after Another](#)

26 September: [The Dead of Winter](#)

26 September: [Carissa](#)

26 September: [Loved Out](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

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