

# .top\_stories

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## 15<sup>th</sup> June #171

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### 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.
  - **Another 3 New vendors** mimecast, Commvault and Sophos are added.
  - **Microsoft EoL section Updated for April 2027** - all about modernisation!
  - **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #171**- No rest for the wicked..
  - **Microsoft Promotions** - now with it's own home page
  - **Microsoft Support** - Time to look at options and HELP to not fall off the cliff.
  - **Agent 365 Licensing guide** - Settle down for a long read!.
  - **Windows Agent 365 GA** - Agent 365 is a BIG deal.
  - **The biggest and best update of 2026**- and it's even from Microsoft!
  - **Microsoft REALLY REALLY wants you to switch to the new Outlook**- Yes, REALLY!
  - **You have a hotel reservation?** - If you REALLY have one, be extra careful.
  - **Blocked by Government Order** - Fable 5 and Mythos 5 taken offline.
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## Microsoft Modernisation April 2026-2027

Microsoft Modernisation strategy has been updated. This addresses key EoL dates, price increases and updates up to 1 April 2027

## DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #171

We scan the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks. Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but actually updated continuously). This is part of the DarkWeb monitoring services included with many of BUI's managed services offerings. **This report is live, and this is a "snapshot" of the top 10 events as of Sunday Afternoon.**

## TOP STORIES #170

Click button above for last weeks news.

## Visit FirstMarketPLace Link here for New Additions

**mimecast, Commvault and Sophos** have been added for this week. See below for LinkedIn [Try out our AI](#) to see whats been added since launch.

### Our LinkedIn

## Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa. **June is a big month. Toy Story 5 is screening next week and Disclosure Day is Currently Screening with a big opening weekend.** Masters of the Universe unfortunately still bombed. **Backrooms** has done extremely well, if you like getting scared, go watch it!

## TOP STORIES ARCHIVE

Register with the link above and get access to the entire TOP STORIES Archive with an AI to help you find what you want. You can also find all the vendors added to FirstMarketPlace and get a whole lot of detail about them! It's in Beta so it could make mistakes.

Request Account Manager

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STORIES

## Microsoft New Promotions

There are going to be MANY promotions coming, so these have been moved to their own home page.

## Microsoft News This Week



### The Support Cliff

Directions on Microsoft has published a **VERY important article (link below)** on a cost that many customers may not be modelling properly in their Microsoft agreements:

### Microsoft Unified Support.

The obvious cliff is the increase in licensing prices.

As Microsoft licensing and Azure spend rise, the Appraised Product Spend baseline used for Unified Support can rise at the next calculation point. That means the support cost can increase even where the estate, user count and support

experience have not materially changed

Same environment. Same people. Bigger support bill.  
That is a difficult outcome to defend commercially.

The key point is that the EA renewal and the Unified Support renewal should not be treated as separate conversations.

Directions notes that Microsoft's November 2025 pricing changes created a visible "financial cliff", but also a hidden and compounding "Unified Support Cliff".

Azure capacity pressure adds another problem, because Azure cost increases can also flow into the same support calculation.

The old playbook was simple enough: renew the EA, argue a bit about support, accept that Microsoft support is expensive, and move on.

**That playbook is now out of date.** Directions recommends a living support strategy, integrated negotiation across EA and MACC, and a proper evaluation of alternatives - not as a bluff, but as a real commercial exercise.

That includes staying with Microsoft and negotiating harder, using a hybrid model, using CSP-led support, moving selected workloads to third-party support, **or using a concierge model to manage the existing Microsoft support agreement better.**

### The First Technology Group & Directions on Microsoft Partnership

This is where the FTG/Directions partnership becomes particularly relevant.

**Navigator First** combines Directions on Microsoft's independent licensing, roadmap and negotiation expertise with First Technology Group's Microsoft engineering, operations, managed services and support capabilities, creating a more joined-up way to plan, negotiate, deploy, operate and optimise Microsoft investments.

### In Plain English:

- **Directions helps you understand what you should be buying and negotiating.**

- **FTG helps you deploy it, support it, run it and optimise it and helps Directions understand your situation to give you even better advice.**

Customers need more than analysis alone.

They need someone to help manage the chaos after the renewal is signed.

**Navigator First** is positioned as one accountable partner across the holistic Microsoft lifecycle:

- **Plan**
- **Deploy**
- **Run**
- **Optimise, including licensing and contract optimisation, secure deployment, 24x7 managed services, concierge support, governance and reporting.**

This also lines up with what we have already been saying in **TOP STORIES** for the last few weeks.

**FTG's Universal Support positioning is built around predictable, customised support, deep Microsoft skills, multi-vendor capability, and escalation into Microsoft where required - without the customer feeling that their support contract is just another route for Microsoft to sell them more.**

**Support is no longer just a line item, it is becoming a compounding expense that needs its own strategy.**

The important conversation with customers is no longer "do you have Microsoft support?" It is: "is your support agreement still commercially and operationally fit for purpose?"

**Speak to your First Technology Group account manager about a Navigator First discussion before the renewal clock runs down.**

**Most importantly, ask about the Concierge Service to improve how a current agreement is used, governed and escalated.**

## **Directions on Microsoft: Time to update your Unified Support Playbook**

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### **Microsoft Agent 365 Licensing Guide May 2026**

Since Agent 365 is now officially Generally Available, I felt it would be useful to leave this article in as a reference to support the official announcement in the next headline

Microsoft has published a new Agent 365 Licensing Guide for May 2026, complete with the usual licensing placemats that try to explain what you already get with a Microsoft cloud subscription, and what needs the full Agent 365 licence.

This guide is "customer facing" so if you cannot download it, please contact your First Technology account manager to assist.

Microsoft's view is that every agent has a human boss. The licence is assigned to a user, not to the agent, because the agent is either acting on behalf of a person, or has a human sponsor or manager watching over it.

Agent 365 is priced at \$15 per user per month, or included as part of Microsoft 365 E7. Importantly, it does not give the agent its own mailbox, OneDrive, Teams, Word, Excel, or other productivity rights.

That is of course a separate licensing discussion.

The real value is not the licence itself. It is observability, governance and security for agents. That includes agent registry, usage insights, agent mapping, lifecycle controls, tool controls, policy templates, data loss prevention, insider risk management, threat detection, and control of unsanctioned local agents.

As AI agents start crawling around your business, you need to know what they are, who owns them, what data they can touch, and how to stop them before they do something expensive,

stupid, or both.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft licensing, security and Copilot specialists to help work out what you already have, what you actually need, and where Agent 365 or Microsoft 365 E7 may make sense.

## Agent 365 Licensing guide

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### Windows Agent 365 Generally available

When Agent 365 first appeared, licensing looked fairly painless. That was not to be.

From 1 June 2026, Microsoft has added licence prerequisites for new Agent 365 purchases.

Enterprise customers need Microsoft 365 E5, Frontline Worker users need Microsoft Defender and Purview at F5 level, and....

SMB customers need Microsoft 365 Business Premium.

Microsoft 365 E7 customers are already covered, because E7 includes E5, Agent 365, Microsoft 365 Copilot and Entra Suite.

This makes sense, even if it does feel very Microsoft. If agents are going to do real work, access systems, use company data and act on behalf of users, then security, identity, compliance and management cannot be an afterthought.

Microsoft has also made Windows 365 for Agents generally available. This gives agents access to managed Cloud PCs when they need a Windows desktop to complete tasks, with access and permissions managed through Agent 365.

That is important because not every business process lives neatly behind an API. Some systems still need something to log in, click buttons, complete forms, copy information and deal with legacy applications that should probably have retired years ago, but didn't get the memo.

From a cost perspective, Microsoft offers On-Demand Cloud PCs for agent workloads at \$0.40 per hour in the US geography, billed on actual runtime and rounded up to the next full hour. For agents that need instant availability, Always Available Cloud PCs cost \$5 per Cloud PC per month, plus the same pay-as-you-go usage. Pricing varies by geography, so check local pricing before quoting.

**The key message: Agent 365 is moving from clever demo to operating model.**

**Licensing, security, compliance, Intune, Entra, Purview, Defender and cost control now need to be part of the discussion before the agents start doing actual work.**

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft licensing and Modern Work specialists to map the path forward, in particular planning to prepare for implement agents to do real work

**GA for Windows 365 Agents**

**Prerequisites for licensing Agent 365**

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### Microsoft dropped the Biggest (and best) update of 2026

Microsoft's June Patch Tuesday update for Windows 11 brings more than the usual security fixes.

The biggest update is the **Low Latency Profile**, which gives Windows a short CPU boost when opening things like Start, Search, Quick Settings and Notifications. In plain English, Windows should feel a bit snappier, especially on lower-end machines.

**There is also Multi-App Camera**, which allows more than one app to use the same camera at the same time. Useful if you are in Teams or Zoom and another app also needs the camera. A new Basic Camera Mode should also help troubleshoot whether camera issues are hardware, driver, or “Windows being Windows”.

**Task Manager now shows NPU usage per process**, which is useful for Copilot+ PCs and AI workloads.

At least now we can see which app is actually using the shiny AI chip we were told we needed!

Other smaller improvements include better Windows Search, Shared Audio for two Bluetooth LE Audio devices (comes with conditions), Windows Hello fixes, and the option to choose a custom user folder name during setup.

**The important bit:** Microsoft is also preparing for Secure Boot certificate expiry, which starts becoming a real issue from June 2026.

**BUT... don't rush this update straight into production.** There are early reports of boot failures, BitLocker recovery loops and device-specific issues, so test it properly first. Patch rings exist for exactly this reason!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to help ensure that this update is carefully tested and rolled out as soon as you are happy it is stable. The Low Latency Profile REALLY make a difference to old machines suffering along on 16Gig!

## Biggest Patch Tuesday of the Year

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### Microsoft REALLY REALLY wants you to switch to the "New Outlook"

Microsoft is continuing its long (uphill) march from Classic Outlook to the new Outlook, and this latest batch of updates may finally remove some of the sharper thorns.

The new Outlook is getting an All Accounts/Unified Inbox view, so users with multiple mailboxes can see mail in one place without hopping around like a caffeinated meerkat!

Microsoft is also adding stronger Mail Merge, better .PST support, favourite folder improvements, unread count controls and calendar tweaks.

The .PST story is particularly important for customers still carrying years of Outlook history around like digital luggage from 2007.

Microsoft's latest release notes say PST import now supports all item types, including calendar events, contacts and tasks. This is a big one!

**BUT.....this is not a reason to blindly switch everybody tomorrow. Microsoft's own migration guidance still describes a staged move from opt-in, to opt-out, to eventual cutover, with Classic Outlook supported until at least 2029.**

So yes, new Outlook is improving. No, it is not time to panic.

It is time to test your add-ins, shared mailboxes, offline requirements, PST processes and power-user workflows.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft specialists to help plan the move properly — before Microsoft plans it for you.

## Major new Outlook Update

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# Security



## Now Phishing Attacks Use Real Hotel Reservations to Target Travellers

This one is particularly nasty because the scam does not start with a random “Dear Customer” email written by someone who thinks spelling is an optional service.

**According to KnowBe4, scammers are using real hotel reservation details to target travellers with very convincing phishing messages.** The emails or messages appear to come from hotel staff and refer to a booking the victim has actually made. That makes the message feel legitimate, because the attacker already knows details such as the guest name, arrival date or booking information.

**Researchers at Norton say the campaign has targeted customers of at least 350 hotels and holiday rentals across 50 countries.**

The message typically asks the traveller to “verify” their information or payment details. The link then takes them to a fake hotel or booking page designed to steal credit card details. The worrying bit is that the attacker may have obtained the booking information from compromised hotel systems, third-party booking services, or by first phishing the hotel staff themselves.

**The lesson is simple..... just because an email contains information that only the hotel “should” know, does not mean it is safe. If you receive a payment verification request, booking confirmation problem, or urgent hotel message, do not click the link. Go directly to the hotel or booking platform website, use the official app, or phone the hotel using a number you verified yourself.**

This is a very good reminder for customers that phishing is moving beyond badly written emails and into context-aware social engineering. The bad guys are no longer guessing, they may already know enough to make the scam feel real.

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security and training specialists. Your users need to be trained for the scams that are coming, not just the phishing emails they learnt to spot five years ago.**

**Phishing attacks using your REAL hotel reservation**

## Cloud & AI

### Claude Fable 5, Mythos 5 blocked by government order - new risk factor

Anthropic has blocked public access to Claude Fable 5 and Mythos 5 after a US government



order, reportedly linked to security concerns around the models.

The important point for customers is not just “what happened to Claude?”..... it is that AI services can now be disrupted by regulation, geopolitics, security reviews or vendor decisions, almost overnight.

If your business is building workflows around one AI model, one vendor, or one cloud AI

platform, you may be creating a new single point of failure.

**Enterprises should start planning for AI resilience now..... model choice, fallback options, governance, data protection and clear rules on what business processes are allowed to depend on AI.**

The shiny AI thing is exciting..... until it gets switched off.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI and governance specialists to assist you with ensuring that you are spreading your risk across multiple models - a strategy which Microsoft is appearing to follow, but it still remains an American company.

**Anthropic blocks Fable 5 and Mythos 5 access**

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