

## TOP STORIES #99

2025 is underway, with many Microsoft updates and announcements. CES is behind us, but ISE is about to happen and is going to be [20% bigger than last year](#). You can read the [ISE Show Preview magazine here](#), and of course, there is much talking about [AI at Davos](#).

Last week's [TOP STORIES #98 can be found here](#)

If you would like to invite colleagues to join, [they can click here](#).

## Hardware

### Seagate announces a 36TB HDD and 60TB by 2030

When I started in IT, I was very proud to have acquired a HDD with a HUGE amount of storage - a [10Mb RODIME](#) - it was a 5¼" full height unit (a 10Mb HDD cost around \$3400 in the 1980's). Rodime was a special company (now a relic of history) - they invented the 3.5" HDD form factor, which is still the de-facto standard today.

It is mind-blowing to think that in 2025, you will be able to buy a 36TB HDD, and [SSDs are already available at even higher capacities](#) but at insane pricing.

Only 10 years ago, the biggest HDDs that were around were about 6-10TB

You can read more about this [new HDD from Seagate and their roadmap to 2030 here](#).

## Microsoft

### Licensing updates and notices

Microsoft has issued many notices to kick off the new year to drive revenue for Q3, so I have collected them all under one heading. If licensing is important to you or your business, please review this carefully!

#### M365 Plan Comparison for January 2025

The Microsoft Plan comparison guide for January 2025 [can be downloaded here](#).

The [plans and pricing home page](#) has also been updated and is more useful.

There are few updates, but Loop has been updated, and Viva Goals has been removed ([it's being retired](#)). This has also resulted in Microsoft updating the [Viva feature comparison table](#).

**With the price increases and changes in what is available in different plans, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing specialists to review your bill of materials and to see if the licenses you are buying and assigning are fit for purpose.**

#### M365 CoPilot Chat

Microsoft has added enhancements to CoPilot for users with an Entra account, triggering a change in the name to M365 CoPilot Chat. The biggest news is the use of agents in the chat experience, which is paid for on a consumption basis. The Microsoft announcement [is here](#), and [how the consumption works is here](#).

#### Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide January 2025

This is the first update for 2025, with only a few minor updates, particularly to the tables on Pages 40 and 41. You can [download the guide here](#).

Dynamics licensing is complicated, so it is important to review your consumption regularly and ensure that you are not accidentally duplicating or over-licensing your users.

**Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Dynamics experts to review your licensing exposure.**

#### End of the public preview for Loop

To create a Loop Workspace or add or remove members, you now need a Business, Standard, Premium, or E3/E5/A3/A5 licence.

You can read up on the details, [along with the licensing, here](#).

## GitHub Copilot Free

Microsoft is introducing a free version of GitHub Copilot for those interested in trying the service. This free version, GitHub Copilot Free, allows for up to 50 messages and interactions and 2,000 real-time code suggestions monthly. If you need more usage, you can upgrade to the Pro version, which costs \$10 per month.

The announcement from Microsoft can be [found here](#).

You can find a [feature comparison table here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Licensing specialists. These specialists can also include our developers, who use these tools and advise on the most appropriate licensing for you.

## Using Azure Reserved Instances to save money

Reserved instances are a great way to save money in Azure, but there are a few things you need to think about before you jump in.

This is a recurring theme, and if you have been following TOP STORIES, you will notice that this is not the 1st time I'm referring to this. **This is a very important way of saving money in Azure.**

Microsoft has published a [useful article here](#), but I strongly advise contacting your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Azure experts, who have the highest certifications in the country to help you get the most bang for your buck!

## Office Word Feature removed.

Along with the price increase announced for M365, Microsoft has decided, in its corporate wisdom, to remove some useful features because it is now bundling AI features in all the components. You may have noticed that Smart Lookup is no longer working. This is irritating quite a few users worldwide, as they now have to use CoPilot or a third-party tool. You can [read more about this here](#).

## Win11 24H2 ready for General Deployment

Microsoft is now deploying 24H2 to all computers eligible for Windows 11. Although 24H2 had a very rocky start, most of the major problems have been solved with patches, and finally, it seems stable for corporate use. You can read [more about this here](#).

With Windows 10 approaching the end of support and Win11 24H2 stable enough, it is time to "pull the trigger" and start upgrading.

You are really running out of time!

Please contact your First Technology account manager for assistance in connecting you with the relevant specialists to get this project underway. This includes conducting a careful inventory, upgrading the machines, deploying Windows 11, and training the users on what has changed.

## Security

### Phishing is No.1 threat for Smartphone users

This is one of the most common attacks on Smartphone users. It can happen easier because your guard is lowered. You have been trained repeatedly to be careful what you receive on your computer, but you "forget" that you are probably more vulnerable on your mobile device, as anti-phishing protection is not as good as what is implemented on your work devices. You need to train your users to be aware of what they are receiving on their mobile devices as well. You can [read more about this here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with our security experts and arrange this type of user awareness training.

## Cloud & AI

### Which AI to use now?

AI models are changing daily, and new ones are being added, like [DeepSeek](#). Nothing is well documented or well understood, and the naming conventions are terrible.

To pick an AI model, you need to know what they can and can't do. If you want to access a leading AI model consistently, you must pay for it. The top three models are Claude, Gemini and ChatGPT (CoPilot offers many of the features of ChatGPT, so you can view CoPilot as similar to ChatGPT, well....sort of).

Many of you will hopefully be getting access to CoPilot as part of your company's licensing. If you don't have access, you could request it. The sooner you start playing with

AI, the better. Don't wait for the ultimate AI; Jump in and start playing NOW!  
You can [read a detailed guide here](#) that includes a table summarising the capabilities of each of the main AI systems available today.

Please talk to your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our AI specialists to discuss the options for starting to use AI in your environment, preparing it to ensure data security, and also training users to accelerate their adoption.

## What's up at FTG

### Cloud Backup for Microsoft 365 powered by First Technology Group

Join us for a Webinar on a 365 Cloud Backup service tailored to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes. This service provides a reliable and scalable solution for data protection.

It leverages advanced encryption and access controls to safeguard sensitive information, ensuring data integrity and confidentiality. Additionally, the service includes automated backups, helping organisations comply with industry regulations and standards.

**When:** 6 Feb at 10:00am - 10:45am

**Where:** Online Webinar

[Register Here](#).

### 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

This is an extremely diverse selection of titles, there is something for everybody!

Now Playing: [A Real Pain](#)

Now Playing: [The Day the Earth Blew Up: A looney Tunes Movie](#)

Now Playing: [Marked Men: Rule & Shaw](#)

Now Playing: [SE7EN](#) (Re-Release)

Now Playing: [Better Man](#)

31 January: [Flight Risk](#) (This one looks to be good and short - 90mins - audiences are liking it)

31 January: [Anora](#)

31 January: [Companion](#)

31 January: [Maria](#)

### Movies for 2025

There is a great lineup for 2025 - [IMDB has updated the schedule](#).

The first big release for the year is Captain America.



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