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9th March #157

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** PDQ, Parallels and Nagios are added.
- **Microsoft EoL section Updated for January 2027**
- **Microsoft M365 E7 it's COMING! What does it mean?**
- **ESU's announced for Old OS's**- Old operating systems get life support
- **Fabric Capacity Autobill opt-in** - Careful of Auto-Shock!
- **PowerPoint gets an Image editor** - Now you do not need to leave the App!
- **"New Outlook" rollout delayed** - Delayed but still inevitable!
- **Microsoft Adds File-level restore** - M365 Backup gets more granular
- **Careful of your AI apps on your phone!** - Yes, even your iPhone
- **Apple Releases the Neo** - Not good news if you a Microsoft OEM!

Microsoft End of Life to
January 2027

Intel's Panther Lake For
Microsoft CoPilot+ PC's

TOP STORIES #156

Summary of what to know up to January 2027.

Click above for the highlights. The detailed PDF to download is at the bottom.

P.S. we DID warn you about EWS retirement.....

DRAM prices have already tripled.

The shortages are REAL!

MORE price increases MARCH.

Quotes only valid for 14 Days!!!

Click button above for last weeks news.

Lenovo urges for Orders ASAP

Visit FirstMarketPLace

PDQ, Parallels & Nagios have been added for this week.

See below for LinkedIn

Our LinkedIn

Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa. "Hoppers" is now screening. Next big movie for 2026 is "Hail Mary" and now a new one: The Magic Faraway Tree

Upcoming Shows

Review what happened at CES and see links for NAMM 2026 ISE has wrapped, it was big, and even Microsoft was there with Teams!

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Microsoft News This Week

M365 E7 from Microsoft Incoming!!

Directions on Microsoft has published news about a new \$99 p/m SKU that is probably going to be released in the near future.

Commentary about this can be found across many publications. **If you are in any way involved with AI at your company and/or in any negotiations with Microsoft regarding licensing agreements, I URGE you to read the two documents published by Directions.**

Below is some additional opinion and commentary that may be useful to ponder.

Driving more investment amid sluggish adoption

Microsoft has poured billions (and more billions) into AI infrastructure, but standalone M365 Copilot adoption remains sluggish (reportedly hovering around just 3.3% of its 450 million commercial users). To drive a return on investment, the rumoured E7 "Super SKU" (expected to cost around \$99 per user/month) potentially bundles E5, Copilot, and a new "Agent 365" governance hub. It shifts the paradigm from licensing humans to licensing digital workers, requiring AI agents to have their own Entra IDs, inboxes, and compliance policies.

This potentially drastically increases IT budgets, especially as leaks suggest Microsoft may introduce a hybrid model combining flat per-seat fees with Azure-style, unpredictable consumption based metering for AI workloads.

The Google Lockout

This is a strategic move designed to "box out" competitors like Google Workspace. While Google is aggressively integrating Gemini AI directly into its baseline subscriptions to make AI highly accessible, Microsoft is appearing through this new SKU (as yet still a "rumour") to monopolise the enterprise AI operating environment.

By goading organisations to use Agent 365 and Entra ID to secure, grant permissions to, and govern all AI agents, Microsoft is building a deep architectural moat.

This entrenches companies deeper into the Microsoft ecosystem, making it incredibly difficult and costly to securely plug Google Gemini or third-party AI models into enterprise workflows.

How big is this bet?

Sticker Shock: Jumping to nearly \$100 a month per user is a massive financial hurdle, particularly as baseline M365 E3 and E5 prices are already scheduled for general hikes in July 2026.

Microsoft risks customer fatigue, alienation, and hardball negotiations during Enterprise Agreement (EA) renewals.

Having an EXPERT partner to support you in these renewals is now critical.

The "Shelfware" Problem: Enterprises are still struggling to prove the day-to-day ROI of standard M365 E5 let alone Copilot features.

Driving customers to buy an ultra-premium bundle to manage autonomous AI agents before the technology is fully mature could lead to massive resentment from ending up with "shelfware" (paying for software that provides no value).

Driving Customers to Custom Alternatives: By taxing "micro-agent" architectures with high per-seat governance fees, Microsoft might unintentionally drive price-sensitive enterprises to build custom, open-source AI infrastructures using raw compute rather than buying into the pre-packaged M365 ecosystem.

Will Microsoft Pull this Off?

Despite these significant risks and the undeniable sticker shock, Microsoft is uniquely positioned to succeed with this strategy.

Enterprises are already so deeply entrenched in the Microsoft ecosystem that many are realising Copilot, anchored by the Microsoft Graph and Purview—is the only enterprise AI solution integrated deeply enough to enforce the strict data governance, sensitivity labels, and security guardrails required for autonomous AI without massive data leakage risks.

To execute this shift, Microsoft is likely to adopt a playbook reminiscent of Broadcom's recent, highly lucrative strategy with VMware: bypassing broad market resistance (and its partner channel) by directly engaging and heavily pressuring its top (let's say) 2,000 global enterprise customers through high-touch, customised Enterprise Agreement negotiations (and we are already seeing evidence of these agreements).

By driving the world's largest, most heavily regulated organisations to adopt E7, Microsoft can cement this high-premium, agent-centric architecture as the inescapable industry standard, validating their massive AI gamble regardless of potential mid-market pushback.

Through this entire process, ensuring that you know exactly what value (or not) you are getting from the Microsoft suites you are already paying for, along with a support contract that ensures problems are quickly resolved, and new capabilities you are already paying for are implemented is absolutely essential.

AI is inevitable, and securing and preparing your environment for its deployment is clearly not an option anymore.

Now that you have read all this, please re-read the Directions publications, as I regard them the "Gold Standard" for predicting what Microsoft is going to do, and another read-through will help ponder how to deal with an AI-infused future!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Universal Support specialists to ensure that you get the necessary advice and support to plan what support ecosystem you need to ensure you can adopt what comes your way, even if what Microsoft is offering is too rich - there are always alternatives.

Microsoft announces ESU's for products released in 2016

Microsoft has confirmed that three products from 2016 have had their lives extended, with Security Updates available for up to three years.

Windows 10 Enterprise LTSB 2016 and Windows 10 IoT Enterprise LTSB 2016 both reach end of support on 13 October 2026, while Windows Server 2016 follows on 12 January 2027.

ESUs for Windows 10 Enterprise LTSB 2016 will be sold through Volume Licensing and CSP, while the IoT edition will only be available through IoT OEMs.

Microsoft has not yet released full pricing and availability for Windows Server 2016, but the current details, including some pricing, are already on the Windows IT Pro Blog.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Licensing specialists to assist with quoting on these ESU SKU's. Assistance can also be provided for obtaining ESU SKU's for the IoT editions as well](#)

Microsoft IT Pro ESU Blog

Fabric Capacity AutoBill Opt-in

Microsoft is adding Fabric Capacity Overage as an opt-in feature in Microsoft Fabric, giving admins a way to keep critical workloads running by billing excess usage on a Pay-As-You-Go basis instead of throttling operations. That means there is now another option beyond surge protection, resizing, or simply buying more dedicated capacity, especially when those still leave you exposed to slowdowns or rejected jobs. Microsoft has also said the Capacity Metrics app will be updated to show when overage billing kicks in, where charges are incurred, when limits are being approached, and when throttling is still in effect, making it easier to track spend, tune capacity, and protect business continuity.

The feature is currently scheduled for public preview in Q1 2026.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Fabric Specialists to help ensure that you are safely implementing this option to prevent an outage when you can least afford it, but also not end up with runaway bills!](#)

Microsoft Fabric Roadmap

Microsoft Adds Image Editor to PowerPoint

PowerPoint now has a powerful image editor allowing quick edits without having to switch to 3rd party apps. The rollout is gradual so you may not see this new editing capability immediately.

[Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our Office Specialists to assist with ensuring this feature is rolled out.](#)

PowerPoint gets Image Editor

Microsoft Delays the Rollout of the "New Outlook"

Enterprise users will no longer be automatically updated to the new Outlook next month as Microsoft planned. Instead, the company has decided to delay the rollout by a year so users will have longer with Outlook classic if they want.

Microsoft has very good reasons to want the "Classic Outlook" to die, but unfortunately, the New Outlook is not even close to being able to replace the old one in almost every respect. The New Outlook is inevitable, so you DO need to prepare.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our Outlook and Exchange Specialists to assist with preparing for the new Outlook to replace the one you have grown up with.

New Outlook Delayed

Microsoft Backup adds file-level restore

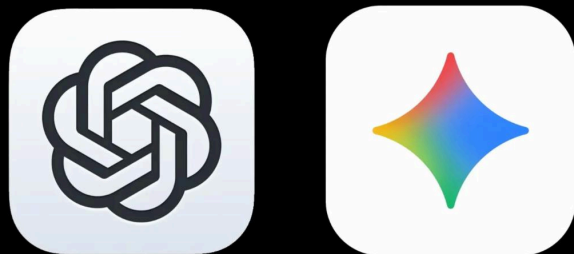
Microsoft will soon begin rolling out a significant upgrade to Microsoft 365 Backup to speed up recovery by allowing administrators to restore individual files and folders.

The feature is only expected to roll out worldwide early May.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our backup specialists to assist with implementing this new feature or to evaluate alternatives that may be more suitable for your environment.

M365 Backup gets File Level Recovery

Security



Fake ChatGPT and Gemini iOS Apps

Phishing Emails Push Fake ChatGPT and Gemini iOS Apps

A sophisticated phishing campaign is targeting iPhone users by impersonating two of the world's most trusted AI brands — OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini. What makes this operation stand out is that the malicious apps are not disguised

as random utilities — they are wrapped in the credibility of well-known AI platforms that millions of professionals interact with every day which then proceeds to harvest your facebook login information.

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our training specialists to help ensure everybody is kept up to date to on how handle the latest trickery. It is important to learn that you are even more vulnerable on your mobile device than what you are on your computer. You can NEVER let your guard down.

Fake GPT and Gemini Phishing Apps.

ChatGPT 5.4 comes with Excel Skills

For this update, OpenAI focused on professional productivity tasks like spreadsheets, presentations and documents, and we're seeing considerable improvements across the board. Per the spreadsheet modelling benchmark cited by OpenAI, GPT-5.4 scores 87% compared with 68% for GPT-5.2, a model that came out not that long ago.

GPT 5.4 gets Excel Smarts

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI Specialists who can assist you in implementing AI solutions such as this new iteration of GPT 5.4 securely in your business, noting that you will probably see it released by Microsoft in the near future.



Apple Releases a nightmare for Microsoft OEMs

Apple is directly targeting customers who want to move to what Apple is pitching as a better system at better value. Apple claims the Neo to 50% faster with web browsing than a best selling Windows PC. Apple is also pointing out that you can run your Office apps very efficiently on this MacBook. There are catches - the Office Apps are not as feature rich and

though it is easy to move to MAC, to move back is considerably more difficult, so as amazing as this new computer may appear, you need to think really carefully about this.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help explore all the different form factors and configurations of notebooks going forward, and to VERY CAREFULLY evaluate the value proposition of what Apple has released, which IS getting very good reviews.

Apple Neo Nightmare

Apple Promotes Office on Neo

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