

TOP STORIES #129

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 - it was making TOP STORIES too long to read through.

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 #128 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](#).

This week is a slow week, but it will start to heat up as we get into September and the Northern Hemisphere's summer holidays come to an end.

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.

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Don't Forget

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](#)

Hardware

Real-time translation is almost a reality

This feature has been demonstrated on a call between two Google Pixel phones. This is evidence that very soon we will see almost latency-free real-time translation operating seamlessly in the background. This has the potential to change the world in ways that are hard to imagine - it is really like science fiction becoming reality. You can [read more about this new Google technology here](#).

Maybe it's time to pay more attention to the role of the [Babel-Fish](#) in the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy?

Microsoft

Excel gets a new COPILOT function.

The new COPILOT function allows you to use natural language prompts inside your spreadsheet. This can become a very useful function! It is still in beta and has some limitations but this could grow into a very powerful part of how you include data dynamically from other sources accessed by CoPilot. You can [read more about this function here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager who can connect you with our AI experts to explore how you could be making use of the function in the near future.](#)

Security

HR Phishing tactics are on the rise

Knowbe4 has published news that HR phishing attacks are increasing in four different ways:

- A quishing payload allows it to bypass normal detection and to move the attack to a vulnerable device like the user's mobile phone
- HR policy update with an urgent (fake) response deadline
- A revenue services-related reporting deadline customised for your country's revenue service
- Financial documentation and contract update requiring you to click on a link to update your personal information and agree to new terms, failing to do so could result in delays of some sort.

Never underestimate the extent to which the attackers can customise the attack for YOUR company!

[You can read more about the attack here.](#)

[This is yet again a reminder that the user \(the person thinking that they might not get paid\) is the weakest link, and it is so important to ensure that your users are up to date with training that helps them spot these attempts to trick them. PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to arrange for the appropriate training for your users.](#)

Hackers using ADFS redirect to steal logins

This is especially nasty as it bypasses traditional URL-based detection, redirecting users from legitimate office.com links to a phishing page. Protecting from this attack takes a bit of work, which you can [read up on here](#).

This also relates to the especially nasty **MFA relay attack**, which you can [watch the \(short\) video about here](#).

These attacks are quite sophisticated, and companies ARE getting attacked worldwide (SA is not excluded), so [PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help ensure you are protected from these attacks.](#)

Malicious URLs and phishing scams remain a constant threat

Phishing emails remain the most pervasive way of compromising a company because it allows the bad guy to interact with the weakest link - the user. As much as it is necessary to have a multilayered approach to protecting a company, as always, it comes down to helping the user be as alert as possible to the newest ways of getting tricked.

[The latest trends are discussed here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help you with the training specifically focused on empowering users to be alert to how their trust is being undermined to facilitate these attacks.](#)

Cloud & AI

GPT-6 on the way after all

So we are not going from GPT-5 to AGI instead, we are going to get GPT-6, soon!

GPT-5's launch did not go as well as Open-AI was hoping, and though GPT-5 is better, it was a huge leap, and it took a bit of getting used to as its answers were subtly different.

It seems GPT-6 is going to be an incremental improvement to deliver what was originally hyped.

[You can read more here.](#)

CoPilot, on the other hand, has benefited noticeably from GPT-5 being "switched on" across the Microsoft ecosystem, and I think if you work with CoPilot, you will have noticed a significant improvement in "smarts", though Microsoft is still focusing on security.

You can [read more here.](#)

AI is becoming increasingly pervasive, and if you are not experimenting with it in your company (and even for yourself) it is extremely important that you start.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security and AI specialists to discuss how AI could be put to work in your business while at the same time ensuring your data is properly categorised and secured.

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: Palo Alto](#)

[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 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 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 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 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 have to find some decent and relevant gifts, get them branded with your company logo, make sure that you are not getting ripped off, get the order placed and hope that you will get them in time for year-end in packaging that you actually expected when you looked at 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 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 on the 29th of August is a big No-No and blocked you from receiving TOP STORIES!

Note Red Sonja has been rescheduled from 15 August to 5 September

Unfortunately, August and a good part of September does not have any major blockbusters lined up, but there is the 50th Anniversary screening of Jaws.....

Now Playing: [The Myth of Maracuda](#)

Now Playing: [Relay](#)

Now Playing: [Hunting Jessica Brok](#)

29 August: [The Roses](#)

29 August: [Caught Stealing](#)

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

29 August: [Afterburn](#)

29 August: [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](#)

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

12 September: [Code 3](#)

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

12 September: [The Long Walk](#)

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