

TOP STORIES #136

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.

New this week

- Upcoming shows [have their own page](#)
- "Did you Know" launched FTG's Cyber Risk assessment tool - [see.tech](#)
- **Dynamics License enforcement** schedule changes... again
- **Intel is making a comeback** in 2026
- **Microsoft launches Onedrive with AI**, and bring your AI to work, and more
- **Turn your Mouse into a Microphone** to Spy? Yes you can!
- Google to **Launch Gemini 3**
- **Solarwinds and F5** added to First Marketplace

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](#).

If you have not tried TSAI yet, I recommend that you do, as it is getting cleverer and faster!
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 source in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.

Last week's [TOP STORIES #135 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](#).

If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the mail.

Upcoming Shows

- **AWS re:Invent 2025 - 1-5 December Las Vegas**
- **CES 2026 6-9 Jan 2026 Las Vegas**
- **NAMM 20-24 Jan 2026 Anaheim**
- **NAB April 18-22 Las Vegas**

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

Did you Know?

First Technology Group is the only IT company in Africa that currently bundles all of [See.Tech's](#) Cyber Risk capabilities assessment into one solution with an executive single-pane view.

Most cyber risk starts outside your network.

<https://see.tech/> shows you exactly what's exposed — fast: agentless, automated, actionable.

- **Map your external attack surface: find shadow IT, misconfigurations, risky third-**

party exposures, and leaked credentials through deep darkweb scans.

- Get a single exposure score with clear, executive-ready reports graded across 20+ categories, plus trend tracking.
- Zero install, works *anywhere*, and scales from a few assets to thousands. capable of integrating with your SIEM, SOC and ticketing.
- Built for CISOs, GRC and MSSPs; aligns with ISO 27001, PCI-DSS and GDPR.

Contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Security specialists for a demo of this technology that will help you see the gaps in your security in one place!

Don't Forget

Windows 10, Exchange 2016/9 and Office 2016/9 are EoL 14 October!

.....and others as well

You can buy M365 with or without Teams - full story [from Microsoft is here](#)

License Enforcement for Dynamics 365 ERP rules have changed again (see below)

Microsoft starts Phase 2 Mandatory Azure MFA

This is a reminder that Microsoft has started with enforcement at the Azure resource manager layer, and if you are an Admin, you need to prepare for this, [which you can read more about here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to assist with this process.

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

Intel is making a comeback!

Intel is hoping that Panther Lake, which we should see in notebooks from early 2026, will return it to its glory days.

Intel is promising 50% better multi-core performance with less power, along with up to 16 cores, next-gen NPU 5 and a new high-performance GPU.

Should this become a reality we can look forward to some new innovative notebooks from all the big OEM's next year. You can [read more about these new Panther Lake CPU's here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our hardware specialists to review what to expect next year, and to adjust the specifications for what you may be lining up to buy in 2026.

Microsoft

Microsoft Enhances OneDrive with Copilot AI for Smarter Productivity

This feature, announced by Microsoft, enables you to find files relevant to your current task more intuitively.

Due to Microsoft's tight integration with Windows and Office, it has a significant edge over competing solutions. This is all part of the move toward conversational computing, where you are able to find and do things while having a natural conversation with your computer. You can [read more about this new feature here](#),

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI and security specialists who can assist you with getting access to this feature securely for your users.

Azure and M365 local for Sovereign environments

Microsoft announced its [Sovereign Private Cloud in June 2025](#) to support organisations with strict data-sovereignty requirements. The solution unifies Azure Local and the newly introduced Microsoft 365 Local.

While Azure Local has been available for some time, [Microsoft 365 Local is new and runs entirely on Azure Local infrastructure](#), allowing customers to host Exchange Server, SharePoint Server, and Skype for Business Server within their own sovereign environments.

These new "SE" editions of the products will be supported until at least 31 December 2035.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Azure specialists to see if you require a secure sovereign environment.

Microsoft lets you bring your AI to work

Well, it's more about bringing your license to work, but it is about a safer option of bringing your AI to work that can also turn into a gaping security hole.

To use the Copilot features, employees sign in to Microsoft 365 (M365) with both their work and personal accounts using [multiple account access](#).

When they open an Office file, they can then use Copilot features such as summarisation or text drafting in Office as usual. In today's world you have to watch out for any possible trick - and even with this, beware of fake premium plans

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Copilot specialists to see how this feature can be enabled in your company to give employees the ability to use their own license at work until you are ready as the employer to add a Copilot license.

M365 Premium Features and Pricing explained

Microsoft 365 Premium is the newest consumer plan that bundles the popular Family subscription with Copilot Pro at a much lower cost.

For \$199 a year, subscribers get six accounts with full Microsoft Office apps, 1TB OneDrive storage each, and premium Copilot AI tools for the plan owner, including research, data analysis, and workflow automation. It is available in SA - [you can find the pricing here](#),

This [excellent guide here](#) breaks down how it differs from other plans, and why it could save power users over \$140 a year.

What is an important note is that the PLAN OWNER gets the benefits of the premium features, not the rest of the minions on the plan!

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our licensing specialists who can assist with the licensing for your business as well, as the line between your home licensing and your work licensing is starting to blur (see above).

Server Subscription editions added to SPLA

The latest SE editions for Exchange, Sharepoint and Skype for Business have now been added to Service Provider License Agreements in the latest User terms for October, which you [can find here](#).

Keeping these services with a hoster, unless they are for very specific reasons, going forward is maybe not the best plan, and it would be a good opportunity to see what your options are going forward. Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Licensing and technical specialists to help review your options if you still have a SPLA agreement.

Change in the Dynamics 365 ERP License enforcement schedule

Microsoft has once again adjusted its enforcement schedule for Dynamics 365 ERP user licensing, which you can [read about here](#). The original enforcement date of 1 September 2025 was first postponed to 1 November 2025. The new timeline now ties enforcement to each customer's first renewal or anniversary date after 15 January 2026.

From that point forward, affected tenants will receive alerts 30 days before renewal. If required licences are still unassigned 15 days after the renewal date, unlicensed users will lose access to

the ERP applications. The [FAQ is available here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to unpack how these changes can affect your specific situation.

Security

Turning your mouse into a Microphone

Just when you think there are no more ways to hack into a computer to spy on people, here is a whole new method, which involves turning your mouse into a microphone! It turns out modern mice, especially those used by gamers, are sensitive enough to pick up sound waves as vibrations which can be converted back into sound.

You can read [more about this interesting exploit here](#).

It's only a matter of time before this is exploited in the wild.

Imagine.... think back to the article about extortion in [TOP STORIES #135](#), and imagine a hacker extorting a family member to plant some "innocent" software on a partner's computer, which is now able to record everything that is going on, bypassing very robust systems preventing unauthorised software from accessing audio devices.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners who are experts in helping train your users to ensure that they are also educating their family members in looking out for hacking and extortin attempts and to speak out!

Microsoft warns of hackers abusing Teams features

These hacks focus on tricking users into granting access through a mix of email floods, Teams messages, and calls. This is quite intense and targeted hacking of individuals that the hackers can research, once they have your Teams identity, they are pretty much able to figure out your entire network of friends and business associates. As always, you need to be aware of the latest tricks to get you to do something you should not.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners who are experts in helping you to deal with these situations and receive the appropriate training.

Cloud & AI

Google prepares to launch Gemini 3

Google is reportedly preparing to launch Gemini 3, its next multimodal AI model, potentially this week, aiming to rival OpenAI's GPT-5. A/B testing reveals enhancements in coding, speed, and multimedia processing. If successful, it could redefine AI benchmarks and boost Google's competitive edge. You can [read more about the soon-to-be-available Gemini 3 here](#).

In companies that are deeply committed to the Microsoft ecosystem, CoPilot still remains the only secure choice to start implementing AI on company data. Over time as you discover how AI can benefit you in your environment, will you be able to consider a more hybrid approach to the types of AI. It, however all starts with security.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI and security specialists to help start the journey to implementing AI in your business.

What's up at FTG

FirstMarketplace.com adding Products Weekly

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

You can be efficient and spend less!

[Added this week for #136: SOLARWINDS and more -read here](#) for the complete list of additions for this week 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 all 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.

Movies

TRON:ARES Is getting mixed reviews for the acting, but excellent reviews for effects

Next week, Kanu Reeves Stars in "Good Fortune".

I'm not sure what inspired the change from John Wick?

Now Playing: [TRON:ARES](#)

Now Playing: [Hen](#)

Now Playing: [Doramon the Movie: Nobita's art world Tales](#)

17 October: [Good Fortune](#)

17 October: [Black Phone 2](#)

17 October: [Shell](#)

24 October: [Springsteen: Deliver me from Nowhere](#)

24 October: [Stitch Head](#)

24 October: [Wicked Part One](#) Sing-Along edition (Lyrics on Screen)

24 October: [Roofman](#)

24 October: [Shelby Oaks](#)

31 October: [Chainsaw Man: The movie](#)

31 October: [Bugonia](#)

31 October: [Regretting you](#)

31 October: [Time Hoppers](#)

7 November: [Predator: Badlands](#)

7 November: [I wish you all the best](#)

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