



.top_stories

//barry_neethling

27th July #177

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** Redstor, Datasnipper and Square-9 are added.
 - **Microsoft EoL section updated for April 2027** - New update coming in August
 - **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #177**- No rest for the wicked, now AI powered
 - **Did you Know?** - We can transform your AI roadmap
 - **Microsoft Promotions** - Some are out, and surprisingly they have to do with AI.
 - **Back to Basics** - But this time you need help to read the Azure meter.
 - **Microsoft Updates the Azure FAQ's** - A lot more about Azure Local (with a meter)
 - **Exchange 2016/9 is done** - Finally done this time.
 - **Microsoft stops rollout of Features** - Sometimes a new feature is....not..
 - **SQL 2016 reaches end of support** - and the last update was on the last day
 - **Vishing attacks increase 10-fold** - That urgent request from IT dept? Maybe not!
 - **Phishing tools bypass MFA** - A human still needs to agree.
 - **More brains at Half the price** - Your bosses dream - you smarter and cheaper!
-

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

New report in August.

DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #177

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 #176

Click button above for last weeks news.

Visit FirstMarketPLace Link here for New Additions

Redstor, Datasnipper and Square-9 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.

July marks summer blockbuster season with The Odyssey & Moana screening and Spiderman coming up for this week

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](#)

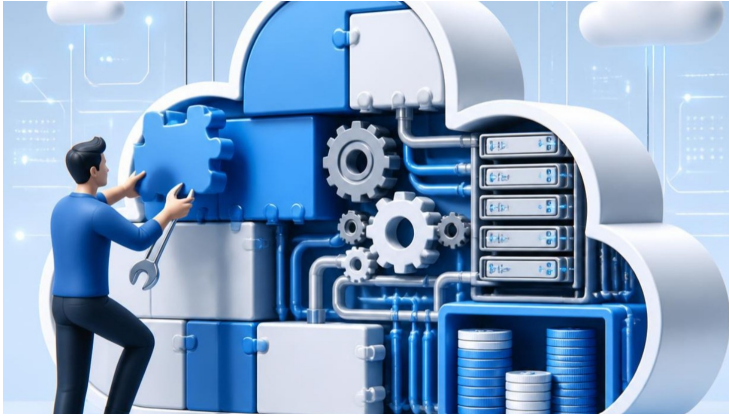
[SUBSCRIBE TO TOP STORIES](#)

Microsoft **New Promotions**

The promotions are here! See the link below!

[Microsoft NCE Promotions](#)

Microsoft News This Week



Back to (savings) Basics with an Azure Meter that never stops

Flat budgets and Microsoft price increases mean savings cannot come only from negotiating a better agreement.

Azure charges by consumption every day, so rightsizing workloads, removing waste and restructuring commitments can

reduce the very next invoice.... and continue saving every month.

However, a green dashboard can be misleading. Workloads drift, VM and reservation options change, capacity becomes constrained, and expired reservations can quietly fall back to expensive Pay-As-You-Go pricing.

AI adds another layer of tokens, GPU hours and Agent consumption that is even harder to track. An annual cost review is simply no longer enough - it just summarises the bad news.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Azure and FinOps specialists. With the Azure meter running every day, it is VERY important to have a partner like First Technology Group continuously keeping an eye on it with you. We have specialists who ONLY do this all day (and night), and they frequently catch things others miss.

Directions: Back to Basics with DIY Savings in Azure

Microsoft Updates Azure FAQ's

After you have read this, RE-READ the article above!!!

Microsoft's updated Azure FAQs are a useful reminder that "move it to Azure" is not a strategy. You can use Pay-As-You-Go, Reserved VM Instances, Savings Plans and Azure Hybrid Benefit..... sometimes in combination.

You can run workloads in Azure, keep them on-premises with Azure Local, or support sovereign and permanently disconnected environments.

Existing hardware may even be reused..... BUT only if it matches a validated configuration.

The catches matter. **Azure Local is billed per physical core rather than per VM**, connected deployments must normally synchronise with Azure at least once every 30 days, and qualifying licences and Software Assurance can materially change what you pay.

Choice is good..... **choosing badly can be VERY expensive!**

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Azure, licensing, infrastructure, security and FinOps specialists to design, implement and continually manage the Azure model that works best for your business..... and your budget.

Microsoft Azure FAQ's

Azure Local FAQ's



Microsoft to stop Exchange 2016/2019 security updates in October

This REALLY is the end!

Microsoft has confirmed that the Extended Security Update programme for Exchange Server 2016 and 2019 ends after October 2026.

There will be no further extension and no more security updates, even for customers already enrolled in the Period 2 ESU programme.

The servers will continue running, but every new vulnerability after that becomes your problem. The supported choices are now to migrate to Exchange Online or move to Exchange Server Subscription Edition. This requires proper planning, particularly for hybrid and heavily integrated environments.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Exchange specialists to assess your environment and help you deal with the end of Exchange 2016 and 2019..... really this time!

BleepingComputer: The end of Exchange 2016/2019 (Yes, REALLY)

Microsoft stops rollout of some Teams and Outlook features

Microsoft has quietly stopped two previously announced Microsoft 365 features. Teams was due to gain a smarter @mention search in September, allowing users to insert files, chats, channels and meetings directly into a message.

Outlook was also going to add Copilot suggestions to its search interface. Both are now “not moving forward at this time”, with no explanation from Microsoft.

This is another reminder that the Microsoft 365 Roadmap is a guide, NOT a promise!

Features can be delayed, changed or disappear completely, this is a great reminder to not build important business processes around something that has not actually arrived.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft specialists to help keep track of the constant changes, which include reading TOP STORIES!

Neowin: Microsoft stops rollout of some Teams & Outlook features

SQL 2016 Reaches End of Support

Microsoft ended support for SQL Server 2016 on 14 July, despite admitting that it remains heavily deployed across critical ERP, billing and line-of-business applications.

IMPORTANT NOTE!!! The Last update for SQL 2016 was issued on 14 July 2026 - [you can get the update here](#).

Upgrading to SQL Server 2022 or 2025 is the obvious answer, but it may not be that simple. **Many older applications have not been certified for newer versions, and the application and its dependencies are often the real problem, not the database.**

Microsoft is strongly promoting SQL Server Pay-As-You-Go through Azure Arc. Importantly, SQL Server 2016 can use PAYG without first being upgraded. Customers can keep the existing application running, pay for SQL by the hour and separately subscribe to Extended Security Updates.

But this is potentially just an expensive 3-year bridge. ESUs provide Critical security updates, not normal fixes or full support, and SQL Server 2016 no longer receives free ESUs simply because it is moved to an Azure VM.

SQL Server is also only [one of many Microsoft products reaching end of support](#). Now is the time to identify what is still running and decide whether to upgrade, migrate, replace, retire or temporarily protect it with ESUs, before an unsupported system makes the decision for you.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange a proper end-of-life and application compatibility assessment. It is really important to start planning

Neowin: SQL Server 2016 reaches end of Support

Security

Microsoft Detects 7.6 Billion Email Phishing Threats as Teams Vishing Attacks Increases 10-Fold

Microsoft detected approximately 7.6 billion email phishing threats during Q2 2026, but the nastier development is happening inside Teams. Malicious Teams calls have climbed to nearly TEN times their mid-2025 level, with attackers posing as IT support, warning about account problems and persuading users to open remote-support tools, surrender access or visit fraudulent sites. **Credential theft still accounts for 94–96% of malicious payload attacks.**

Once again, the human (yes, YOU!) is the weakest link. The best security tools can still be defeated by a convincing voice calling through a trusted company platform. Training cannot stop at “do not click suspicious emails”. Users must learn to verify unexpected Teams calls independently, NEVER grant remote access simply because somebody sounds convincing, and immediately report suspicious contact.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to review both your technical protection AND the customised, realistic training needed to stop users from opening the door AT YOUR company.

CyberSecurityNews: Microsoft Detects 7.6 Billion Email Phishing Threats

New Phishing Tools Bypass Multifactor Authentication

New phishing kits are making it much easier for criminals to bypass MFA. Jalisco generates fresh OAuth device codes in real time and tricks users into authorising an attacker's device, while OmegaLord collects passwords and telephone numbers so criminals can intercept or manipulate MFA requests.

Once inside Microsoft 365, attackers can register their own devices, maintain access and rapidly steal data from connected cloud services. The uncomfortable lesson remains the same..... **MFA is essential, but it cannot protect a user who is persuaded to approve the attack themselves.**

The human remains the weakest link, which is why the best security tools must always be supported by continuous awareness training and realistic phishing simulations. Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to review both your technical controls AND user training.

Knowbe4: New Phishing Tools Bypass Multifactor Authentication

Cloud & AI

Claude Opus 5 closes the Gap at half the cost

Anthropic has released Claude Opus 5, delivering performance surprisingly close to its more powerful GPT-4 model at roughly half the cost per task. It more than doubles Opus 4.8's performance on some coding tests and is significantly better at handling long, complicated projects, checking its own work and fixing problems before handing the result back. It is priced at the same \$5 per million input tokens and \$25 per million output tokens as Opus 4.8.

This is another reminder of how quickly the AI price/performance equation is changing. The most powerful model is not necessarily the best or most economical model for every workload.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Cloud & AI specialists to help test the choices, control consumption, protect your data and select the right AI model and location for each requirement.

WebProNews: Claude Opus 5 Bridges the Gap at Half the cost

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email & social marketing for free!