

## TOP STORIES #122

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 place in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.**

There are some really interesting announcements in the "What's up at FTG" section this week, with some new events and a **major bombshell** from our CyberSecurity division - go take a look below....

Last week's [TOP STORIES #121 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

With summer holidays in the northern hemisphere, the number of large shows slows down, but there are still a few worth paying attention to.

### **AWS Summit is up next in New York**

This is a **major event for AWS** on 16 July to showcase to customers and developers what is on the roadmap for AWS.

### **Black Hat USA 2025**

This is a **major security conference for 2-7 August** that is a "Must Attend" for everybody who is serious about security.

### **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

This is a list of **ALL Microsoft services and products that are "expired" for whatever reason for the next year.**

The downloadable documents are very detailed, spanning 24 pages, so I recommend searching for what you need within them to stay up to date.

The material is presented in a way for you to copy the relevant pieces and send them to teams focused on different aspects of Microsoft technologies.

**The guide for July 2025 to July 2026 can be downloaded [here](#)**

The July guide is focused on the changes relating to the end of Windows 10

This should be read in conjunction with the [previous guide here](#).

**The most critical update to note is that Microsoft has announced that security updates for Microsoft 365 Apps (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook) running on Windows 10 will continue for three years after the Windows 10 end-of-support date.**

This means Microsoft 365 Apps **on Windows 10** will receive security updates until October 10, 2028. Now, how do you do that while not supporting the host operating system?

**UPDATE:** It appears we are receiving a partial answer to this, with Microsoft now stating that you will receive free security updates for 1 year under certain conditions (see the Microsoft section below). However, this still does not address the issue for enterprises.

### Important Caveats

- This extension applies to security updates for M365 Apps only. The Windows 10 OS itself still reaches end of support on October 14, 2025 (unless ESUs are purchased for the OS).
- If an issue with M365 Apps occurs only on Windows 10 (and not on Windows 11), Microsoft support will advise moving to Windows 11. Troubleshooting assistance may be limited if unable to move to Windows 11.
- Bug reports or feature requests for M365 Apps on Windows 10 will not be accepted after October 2025.

This significantly impacts planning for organisations, offering more flexibility for the M365 Apps component while still necessitating a Windows 11 migration strategy for the underlying OS. More on this below.

### Did you Know?

**Some global vendors, such as Microsoft, charge \$650 for ANY support call (unless the call is about paying your bill )**

Why pay for "fluffy" value adds when you can get hard-core 24x7x365, multi-technology support from a company that has your interests at heart for a flat, predictable, right-sized fee?

**First Technology Group is one of the very few organisations IN THE WORLD that provides Multi-vendor support 24/7/365 with Microsoft at the core.**

**Every business relies on more than one vendor, so our support agreements reflect that reality.**

**We have hundreds of engineers, architects and consultants who are fully employed at FTG!!!**

You get REAL certified engineers (you can ask them) to help you from your first call. No 3rd party contractors or sales pitches disguised as workshops!

Contact your First Technology account manager to see how Universal Support provides real value when "all hell breaks loose."

Other global companies have taken the leap, so perhaps it's time to reconsider.

Even if you are locked into a support agreement that cannot be cancelled, we can make it work harder to be ready to handle Armageddon when it happens.

P.S. We'll support you anywhere on the planet, any time of day or night... but for now, only in English!

### Hardware

#### AMD Next-Gen CPU's to Top 6GHz

The CPU wars seem to be hotting up, making 2026 look very interesting when it comes to high-performance gaming and computing. The latest rumours on AMD's next generation of CPU's are looking to be very impressive. You can [read more about this here](#).

The roadmap is changing continuously so it is essential to stay up to date with what is available and coming soon.

Please contact your first Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists, who can help ensure you are up to date with the changes in the release roadmap.

### Microsoft

**Exchange and Skype for Business SE editions are now available.**

Microsoft has announced the successors to the 2019 on-premises editions.

The official announcement with detailed information on the upgrade is available [here for Exchange](#) and [here for Skype](#).

From a licensing perspective, these editions follow the same rules as for SharePoint SE - you can use them as long as you are paying for Software Assurance, if you stop paying, your usage rights revert to the 2019 editions.

Please contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our specialists to assist you with the migration or deployment of these new editions, as it can get quite complicated!

## Power Platform Licensing guide updated to exclude CoPilot Studio

This was initially published in [TOP STORIES #119](#). The latest Power Platform Licensing guide is now separate from the CoPilot Studio Licensing guide. Both guides can be downloaded from the [Microsoft Licensing Guides home page here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Licensing specialists to see how we can assist you with navigating these changes and to ensure you continue to get maximum value from your existing investments.

## New Outlook for Windows now supports Export to PST

With Microsoft appearing to be determined to eventually replace Classic Outlook with the New Outlook, new functionality continues to emerge.

Microsoft has now added the ability to (very slowly) export either an entire mailbox or a single folder to a PST.

It is great that Microsoft is adding this functionality, but conversely, allowing users to export their PSTs may not be a good idea. Fortunately, you can switch this feature off - you can [read more details on this feature here](#).

The entire roadmap for [New Outlook functionality is published here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Exchange and M365 specialists to assist you in starting the migration to the New Outlook, as many of your users may be quite happy with the functionality.

## Hefty price increases for on-premises server products

Microsoft has announced price increases for its premise-based servers and CAL's between 10% and 20%. These price increases will roll out from July to August..... you can [read more about them here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Account Manager to connect you with our Licensing specialists, who can assist you in understanding the impact of these increases and how to mitigate them for your implementation.

## Security

### Incredibly Dangerous MFA relay attacks are rolling out.

Attackers have figured out ways to bypass traditional MFA using an adversary-in-the-middle phishing attack and to do it at scale using reverse proxy kits, so even small companies are now vulnerable.

MFA relay attacks involve a malicious website acting as a proxy between the user and the legitimate login system, and you can [read more here about how it works](#). Tools transparently forward the real Microsoft 365 login page to the user, capturing the entered credentials and MFA codes, as well as the resulting session token (cookie) after a successful MFA login.

Because the user unknowingly interacts with the genuine login form through the attacker's proxy, the attacker can steal the authenticated session.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists, who will provide urgent assistance in implementing countermeasures. Additionally, training your users to identify these attacks is also critical; please also discuss planning your next training session for them.

## Cloud & AI

### AI will replace White Collar jobs

The Ford CEO is [predicting that a large number of jobs will be lost to AI](#). This paints a gloomy picture for many people, but it is important to remember that history is also repeating itself, and it did not end up so gloomy!

In the article "[From Spreadsheets to Superpowers](#)" I explained how this happened when

spreadsheets first appeared.  
So, remember!!, we've been here before.

When electronic spreadsheets arrived, you had two choices:

1. Cling to your calculator and become irrelevant, or
2. Learn to model a balance sheet in minutes and become indispensable.

**History rewarded those who went with #2.**

Back then the stakes were modest.

The global population was 4.4 billion and fewer than 1 per cent of people had even touched a computer.

**Today we are nudging eight billion, and about 70 per cent of humanity walks around with a pocket super-computer.**

The diffusion curve for technology has collapsed from decades to months.

AI adoption will feel less like the spreadsheet revolution and more like the arrival of electricity — invisible yet everywhere.

**AI will not replace white-collar workers BUT.....**

**People who can wield AI will replace those who cannot.**

Generative AI models can summarise meetings, draft code, debug PowerShell, sketch marketing copy and surface patterns in data before your first coffee is finished.

**Used well. AI amplifies curiosity, creativity and commercial insight.**

**Your competitive advantage.....**

**Speed** – Tasks that once filled a morning take minutes.

**Scale** – One analyst with Copilot can interrogate a data estate that previously required a team.

**Scope** – Multimodal tools translate, storyboard and forecast without swapping applications.

Mark Cuban believes that the **world's first Trillionaire could be just one person in a basement who has mastered AI**. Quite a thought!

It is also important to note that, provided you are using AI critically, it actually boosts brain function and creativity; **you can read more here** in the report that has just been published.

However, if you use AI as a crutch and become reliant on it, it will affect you negatively, **as discussed in this article**. As an example, how **reliant are you on GPS navigation?**

**You must always actively engage AI in support of your quest. It is not a crutch!**

So, the point of this story is to encourage you to please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI experts to help you get started on this journey. Have a CoPilot workshop, see what it can do, and then see what you can make do for YOU!

## What's up at FTG

### First Digital Makes AI History

First Digital just became the first SA-headquartered company to earn [Microsoft's Advanced Specialisation for Building AI Apps on Azure](#) — **and nailed the audit.**

**This confirms what we already knew: our AI isn't hype. It works. And now Microsoft agrees!**

Please contact your First Technology account manager to explore what we can do for you. The AI you use to query the TOP STORIES archive(TSAI) is one of those apps!!

### BUI Just Dropped a Bombshell: South Africa's First Cyber Warranty

While other companies are saying you should have this, **BUI has done it!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division, has become the first Microsoft Cloud Solutions Partner in South Africa to launch a Cyber Security Warranty.

That's right — they're so confident in their security operations, they're backing it with a financial warranty.

**Think of it as putting your money where your Security is. If you suffer a cybersecurity incident, they will assist your organisation up to the value of R1,000,000.00.**

It's the kind of assistance customers didn't even know they needed — until now.

**You can read more about the announcement on ITWeb here.**

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with the BUI team to discuss how you can take advantage of this new level of protection.

### 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!

### **Free Microsoft Support Ends**

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.

### **Pitfalls with Dynamics 365**

The CRMTeam, of First Technology Group [have published a document on ITWeb](#) about avoiding the pitfalls of a D365 Customer engagement implementation. If you are looking to dive down the D365 rabbit hole, this is a good article to read. Then, contact our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

### **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 - 8th, 9th and 10th Videos Available**

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted 3 new videos focusing on Entra ID. It is highly recommended that you review these videos as they give you an understanding of how to squeeze value out of the Microsoft suites as opposed to buying alternative products which may not be necessary.

**No. 8:** Streamlining employee onboarding

**No. 9:** Modernise Remote Access

**No. 10:** Secure Internet access based on business requirements.

### **Joint Standard 2 on Cyber Security and Resilience**

BUI has published a 1-page guide for you to gauge your compliance and, if you have concerns, to reach out to the BUI specialists for assistance. The [guide is available here](#).

## **Movies**

Now Playing: **Jurassic World: Rebirth** - Another **Blockbuster for the franchise on the way!**  
11 July: **SMURFS**  
11: July: **Superman Legacy**  
18 July: **I know what you did last Summer**  
18 July: **Four Letters of Love**  
25 July: **Fantastic Four: First Steps**  
25 July: **Don't let's go to the Dogs tonight**  
25 July: **Lucky Fish**  
1 August: **Bring her Back**  
1 August: **The Bad Guys 2**

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