

## TOP STORIES #131

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.

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 #130 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](#).

There is big news this week with us announcing a refined version of our Universal Support Agreements. See under "Did you Know"

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

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## 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](#).

Now that the show has wrapped you can read the Show dailies [here for days 1, 2 & 3](#) - you will see the publications for days 2 & 3 at the bottom of the page.

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 how the frog is starting to boil.

### IFA Expo Berlin - 5-9 September

The show is [billed as the largest trade fair for consumer and home electronics](#) (though I think CES would disagree). Here is a great summary of some of the [most interesting gadgets at the show](#).

The content is structured around four main themes:

the future of intelligence (AI, robotics), the future of smart societies (smart homes, digital health), the future of connectivity (5G, 6G), and the future of sustainability (eco-design, energy efficiency) Of course no show like this is complete without [AI powered vacuum cleaners](#), [rotating displays for laptops](#), and [robo-mowers](#), and you just HAVE to see the [marswalker in action!](#) Now, all it has to do is clean the stairs as well!

### AWS re:Invent 2025 - 1-5 December Las Vegas

This is a "MUST ATTEND" for any organisation that uses or competes with AWS. [Register here](#). It is the single most important event for understanding the future of the world's recognised cloud

platform.

The product announcements made during the keynote addresses can have immediate and far-reaching implications for technology stacks, budgets, and competitive positioning. The event's structure is notably dual-focused: it provides deep, practical technical training for practitioners who need to implement AWS services, while simultaneously offering high-level strategic sessions and executive networking for leaders making long-term technology decisions. This makes re:Invent a multi-layered and highly efficient event for entire technology teams. **Of course, First Technology Group will have representatives attending and will report back on how AWS's announcements will impact business and opportunities in particular for South Africa.**

## CES 2026 6-9 Jan 2026 Las Vegas

CES is the event that sets the **consumer technology agenda for the entire year**. Its primary value is not in enterprise strategy but in product launches, generating media buzz, and forming partnerships within the consumer product ecosystem.

**If you want to attend, you need to plan now! [Sign up here](#).** A more hidden and serious part of the show is that it is also a major destination for startups, with a dedicated area called **Eureka Park** that hosted 1,400 in 2025 - this is actually the most exciting part of CES - what is announced in the main halls, is usually leaked to the internet weeks in advance so attending physically unless you have a specific reason is actually pointless - TOP STORIES gets quite busy for December with all the news leaks!

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## Account Manager?

In many cases, the stories below recommend that you contact your First Technology Group account manager. If you are not sure who your account manager is, [click here for us to connect you](#).

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## Don't Forget

### **Legacy MFA and SSPR to Authentication must migrate NOW!**

September has arrived, and you may soon be experiencing authentication issues. This may be the reason. [You can read more here](#).

SSPR = Self-Service Password Reset

### **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**

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## Did You Know?

### **You can have Microsoft-certified Consultants supporting your company 24/7/365?**

**Universal Support gives you always-on, human support.** Real consultants across Azure, Modern Work, Dynamics, Purview and more, using support credits to resolve issues end-to-end, with seamless escalation when required.

**Add our concierge service to enhance any Microsoft Unified Support agreement** you may already have.....

We drive escalations, eliminate the follow-the-sun handoff pain, prevent downgrades, and extract more value from what you're paying.

We then help you consider alternatives when you are ready. We are **ISO-certified**, CSM-led, and extend beyond Microsoft (yes, AWS too), with no chatbots at the front door, just real certified consultants speaking your language who pick up the phone, day or night.

Please contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our dedicated Universal Support consultants to craft a support agreement tailored to your specific requirements.

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## Hardware

### Samsung MicroLED technology slowly evolves - gets "cheaper"

Although it remains incredibly expensive, it is clear that over time, this technology will become more affordable, offering new levels of display quality and brightness. So, if you have \$30 000 burning a hole in your pocket, [take a look here at what you can buy now!](#)

### My Vinyl (Record) Stands Upright!

This is a very interesting departure from normal Vinyl turntables, and now with Vinyl making a comeback, new technical approaches are being taken to reproduce the sound from this old analogue format. Because this uses an optical pickup, it allows your player to be mounted vertically!

If you have ±\$3000 lying around, [here is an interesting player you can consider buying!](#)

### Intel's Panther Lake CPU spotted "in the wild"

Acer has quietly showcased a notebook based on this new CPU, which [you can learn more about here](#). This means production units from many other manufacturers is imminent.

This is a reminder of why it is so important to stay up to speed on the latest developments from your hardware supplier and to continually look for updates on what is coming.

This is a big deal, as Panther Lake is part of the Intel Core Ultra 300 series of processors that will **comfortably exceed** the minimum Microsoft 40 TOPS rating for CoPilot+ computers.

Please contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our hardware specialists to help update you on when you can expect notebooks with Panther Lake processors in them.

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## Microsoft

### Windows 11 25H2 is close to release

Microsoft seems to think that 25H2 is almost ready, this is really good news for companies, as there are no huge updates or any "exciting" changes, so this is looking to be a very "boring" release, which you can [read more about here](#). What is important from this information is that you should not delay your deployment of 24H2 because 25H2 is imminent.

Please contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our deployment teams to assist with any issues you may be encountering with getting Win11 deployed.

### Microsoft to enforce USB-C function reporting

Unfortunately, USB-C is not **Thunderbolt**, and there are no strict rules on what functionality the port may have to receive a certain designation. This means you can end up buying a notebook with USB-C ports that could have minimal functionality. To improve this situation, Microsoft is encouraging OEM's to ensure the operating system correctly reports that functionality [which you can read more about here](#). PCWorld has [published an article that tries to demystify USB-C charging](#) - it helps a little.

Please contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with our hardware specialists, who will assist in specifying the functionality you expect from the USB-C ports on the hardware you plan to order.

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## Security

## Weaponising trusted Tools to gain access

This is an example of a broader shift in how hackers are gaining access to companies to launch a major attack. Instead of "breaking in", the hackers instead use phishing methods to trick users into giving them access to Teams or Zoom accounts to allow them to deploy legitimate tools to then move laterally inside the company, all the while blending in with legitimate activity. [You can read more about these new types of attacks here.](#)

You can have the best tools in the world to protect your company, but if your users unwittingly grant access, there is nothing you can do. All you *can* do is ensure that you provide training to your users to be more alert to potential scams. Always remember, "if it's too good to be true, there is probably a catch".

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists, who can help ensure your tools are working to protect you.

**Most importantly, they can assist in scheduling regular training for your users to increase awareness of these sophisticated campaigns and help you catch them out.**

## Hackers using AI platforms to steal credentials.

Crooks are increasingly using trusted AI platforms to trick you into parting with your credentials. It is not helpful that new AI platforms are popping up daily. For example, AI marketing platforms are already commonplace and are routinely whitelisted by IT departments. You can [read more about this clever attack here.](#)

It is crucial to ensure that your users receive regular training updates on how to identify scams or tricks, which are becoming increasingly convincing due to the advancement of AI, **with a note to all humans in IT departments that you too should not be excluded from training - you are also human and no matter how well you may know "IT stuff", your "human brain" can still be tricked!**

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss the available training courses that can help keep your users (and IT department) up to date with the latest security threats and best practices.

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## Cloud & AI

### OpenAI Jobs platform

OpenAI is launching an AI-powered job platform that will utilise AI to connect candidates with prospective employers, potentially competing with LinkedIn.

**This will include the ability for you to achieve certifications in AI literacy.** This addresses what I have been saying for a while, in that most jobs will NOT be lost to AI, but those people who do NOT become AI literate will lose jobs to those who are.

What OpenAI (and many others) [is developing will accelerate this.](#)

This is a good reminder that it is crucial for you to start experimenting with AI, both for yourself and within your company, and to explore how AI can make a difference.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI specialists, who were the first company in South Africa to receive Microsoft's advanced Specialisation for building AI Apps on Azure (announced in [TOP STORIES #118](#)). This team is ahead of most other companies in implementing AI-powered solutions, and it is highly recommended that you schedule a session with them to see how they can use AI to make a difference in your business.

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## 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: Nitro and more -[read here](#)** for the complete list of additions 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.

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### 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!

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### 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**.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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## Need Branded Gifts?

Sometimes it is a mission for companies to find year-end gifts for their clients.

You need to find some decent and relevant gifts, have them branded with your company logo, ensure that you are not getting ripped off, place the order, and hope to receive them in time for year-end in packaging that matches your expectations, as seen in 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 Group account manager](#) to connect you with the "Gifting Experts" to help come up with the perfect gift for your clients!

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## Movies

Not much to get really excited about.....sadly!

Now Playing: [Disney Junior Cinema Club](#)

Now Playing: [The Stolen Girl](#)

Now Playing: [Conjuring: The Last Rights](#)

Now Playing: [Red Sonja](#) - Critical Drinker has some [interesting things to say about it!](#)

Now Playing: [Baahgi 4](#)

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

12 September: [Code 3](#)

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

12 September: [The Long Walk](#)

19 September: [Chickenhare & the secret of the Groundhog](#)

19 September: [Threesome](#)

26 September: [The Strangers: Chapter 2](#)

26 September: [Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie](#)

26 September: [One Battle after Another](#)

26 September: [The Dead of Winter](#)

26 September: [Carissa](#)

26 September: [Loved Out](#)

3 October: [Avatar: Way of Water \(re-release\)](#)

3 October: [A big bold beautiful Journey](#)

3 October: [Him](#)

3 October: [The smashing machine](#)

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