

TOP STORIES #135

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 (read below for more)

- New Upcoming Shows - **NAB**
- China announces **data centre CPU to rival AMD**
- **Windows 11 25H2**: How Are You Affected?
- Microsoft announces new **Premium AI for M365**
- **IoT Systems** needlessly exposed
- Scammers are able to **ruin your life**.
- Perplexity releases **Comet AI browser for free**
- **First MarketPlace** adds [Quest and Varonis](#).

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 #134 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

CES is going to start 2026 with some extra exciting news in "On-device" AI PC's, the rise of Physical AI's that can interact with the real world. **This will be the first year that the focus will shift from the promise of AI to its practical application.**

While earlier shows focused on announcing AI-powered products, **CES 2026 will feature a wave of more polished, effective, and autonomous AI-driven technologies that benefit from the intense competition among the industry's heaviest hitters.**

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

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!

NAMM 20-24 Jan 2026 Anaheim

The first big ProAV show of 2026 kicks off with new products, performances and new ideas freshly baked for 2026. You can already [register here to attend](#).

NAB April 18-22 Las Vegas

Although NAB does have a show coming up in [October in New York](#), the big one is in Las Vegas next year.

The NAB Show in Las Vegas is designed for anyone working in the media, entertainment, and technology industries, from content creators to C-level executives. It is particularly valuable for those looking to stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly changing media landscape shaped by innovations in artificial intelligence (AI), streaming, and the creator economy. [Click here to be notified when registration opens](#).

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](#)

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

CPU's from China to rival AMD.

China's new 96-core x86 CPU, the Zhaoxin KH-50000, rivals AMD's EPYC lineup by leveraging an advanced chiplet design with up to 13 chiplets per processor, supporting up to 384 cores on a single motherboard—matching and even exceeding the scalability of AMD's offerings. Its architecture allows for large multi-socket systems, and it also mirrors AMD in package size and server deployment types. What this all means is that China is starting to enter the fray, which will

probably increase competition, ultimately driving down prices. You can [read more about this announcement here](#).

Microsoft

Windows 11 25H2 - how does that affect companies?

As Windows 10 comes to an end, we also have a (not so) big update in the form of 25H2 from Microsoft to contend with. [Directions on Microsoft has published a detailed paper](#) on what can be expected in 25H2, which is fortunately a short list, as most of the big updates such as Quick Machine Recovery and hot patching, have already been released.

What this means is for 24H2 Windows 11 machines, 25H2 will be an enablement package, which is considerably less effort to apply than a full install like 24H2 was.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Hardware, Licensing, Endpoint Support and Remote Managed Services (RMS) divisions to assist you in preparing for the deployment of Win11 25H2.

Dynamics Licensing guide updated for October

This month, there are only minor updates, where "Project Operations Lite" has been changed to "Project Operations Core" and the 'How to Buy' table for the three purchasing options was rewritten. You [can download the latest document here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Dynamics specialists, who will help keep you updated on the increasingly complex world of Dynamics licensing and its potential impact on your environment.

Satya announces 5 AI innovations for M365

In a post on X on 5 October 2025, Nadella highlighted several major upgrades to Microsoft's productivity suite. For example, Excel is getting an "Agent Mode" where Copilot can directly build stuff in your workbook from a prompt.

Teams is introducing collaborative AI agents in meetings and chats that act like group assistants. There's also a new "Researcher" mode, which allows you to switch between OpenAI and Anthropic models on the fly for optimal results.

To top it off, Microsoft announced Microsoft 365 Premium, a \$19.99/month plan bundling Copilot perks with higher usage limits noting that this is Personal and family plans. You can [read more about this here on the official Microsoft posting](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Licensing and AI specialists to help you understand how you can benefit from these new announcements.

Microsoft renames security and compliance suites.

Microsoft has announced that as of 1 October, Microsoft 365 E5 Security will be called the "Microsoft Defender Suite", and Microsoft 365 E5 Compliance is now "Microsoft Purview Suite". The [official announcement is here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Licensing and Security specialists to see how these changes impact you for the future..

Security

Unforgivable Exposure: industrial systems are needlessly exposed

The number of IoT devices exposed to the internet is increasing which you can [read more about these vulnerabilities here](#).

In every company, there are numerous devices that have been forgotten and many still with their default passwords. I published a very interesting story about a [Fish Tank and a Casino here, which is worth reading](#).

First Technology Group has the only team in South Africa available 24/7 that specialises in finding and securing these hidden devices. Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Security specialists, who can discuss how they can help scan your network, discover these devices, and take steps to better secure your environment going forward.

What I have on you will ruin your life

With AI becoming embedded in all parts of our lives for good reasons, it is present in equal

measure for bad, and it can get REALLY bad!

It is so important that we confront these issues and ensure that we are making our family aware of them, and if these things happen to any member of your family, you must have had the discussion with them to ensure that if something DOES happen, you are there to support them. AI is getting to the point where it is impossible for a layman to identify an AI-generated image from a real one.

The point is that you or your family members can be extorted with completely fake material, and you need to be empowered to cope with this.

You can [read the article here](#) (warning- can be distressing for sensitive readers).

Remember, it is not only pictures that you can be extorted with.....

It is not just your teenager who can be targeted either, hackers can also exploit YOU to manipulate you into giving them access to your company's systems.

They don't need to hack the system, they just "hack" you!

These threats, turbocharged with AI, are already emerging, and it is crucial to be prepared. That begins with making sure you receive the necessary training to handle these situations effectively.

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 NOT panic! Training on how to cope with these situations is becoming more important than ever!

Cloud & AI

Perplexity releases AI Comet browser for free on Windows and macOS

This is one of the new generation of browsers that is an AI-powered browser, which is important for you to start experimenting with. This one from Perplexity is very powerful and free. It watches what you're doing and offers help with whatever task you're engaged in, from summarising big chunks of text to making grocery lists on shopping platforms and even going through your own data (with your permission) to pull answers from your email, calendar, and more.

You can [read more about what it does here](#).

It is more important than ever to experiment with what AI can do for you in your personal life as well as your work, and not to be left behind. It is essential to explore with our AI and security consultants how AI can be applied in your business to enhance efficiencies and competitiveness.

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 #135: QUEST 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

The next is **TRON:ARES** - let's hope it is a good one!

In October, Kanu Reeves Stars in "Good Fortune".

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

Now Playing: **Avatar: Way of Water (re-release)**

Now Playing: **A big bold beautiful Journey**

Now Playing: **Him**

Now Playing: [The smashing machine](#)
10 October: [TRON:ARES](#)
10 October: [Hen](#)
10 October: [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](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

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



Try email & social marketing for free!