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20th July #176

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** Heygen, Papercut and Foxit are added.
 - **Microsoft EoL section updated for April 2027** - New update coming in July
 - **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #176**- No rest for the wicked, now AI powered
 - **Did you Know?** - We can transform your AI roadmap
 - **Microsoft Promotions** - now with it's own home page.
 - **Do not Delay updates** - This is serious! You **REALLY** must not delay!!!!
 - **Microsoft Announces Discovery** - It's not a TV channel - it's AI!
 - **Microsoft proves 8 GB is a problem** - Stick to 32Gig PLEASE.
 - **You WILL use CoPilot** - Even with Outlook Classic.
 - **SQL 2016 reaches end of support** - and a LOT is in production - we need to talk!
 - **SOPHOS browser shield** - A clever way to protect from Browser Extensions
 - **MFA can't protect a click-happy user** - you need training - ALL THE TIME!
 - **When your gets AI too clever** - It becomes a national asset you can't use!
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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

DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #176

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 #175

Click button above for last weeks news.

Visit FirstMarketPLace Link here for New Additions

Heygen, Papercut and Foxit 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 Spiderman coming up for the end of the month**

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

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Did you Know?

Your AI experiments do not have to stall in the lab!

One offer. Three steps. From AI ambition to production reality.

Everyone is under pressure to "do AI". The trouble is that most programmes stall..... shadow tools creep in, pilots never reach production, and every new use case rebuilds the same plumbing.

First Technology Group, through BUI and First Digital and in partnership with Microsoft, now offers the AI Transformation Offer (ATO). A structured, three-step programme that

takes you from your first use case to AI that runs in production:

- **Set the direction.** Workshops to agree your best use cases, governance and a working prototype.
- **Build once.** A secure, reusable AI landing zone that every future workload inherits.
- **Make it repeatable.** A "GenAI factory" that ships new solutions in weeks, not quarters.

Why it matters: most customers rate AI as their biggest security risk. Get governance and data control right first, or AI just scales that risk. That is BUI's home ground as a trusted Microsoft security partner, with Responsible AI built in.

So ask yourself..... if an AI tool is already inside your business, do you know what data it can reach?

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to see how the ATO takes you from stalled experiments to production AI, safely.

Microsoft New Promotions

There are going to be MANY promotions coming, so these have been moved to their own home page.

Microsoft Promotions - Coming Soon

Microsoft News This Week



DO NOT DELAY UPDATES!!!!!!

I have always urged you to install security updates as quickly as possible.

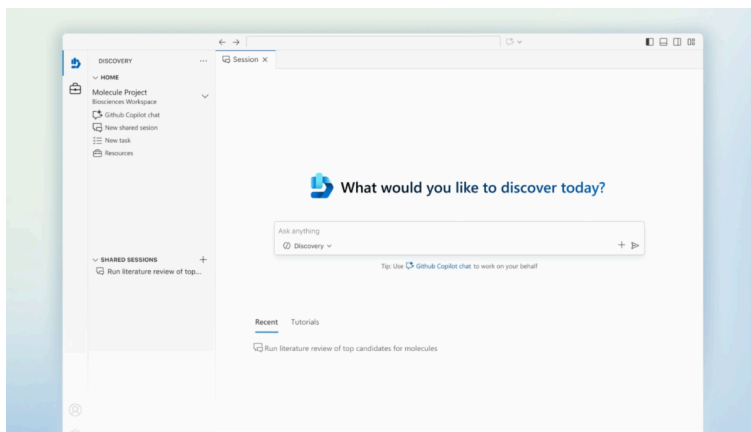
Microsoft now warns that AI can turn a newly disclosed Windows vulnerability into a working exploit within hours.

Its new recommendation is blunt, deploy quality updates in less than three days, with a deadline of zero or one day and no more than two days' grace.

Leaving devices unpatched for weeks is no longer cautious change management, it is dangerous.

If your organisation is struggling to keep Windows devices updated, contact your First Technology account manager. We can help assess and fix the underlying device management and patching problems.

Microsoft is killing the CoPilot+ PC advantage



Microsoft Announces Discovery

Microsoft Discovery is now generally available, bringing agentic AI into complex scientific and engineering research. Organisations can build and govern specialised Agents that connect to research data, modelling and simulation tools, preserve evidence and coordinate repeatable workflows,

while leaving final decisions with human experts.

The Azure service uses Pay-As-You-Go billing, with Agent activity measured through “User Messages”, costing \$0.20 for ten backend operations. A lighter desktop app is also in preview for researchers, students and smaller teams, using GitHub Copilot Credits before projects scale into the full Azure platform.

Another clear sign that Microsoft sees Agents becoming workers, not merely assistants.

There is an interesting Case study on how this new Agentic AI capability has been put to use in biological discovery, which you can [read about here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI specialists, who can start working with you to put this agentic research capability to work in your organisation and help accelerate your competitive advantage.

Microsoft Discovery GA announcement



Microsoft itself accidentally proves Windows 11 minimum system requirements make no sense

Microsoft has accidentally reinforced my repeated warning that 8GB RAM is a trap. Neowin has reported that Microsoft's new 8GB Surface

Laptop became sluggish with only a few applications open, while Windows 11 was already consuming more than half the memory immediately after restarting.

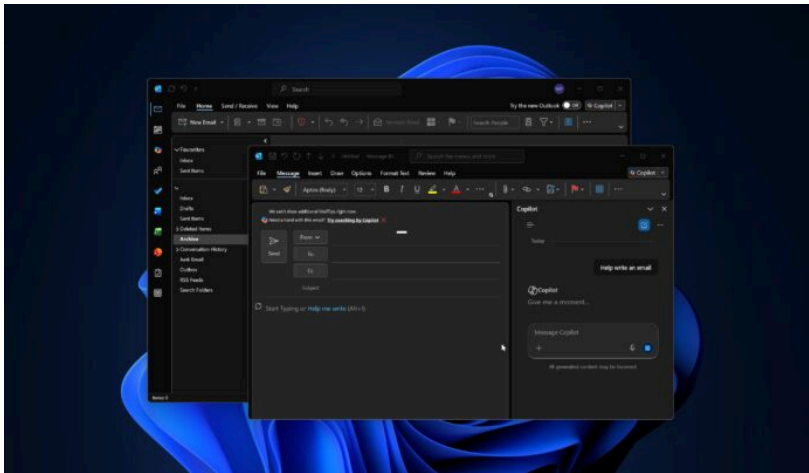
Test this for yourself, hit at the same time - and then click "Performance" and see how much memory you are using.

Microsoft still claims Windows 11 needs only 4GB RAM, which is clearly meaningless in the real world.

Keep 16GB as the absolute minimum for carefully optimised machines, and continue specifying 32GB for normal corporate use.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our experts to help you get the best possible performance out of notebooks that need to live longer than what you initially thought and NEVER with less than 16Gig!!

Neowin: 8 Gig of RAM makes no sense



Microsoft to force enable Copilot in Outlook Classic, even though it wants you on New Outlook

Further to previous TOP STORIES coverage, Microsoft is bringing even more "Copilot" into Classic Outlook, despite continuing

to push customers towards New Outlook.

Copilot Chat will be enabled by default for eligible users later in 2026, including many without the paid Microsoft 365 Copilot licence.

The irony is funny in a way, Microsoft is improving the Outlook it wants you to stop using!

Administrators should review Copilot pinning, Integrated Apps, data permissions and governance before users suddenly discover another AI button analysing their email, calendar and corporate data. HOWEVER the switch to the "New Outlook" will continue.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft messaging specialists to start working on a full migration to the New Outlook, which could take a long time, especially if you need to start replacing COM add-ins with new solutions.

WindowsLatest: Microsoft adds AI to the "Old Outlook"

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.

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



Sophos Browser Shield Tackles Rising Extension Attacks in Hybrid Work

Browser extensions have become a major attack surface, stealing credentials, hijacking sessions and even bypassing MFA. Sophos Browser Shield adds security controls, data protection and visibility into Chrome and Edge without

forcing users to change browsers.

But no tool can protect against every clever trick.

The human remains the weakest link, which means effective security must always combine the best technology with continuous user training.

Contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect with our security specialists. As a premium Sophos Titanium Partner, FTG can help protect the browser, the endpoint and, most importantly, the person using them with training that takes into consideration the specific environment of YOUR company which hackers are using AI to exploit - attacks are targeted to exploit YOUR weaknesses, and so must the training be customised to address them.

WebProNews: SOPHOS browser shield tackles Rising Extension Attacks

MFA cannot protect users from themselves

Two new phishing kits are targeting Microsoft 365 accounts and bypassing MFA.

One tricks users into approving an attacker-controlled device through a legitimate Microsoft login page, while another poses as a PDF reader to steal credentials and phone numbers.

Once inside, attackers can steal SharePoint and other cloud data in as little as six minutes.

The lesson is consistent the human is the weakest link.

MFA is essential, but it cannot help when a user is persuaded to approve the attacker.

Organisations must tighten Entra device and Conditional Access controls, but continuous user training remains critical. Contact your First Technology account manager to arrange a review of



both your security controls and user awareness training.

BleepingComputer: New Phishing Kits have been Discovered

Cloud & AI



AI is a matter of national security

We all knew this was coming, but somehow continued planning as if every AI model would remain freely available forever.

The most powerful AI models can now accelerate cyberattacks,

expose critical infrastructure and place dangerous technical knowledge into the hands of people who previously lacked the skills. Once an AI model, chip or cloud platform becomes strategically sensitive, access could be restricted with very little warning.

AI sovereignty is now critical. You need to consider not only which AI you use, but where its compute runs, who controls it, what data it can access, and what happens if that access suddenly disappears.

Contact your First Technology Group account manager to help plan your cloud and AI journey, properly categorise your data, and secure it before connecting it to increasingly powerful AI systems.

TechRadar: AI is a matter of national Security



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