

TOP STORIES #106

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you're receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more. I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" below to see if you missed something coming to End of Support (EoS) that may impact your business. **Note a new addition about Publisher.**

Remember to check out the **official movie release dates** in South Africa for all studios at the end of this email. The schedule has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #105 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 right at the bottom of the mail.

NAB, the Show for the Entertainment & Education Business and Movie Technology geeks, kicks off in Las Vegas from **5-9 April**. **AI is going to play a huge role at the show**.

Big Industry news is that Intel has appointed a new CEO, who hopefully will be able to **lead a turnaround in the company**.

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Did you Know?

First Technology Group boasts Africa's largest and most experienced team, specialising in SAM, ITAM, FinOps, and licensing compliance.

In an industry where expertise matters more every day, FTG stands out, not just in South Africa but on a global scale:

- Over 100 years of combined expert experience.
- Largest certified FinOps and SAM team on the continent.
- Immediate savings—our FinOps team regularly cuts cloud bills by up to 50%
- License Pulse by First Digital quickly spots Microsoft 365 licensing overspend.

The technology landscape is maturing in the cloud, making precision in cost control and licensing compliance critical. We've mastered controlling costs with advanced tooling and are already helping global businesses save substantially on cloud expenditures.

If you would like to see if you can reduce your cloud spending, or even if you feel OK with it but would like a "sanity check," it is recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with one of our THREE teams to see how we can assist you in finding savings.

Hardware

An Intel Core Ultra Notebook for \$15,000???

This notebook is an ultra-high-end mobile workstation. It can be outfitted with up to 256GB RAM, a 5090 GPU, 32TB of storage, two 2.5G network ports, and more. You can [read more here](#).

Many ultra-high-end notebooks will be released through 2025. If you are interested in such extreme mobile computing solutions, please contact your First Technology account manager, who can help you find what is available in South Africa.

Intel's Arrow Lake refresh is back.

The refresh aims to increase the NPU TOPS rating, which was below the minimum Microsoft requirement of 40 TOPS for a [CoPilot+ PC](#). Unfortunately, we do not have a date when Intel will release these updated CPUs, but it will probably be "soon". [You can read more here](#). Maybe wait for this refresh, if you can, before you get your ultra-high-end workstation!

Microsoft

Dynamics 365 Fraud Protection not supported after 3 Feb. 2026

Along with announcing that, as of 3 Feb 2025, Fraud Protection is no longer available to purchase, Microsoft has also announced that Fraud Protection will not be supported after 3 Feb. 2026. This is most likely due to a lack of demand. [You can read the Microsoft announcement here](#).

If this announcement impacts you, please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Dynamics specialists, who can assist you with alternatives.

Remote Desktop App phased out in May

The remote desktop app will no longer be supported after 27 May 2025. To continue accessing Windows 365, Azure Virtual Desktop, and Microsoft Dev Box, you need to transition to the Windows App.

Note that after 27 May, the Remote Desktop App will still be the only app that uses Remote Desktop Protocol connections. You can [read more about this announcement here](#).

March Patch Tuesday is important.

This patch Tuesday fixes seven critical vulnerabilities, so it's especially important to keep your patching up to date. [You can read more here](#). If you need assistance ensuring that ALL your computers are patched, please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our security specialists to help ensure your patching is up to date.

Security

Cyber attack mimics Booking.com

Microsoft has identified a phishing campaign that impersonates booking.com to deliver credential-stealing malware. This campaign uses user interaction to bypass conventional security measures. You can [read more about it here](#). This is yet another reminder that users need to be regularly updated and warned about phishing campaigns designed to trick them.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to schedule training for your users to ensure they are updated with spotting the latest trickery.

Cloud & AI

Vibecoding with English

It is discussed that English is the hottest new programming language in the world of AI. There is a very interesting article from Ethan Mollick about how you "code" with AI's to get things done. If you are interested in driving deep into the AI rabbit hole, this is a [fascinating article to read](#) on how you "code" with advanced reasoning AI's.

Repatriating your cloud workloads because it is too expensive

Many companies are starting to realise that moving workloads to the cloud did not end up saving anything, in actual fact, their bills have continued to increase. This has forced companies to reconsider if moving to the cloud was a good idea.

It can still be a good idea if you ensure that what you have moved to the cloud is using the resources optimally. This is quite different from how you would run on-premise.

On-premise, it does not matter if you run your CPU flat out or move vast amounts of data around for no good reason; it costs nothing extra to do that. In the cloud, the story is very different. [Here is a very good article written by one of First Technologies' cloud specialists](#) that provides some interesting guidance on how to approach this to ensure optimal use of cloud resources.

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with one of our THREE teams to discuss how we can help you find savings.

Don't Forget

This new section is dedicated to reminding you about important dates or events in IT. Note that this list is not complete.

[The Microsoft Product Lifecycle Page](#)

[Here is where you can find out when ANY product is ending](#) mainstream or extended support.

Of course, the list of products is huge, and it's easy to miss important dates and their implications. Even though you can access the list yourself, I'll highlight important dates.....

Microsoft Office

There is a long list of Office EOL dates, including when Publisher will be discontinued (13 October 2026), [Outlook "Classic" EOL \(at least 2029\)](#), and more.

Outlook Classic for Enterprise switches to "Opt-in" April 2026 (removed from Office install)

The [complete list of Office EoS is maintained here](#).

It is important to remember that Office 2019/6 and Exchange Server 2016/9 Extended support, along with Windows 10, will end on 14 October 2025.

Microsoft Publisher

Publisher will reach end of Life in October 2026, after which **M365 Subscribers will no longer be able to open or edit Publisher files**. You have until then to save the files in other formats. The perpetual version of Publisher will continue to work (without support). [You can read more detail here](#).

Microsoft notes that *"documents may not be a one-to-one replication of your original Publisher file. If your document has a lot of graphics, you may see significant changes."*

Unlicensed OneDrive accounts to lose data

As advised in [TOP STORIES #95](#), as of now, OneDrive accounts will be archived after 93 days. After another 93 days, they get PERMANENTLY deleted. Up until then, you can still re-activate the accounts. You can [read about how all this is working here](#). **THE FINAL DEADLINE (for a price) is before 29 July 2025!**

(disclaimer - Microsoft can change the rules anytime - so get your data out FAST!!!)

Windows 10 - End of Support (EoS) October 2025

Everyone should be aware of this, but it is important to remember that Extended Support is available if you cannot get rid of Windows 10 in time, albeit very expensive.

It will only protect you from vulnerabilities Microsoft chooses to protect you from. You can get more information on [the program here](#).

Plan "C" comes from a company called [Opatch](#).

NOTE!!!!!!! ALL support for any product, INCLUDING O365 running on Windows 10, also ends.

The exception - Windows 10 LTSC 2019 is supported till 2029.

Note the use case for LTSC is very narrow (POS, Medical Devices, ATM's etc.) and not recommended for general use.

Windows 11 - End of Support (EoS)

It is essential to track the builds, and as you can see, it is very important to make sure you are trying to deploy Win 11 24H2 and NOT earlier builds.....

Win 11 22H2 October 2025 (**Note: Microsoft will force upgrade this version**)

Win 11 23H2 November 2026

Win 11 24H2 October 2027

Win 11 Ent. LTSC 2029

Windows Server End of Support

Windows Server 2012 ESU ends October 2026 - **that's 100% the end of the line.**

Windows Server 2016 Support ends Jan 2027, ESU ends Jan 2029

SQL Server End of Support

2012 SP4 ESU July 2025

2014 SP3 ESU July 2027

2016 SP3 July 2026 (this is your next big one to worry about)

2017 Oct 2027

Azure AD and MSOnline End of Support

Both these services come to **end of support on 30 March 2025**

Microsoft has posted detailed information about this [here](#).

What's up at FTG

HPE Aruba New Networking Solutions Unveiled

Join us for an Exclusive First Technology KZN event in partnership with Aruba to discover how our AI-powered, secure, and scalable infrastructure can transform your business with guest speaker Alan Knott-Craig

When: 27 March @ 8:30am

Where: First Technology, Office 11 Richefond Circle, Ridgeside Office Park, Umhlanga

RSVP: [Here](#)

Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI

With 63 healthcare facilities in southern Africa, the security of Life Healthcare's data is paramount. A move to the Azure Cloud, facilitated by BUI, became the clear and strategic choice.

As a leading South African private healthcare provider, Life Healthcare plays a key role in the health of our nation. While their primary business occurs in wards, theatres and consulting rooms around the country, it is underpinned by a solid IT foundation.

Read more about how BUI enabled Life Healthcare's move to the cloud..... [Navigating the Cloud: Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI - BUI](#)

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.

Municipality Solution Demonstration

Join the CRMTeam at Microsoft for an event that showcases how cutting-edge technology can transform the way municipalities handle service delivery, from ticket management to AI-powered insights. You can [read more about the event here](#).

When: 19 March 2025 from 10H00 - 12H30 ([RSVP by March 12](#))

Where: Microsoft Offices, 3012 Winnie Mandela Dr, Bryanston, Sandton.

CoPilot Security Demo

BUI, FTG's security division, can present CoPilot for Security information-sharing sessions, workshops and demos.

In light of ongoing attacks that will only get sneakier, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to arrange to attend a session. You can also [request a session here](#).

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 - 5th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, is now in its fifth edition, [available here](#).

This edition focuses on security news from Microsoft for February. If you work with the Microsoft security stack, this is a handy video to watch—it's only five minutes long.

BUI Open 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

BUI Newsflash

The first MVP, Samson Barasa Wanjala from BUI has been accepted into the program. You can read [more about his journey here](#).

BUI was announced as a Diversity in Security award finalist in the Microsoft Security Excellence Awards. The company was honoured among a global field of industry leaders who demonstrated success across the security landscape during the past 12 months. You can [read more about this award here](#), where on the 28th April Microsoft will recognise the finalists in 9

categories.

Movies

Grp 1 Pvt School Holidays 21-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

Public School Holidays 29-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

Grp 2 Pvt School Holidays 05-APR-25 until 05-MAY-25

Human Rights Day 21-MAR-25

The Line-up for 21 March is going to be INTENSE!!

Now Playing: [Buffalo Kids](#)

Now Playing: [Cleaner](#)

Now Playing: [In the Lost Lands](#)

21 March: [Disney's Snow White](#)

21 March: [Som Van Twee](#) - Please support your local cinema!

21 March: [Black Bag](#)

21 March: [Novocaine](#)

21 March: [Last Breath](#)

28 March: [Night of the Zoopocalypse](#)

28 March: [A working Man](#)

4 April: [Locked](#)

4 April: [A Minecraft Movie](#)

4 April: [Riff Raff](#)

11 April: [The Amateur](#)

11 April: [A Kind of Madness](#)

11 April: [Drop](#)

11 April: [Warfare](#)

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