

## TOP STORIES #127

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 independent 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 #126 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.

### **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

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

Although Intel is busy with getting Panther Lake CPUs released for 2025, more information is leaking about Nova Lake expected in 2026, but all this is also telling us that AMD will remain in the lead with Strix Halo. It seems even for companies looking for hardware refreshes in the next 2 years, it will be more important than ever to consider AMD as an alternative, but that brings the tricky problem of supporting Thunderbolt and USB-4 peripherals.. You can [read more about what is coming from Intel in the next year here](#).

With the constantly shifting roadmap, it is very important to regularly update your roadmap with your vendor and make sure you are up to date with the latest hardware while planning on how to deal with the increasing prospect of moving from Intel to AMD and having to deal with a mixture in your environment.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to ensure you stay up to date with the latest changes in availability.

## Microsoft

### Win11 25H2 to remove unwanted Apps

Microsoft is going to be adding a much-requested feature that will allow admins to remove unwanted apps via group policy. Win11 25H2 is expected to be released sometime in October. Windows 11 has been slowly getting more bloated with apps that serve no useful purpose in the enterprise other than wasting space, which could be better used for new AI capabilities, so it seems Microsoft now finally has a great incentive to de-bloat Windows 11.

You can [read more about this new feature here](#).

### What is Windows 11 Quick Machine Recovery?

QMR is now being rolled out by Microsoft to all production Windows 11 machines, and is actually quite a big deal in terms of how it will help make sure machines can recover from a disastrous update. The CrowdStrike disaster is cited as an example of where QMR would have allowed a recovery in minutes rather than days. You can [read more about how it works and how to start testing it here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Security Specialists to start testing and preparing for QMR, which Microsoft should fully deploy before the 25H2 update in October.

## Security

### 28,000+ Microsoft Exchange Servers Vulnerable Online

Here we go again!

As of 7 August, there are still over 28,000 Exchange servers that are unpatched, allowing for a total compromise of the domain on-premises and in the cloud. Patching is urgent!

You can [read more about this compromise here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to assist you in ensuring that these patches are applied, and your environment is checked to ensure that hackers have not already gained a foothold, remembering that the SharePoint hack is still very much alive!

### Axis Camera Vulnerabilities Expose thousands of companies.

Over 6500 companies are vulnerable to attackers being able to completely take over their camera network and monitoring systems.

These are high-end cameras often used in very high-value installations.

You can [read more about the compromise here](#).

First Technology Group has a dedicated team of IoT security specialists that will be able to help find and secure these vulnerabilities. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our IoT team to start helping to see if you are vulnerable and then to take the necessary steps to ensure you are secure.

### A new Salesforce scam that caught Google

This is yet another example of how you can get tricked into giving an outsider access to your

company's data. This attack does not take advantage of any vulnerability.... it takes advantage of tricking YOU into giving an outsider legitimate access to your data by authorising a "connector". They call you and ask you for access with a story convincing enough for you to grant it! You can [read about how this attacks works here](#).

These connectors exist in many systems such as Slack, Teams, M365, Google Workspace etc.....

There is no vulnerability! The only thing you can do is make sure your users are trained to spot these types of attacks and refuse to grant access no matter how compelling or plausible the story could be.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts to help ensure your users are trained to spot these manipulative attacks on their trust.](#)

## Cloud & AI

### GPT-5 - the backlash

GPT-5 is going to go down in history as probably the most anticipated launch of a new AI. 700 million users got access to this new AI within 4 days - the fastest rollout of a new technology in human history! Clearly, that did not go smoothly, and OpenAI got a few things wrong, especially relating to new rate limits and 4o being removed (it's coming back).

What is remarkable is that nothing broke completely, and Microsoft quietly "switched on" GPT-5 at the same time, with nothing significant appearing to break either. You can [read more about the launch here](#).

### GPT-5 .....It just works!

Now, let's ignore the noise and take a closer look at what GPT-5 really means to the world and for us as individuals.

#### **"Free" is just a demo!**

If you are using the free version of any of the AI's, you are not getting to experience what an AI could really do for you.

This is going to be a new cost for living and competing in the world - this is ANOTHER bill in addition to your rent, electricity, water, transport and cellphone (remember when you did not have a cellphone bill?).

Maybe you will agree.....you will probably starve before not paying for your cellphone!

Well - AI is going to be that type of bill too - soon.....

GPT-5 is the first AI that gives you direct access to the most powerful model for your task. It is also the very first model that just "gets it done" without you having to jump through many hoops to get it to do what you want.

Maybe in 2026 we will see "AGI" and not GPT-6..... You can [read more about engaging with GPT-5 \(the thinking - NOT free model\) here](#).

#### **Tip: Ask it to "think hard" so you have a better chance of it selecting a smarter model**

Note that Google Gemini 2.5 Pro is also immensely powerful with a huge multi-modal context window, and if you are able, I recommend experimenting with that AI as well.

With the advent of GPT-5 in CoPilot, bringing a dramatic increase in intelligence, it is now more important than ever to start experimenting with how AI can benefit your business, but as always, it starts with ensuring that your data is secure and correctly categorised.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts to talk about how we can get you started on this Journey!](#)

## Why firms are merging HR and IT departments

A big part of what makes HR departments tick is IT-based processes, such as streamlining the mover/leaver/joiner and onboarding process, ensuring technology and people strategies work in harmony.

There is a growing trend of HR and IT merging under a single vision as [highlighted in this BBC article](#).

At First Technology, we understand the growing trend of HR and IT merging under a single vision, as highlighted in the BBC article. Our strength lies in working seamlessly with both functions to bridge any cultural or operational divide.

We deliver low-code automation, AI-powered HR assistants, and streamlined processes, ensuring technology and people strategies work in harmony. By aligning HR's people expertise with IT's technical capabilities, we help organisations accelerate transformation, improve collaboration, and create a unified approach to how work gets done in the AI era.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts to start discussing how we can help you start this journey.](#)

# 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:** Now you can procure **Palo Alto** and **CheckPoint!**

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 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 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 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.

## 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.

## Need Branded Gifts?

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

You have to find some decent and relevant gifts, get them branded with your company logo, make sure that you are not getting ripped off, get the order placed and hope that you will get them in time for year-end in packaging that you actually expected when you looked at 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 account manager to connect you with the "Gifting Experts" to help come up with the perfect gift for your clients!

## Movies

Fantastic Four is turning out to be one of the best movies of the year!

Even **The Critical Drinker** thinks so!

Of course, there are others who think the movie failed to deliver.....

Note Red Sonja has been rescheduled from 15 August to 5 September

Unfortunately, August does not have any major blockbusters lined up, but there is the 50th Anniversary screening of Jaws.....

Now Playing: **Freakier Friday**

Now Playing: **Tin Soldier**

Now Playing: **Weapons**

Now Playing: **Sketch**

15 August: **Nobody 2**

15 August: **Together**

15 August: **Grand Prix of Europe**

15 August: **Coolie**

15 August: **Magazine Dreams**

15 August: **War 2**

22 August: **The Myth of Maracuda**

22 August: **Relay**

22 August: **Hunting Jessica Brok**

29 August: **The Roses**

29 August: **Caught Stealing**

29 August: Jaws 50th Anniversary - [watch the documentary here](#) .

29 August: **Afterburn**

29 August: **My F\*CK Marelize**

5 September: **Disney Junior Cinema Club** - not much information - yet!

5 September: **The Stolen Girl**

5 September: **Conjuring: The Last Rights**

5 September: **Red Sonja**



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