TOP STORIES #98

With CES behind us, the next big show of 2025 is about to start: **ISE 2025, which will take place from 4 to 7 February** in Barcelona. This show is aimed more at the professional AV Industry. A browse through this Magazine, **RISE,** will give you an idea of what to expect at the show. It is a very big show, and you can expect more announcements from all the major technology vendors.

Did you Know?

First Digital has Digitally Transformed Blood!

First Digital, a division of First Technology Group, has revolutionised the blood donation process for Western Cape Blood Services, one of Africa's largest organisations of its kind. **They've introduced a world-leading end-to-end digital system**, drastically reducing donation time and eliminating the painful process of completing a 72-question paper-based form prone to errors!

Key achievements:

- **Digital Questionnaires**: Donors can now complete pre-screening via mobile or web, slashing in-clinic time.
- **Azure Cloud Integration:** Real-time validation and seamless data transfer ensure an error-free process.
- **AI in Action:** Advanced analytics and planned AI initiatives aim to predict blood supply needs with unparalleled accuracy.

This groundbreaking solution has not only increased donor convenience but also set a global benchmark in healthcare digital transformation. It is a testament to what innovation can achieve in saving lives—one drop of blood at a time.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our specialists in First Digital to show you this amazing World First solution and then talk about what DIgital Transformations could be applied in your business, or come visit First Digital at the Microsoft AI Tour on 23rd Jan at the Sandton Convention Centre (see below for more).

Hardware

Lenovo Launches CuP and Rollable Notebooks

Lenovo captured a lot of attention with two technologies, one being the first notebook with **C**amera **u**nder **P**anel technology - which you can **read about here** - it's very cool as it allows the bezel to be ultra-thin.

The technology that really captured the world's attention was the very first rollable notebook display, which you can **read about here**. The notebook will probably only be available in mid-2025, as the latest news is that Samsung, which is making the display, will be in **mass production by April**.

If you want more information about these products and when you can expect them in South Africa, please contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with our hardware experts to assist you further.

PCIe 7 ratified in 2025

We are only now able to buy storage that supports PCIe 5, but PCIe 7, which will allow up to 512GB/s, is already heading for ratification in 2025!

Two years ago, I predicted we would see terrabyte-per-second transfer rates in 10 years. The way this is going, we will see a rate like that in 2 years!

You can read **more about this announcement here**.

Microsoft

Like it or not, New Outlook is coming to Win10

I have warned about this in previous TOP STORIES and hoped that Microsoft would decide this is a bad idea, as it will irritate many people for nothing, but it seems they are dead set on proceeding. **Office Watch has published a full story** on what to do about it

—which is really about removing it after it has been installed. Note: when Windows 10 comes to the end of support in October, ALL versions of Office on Windows 10 will Stop getting supported - **the details are here**.
It makes sense—when support for Win10 ends, all other vendors, not just Microsoft, will probably stop supporting their products as well.
However, if you have purchased Extended Support, it will get tricky. Microsoft still needs to answer these questions.
For the reasons above and all the others discussed in the previous TOP STORIES, I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to start planning your Migration to Windows 11 24H2 combined with your hardware refresh, which you also have to plan.
The minimum RAM requirement will certainly be 32 GB going forward, which should be factored into your upgrade/refresh.
Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts to plan the upgrade to Win 11, along with your hardware refresh and RAM upgrade. If you have not started, you are REALLY running out of time!

M365 Gets a price increase

This news is all over the internet!
Microsoft has announced that Personal and Family Plans will increase their **prices by $3 per month.** The plans will now include CoPIlot, but it is not unlimited—you get an allotment of credits to use CoPilot.
This is not the drastic price increase Microsoft implemented in **six Asian countries**, but unfortunately, it looks like South Africa is getting the **45% price increase** as well—remember, **this is consumer, not corporate**.
The price increase does not apply to all subscriptions, so it is important to check what applies to you and when it comes into effect, which appears to be 18 March 2025.
You can **read more details here**.
This is probably an advance warning of a price increase for corporates.
Microsoft needs to recoup the massive investment it has made and will continue to make in AI.
Recovering an extra $3 from 80 million users is not even a drop in the ocean compared with the billions being invested in AI.
As Microsoft integrates AI into its product suites, its pricing will trend upwards, so it is very important to balance cost with features carefully.
If your contract is due for renewal in 2025, it is SUPER important to start preparing, **especially when it comes to selecting the optimal product suites for different profiles**. Otherwise, negotiating with Microsoft for better pricing will become extremely difficult.

Win11 gets AI-powered Natural Language Search

Microsoft has released a preview build allowing you to test this new search for CoPilot+ PC's.
Depending on your work, this could be a real time-saver looking for things. You can **read more about this new functionality here**.
Windows 11 will soon add more functionality, so it is important to review "**What does an AI PC do?**" in **TOP STORIES #91.** Those boxes are already starting to get ticked!

Security

New Phishing kit targets M365 accounts with 2FA bypass

This is an especially nasty attack designed to trick users into authenticating themselves to gain access to blurred content they are tricked into needing to see. You can **read more about how this attack works here**.
This is another reminder that you cannot give up on constantly training your users to be alert for new ways of getting tricked. It's no longer as simple as looking out for poor spelling and grammar—AI is making sure those boxes are ticked.
Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss the 2025 training courses and to schedule training for your users.

Microsoft Patch Tuesday is important!

Microsoft has fixed more than 150 vulnerabilities, including three that are being actively exploited, so please make sure you are applying the updates ASAP!
You can read **more about these vulnerabilities here**.

Cloud & AI

It's the Question that counts!

Knowing what questions to ask and how to ask them will be a very important skill to develop as AI becomes more powerful. Knowing how to connect the dots to gain insights into patterns, events, or processes will give you the edge.
You can read **more about what Sam Altman thinks about this here**.
Microsoft has also made a point about this by launching the **CoPilot Academy** to help users develop better prompting skills.
Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our AI experts. They can help you to get your users more comfortable prompting AI for better responses. This skill is honed with practice!

What's up at FTG

Microsoft AI Tour in Johannesburg

First Technology Group will have a major presence at the Microsoft AI Tour in Johannesburg. You will be able to meet our experts in all fields of AI. These experts from First Technology, BUI, CRM Team and First Digital will be there to introduce, explore and demonstrate business-centric AI-powered solutions to boost creativity and productivity. (Note the Digital transformation of Blood above) These include out-of-the-box solutions and custom designs developed by First Technology Group companies.

When: 23 Jan 2025 7:00am to 1:45pm
Where: Sandton Convention Centre
Register here

Cloud Backup for Microsoft 365 powered by First Technology Group

Join us for a Webinar on a 365 Cloud Backup service tailored to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes. This service provides a reliable and scalable solution for data protection.
It leverages advanced encryption and access controls to safeguard sensitive information, ensuring data integrity and confidentiality. Additionally, the service includes automated backups, helping organisations comply with industry regulations and standards.

When: 6 Feb at 10:00am - 10:45am
Where: Online Webinar
Register Here.

Pure Storage event - Special Guest speaker - PSG Wealth

This is a special in-person event to start the new year. It introduces the Pure Storage and First Technology partnership, takes you behind the scenes of the technology, explains how you can benefit from it, and discusses what the future looks like with Containers and Kubernetes.

When: 23 Jan 2025 at 8:00am
Where: Pencil Club, 1 Ncondo Pl, Umhlanga Ridge, Durban, 4320
Register Here.

There are limited seats, so please register ASAP

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 - 4th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI, has launched a blog focused on Security—what's new, what's changed, and what you need to do to maintain a sound security posture. The 4th Video in the series is **available here**. **This video covers some of the Purview announcements at Microsoft Ignite 2024**.

Movies

This is an extremely diverse selection of titles, there is something for everybody!
Now Playing: **Luther: Never too much**
Now Playing: **Nosferatu**
Now Playing: **Wolf Man**
24 January: **A Real Pain**
24 January: **The Day the Earth Blew Up: A looney Tunes Movie**
24 January: **Marked Men: Rule & Shaw**
24 January: **SE7EN** (Re-Release)
24 January: **Better Man**

Movies for 2025

There is a great lineup for 2025 - **here is a list by the release date of some of the big titles**. Note that the release dates are for the USA.

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, 2191 ZA

Unsubscribe | Update Profile | Constant Contact Data Notice

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!