

# .top\_stories

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## 26th January #151

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### 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.
  - **Did you Know?** We have a new World First AI training platform to show you!
  - **Microsoft EoL section** Updated for January 2026 - **Note the Biztalk Zombie!**
  - **3 New vendors** Paessler, PingPlotter & PowerViz added to FirstMarketplace
  - **DRAM Prices Stabilise** - They are going to stay high - best make plans!
  - **WiFi Tracking in Teams Delayed** - We WILL find you!!!
  - **PowerApps USER SL removed** - Need to check if you are impacted.
  - **Teams Getting New Features** - Features for everybody that were only in Premium
  - **Activating Azure Arc**- There are licensing prerequisites - careful!!!!
  - **A Cleanup Tool from MS that is good!** - Even MS can't get it wrong all the time!
  - **New LinkedIn Phishing Campaign** - Read carefully, you need to be careful.
  - **Bluetooth Vulnerability affecting everybody** - Read to be aware and get patched
  - **Advanced Phishing Kits using Voice cloning** - The bad news... this is only the start
  - **Adobe Transforms PDF's into podcasts** - Maybe your PDF archives can get airtime!
  - **The Desktop is dead - long live the Keyboard!** Time to consider other form factors
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# Did you Know?

AISDI is the only AI education platform in the world built on **Syntheogy** - structured human and AI co-learning

- AI is your learning partner inside the course, not just the topic
- Over 150 role-based courses, from AI basics and prompt skills to exec programmes
- Bespoke industry training can be built fast, aligned to your sector and teams
- Integrates into most Learning Management Systems using LTI, plus API options
- Vendor-neutral, improves adoption and ROI from AI tools because people know what to do and why it matters

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to arrange a demo and have a discussion about how this can help drive AI adoption in your business.**

## Upcoming Shows

See this page for a summary of some of the technology announced at the biggest tech show of the Year. Biggest news is Intel's Panther Lake CPU release that beats AMD.

## Panther Lake Impact

**DRAM prices have already tripled.**

Read how Intel's Panther Lake changes the game now that CES is done.

## TOP STORIES #150

Click button above for last weeks news.

## Price increases hit SA IT Hard

## Visit FirstMarketPLace

**Paessler, PingPlotter & PowerViz** have been added for this week.

There is now a LinkedIn Page for you to follow as well.

## Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa.

**Coming up: "Send Help"**  
Next big movie for 2026 is **"Hail Mary"**.

## Microsoft EoL

**Summary of what to know up to January 2027.**

Detailed document available for download

Go to Bottom of EoL landing page for detailed PDF to download

## Visit our LinkedIn

**Request Account Manager**

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## RAM Prices Stabilise at Record Highs in 2026

It is becoming painfully clear that extremely high RAM prices are here to stay for at least the whole of 2026. Prices have stabilised for now, as the high prices have caused demand to drop. Corporations are going to have to find more creative ways to buy new hardware at reasonable prices. This creates a great opportunity to review hardware standards, and allow for new configurations - like AMD or Qualcomm based devices and then NUC-type devices, or even HP's new computer in a keyboard! Please read the article at the bottom of this newsletter to help consider a different approach to buying computers for your users.

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help with planning your roadmap with this new hardware, along with alternative form factors, and to simultaneously implement a program to extend the life of existing hardware through debloating and optimisation.**

**RAM Prices Stabilise**

**Intel focuses on more XEON's**

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## Microsoft News This Week

### Microsoft Teams WiFi Location Tracking Delayed Until March 2026

Microsoft has once again postponed the rollout of its controversial Teams feature that automatically updates a user's work location based on their office WiFi network connection. Originally scheduled for December 2025, then pushed to January 2026, the feature is now expected to deploy in mid-March 2026 as it looks like Microsoft making further adjustments to respect privacy.

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists to help plan for the activation of this feature, because although it is delayed it WILL roll out and it will be a good idea to have a policy in place around this, and may require updating HR policies as well.**

**Teams Location Tracking**

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### PowerApps per App User SL removed

Microsoft has confirmed that the Power Apps Per App User subscription licence is no longer sold to new customers from beginning of January 2026. It was removed from the Licensing Guide earlier this month and this announcement confirms it officially. Existing customers are not forced to change immediately.

- CSP and EA customers can keep using and renewing their current licences
- MPSA customers can only use existing licences until their current agreement ends

For new purchases, the options are:

- Power Apps Per App Pay As You Go remains available
- Power Apps Premium is the main per user alternative

**Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing and PowerApps specialists to help you understand how you are affected by this change and what the best options are for your business going forward.**

**Power Apps Sales end**

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## Activating Azure Arc for Windows Server AutoMagically!

In November 2024 Microsoft started including several Azure server management tools at no extra cost for eligible Windows Server machines connected via Azure Arc. If the server is Pay as you go, or covered by Software Assurance or Software Subscriptions, Azure Update Manager, Change Tracking and Inventory, and Machine Configuration are included.

Previously you had to identify each eligible server and manually switch the benefit on, while confirming you had the right licences. Microsoft has now added an Azure Policy you can deploy that continually scans your Azure Arc estate, spots newly added machines, flags servers that are not enrolled, and then lets an admin run a remediation task to enable the benefits across the right servers.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with our SAM, licensing and Server experts to assist with understanding the benefits and importantly the implications of turning on this feature.

### Automating Adding Win Server to Azure Arc

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## Changes coming to Teams Licensing 1 April 2026





Microsoft has posted on the official Teams Blog site some major changes coming to Teams licensing starting 1st April 2026.

- **Advanced Town Hall & Webinar features (streaming chat, reactions, eCDN, immersive 3D events), previously in Teams Premium, for up to 3,000 interactive / 10,000 view-only attendees.**
- Need bigger events? New Attendee Capacity Packs will scale up to 100,000. Pricing TBA.
- Places end-user features (Places Finder, Places Explorer), previously in Teams Premium, are now available for all users with Exchange/M365, except licensees.
- Teams Shared Devices license will be renamed to Teams Shared Space license, which adds the ability to manage up to four desks with a single license, as well as the original shared device features. This is the way you would make spaces and desks available to Microsoft Places users.
- **Teams Premium is still needed for advanced communication features** in Teams meetings, meeting protection, Advanced Collaboration Tools for admins, Intelligent recap, Queues app for Teams Phone, and enhanced capabilities for Bookings and virtual appointments.

Tom's m365perspective.com has also created a nice infographic summarising the changes below.....

# Microsoft Teams Licensing Changes April 1st 2026



| Places End-User Features   | Teams Shared Space License   | Advanced Town Hall & Webinar Features  | Attendee Pack Licenses   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <br>Places end-user functionality moves from Teams Premium to Teams Enterprise licenses |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Renamed from Teams Shared Device license</li><li>Manage up to four spaces/desks with a single license</li><li>Enables Desk booking for employees</li><li>Allows Space management of booking policies</li><li>Provides Space Analytics like desk utilization reports</li><li>Integrates with 3rd-party APIs for check-in signals and spatial data</li></ul> |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Features previously in Teams Premium move to Teams Core licenses</li><li>Includes advanced host controls and management</li><li>Supports up to 3,000 interactive attendees</li><li>Allows up to 10,000 attendees in view-only experience</li></ul> |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New add-on licenses to increase attendee cap</li><li>Scale events up to 100,000 participants</li><li>Available in a range of sizes for added flexibility</li></ul> |

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with our Teams experts to assist you in evaluating these new benefits coming to Teams and how that may change the value proposition for you in putting Teams to better use in your organisation.

## Teams Premium features coming to Teams Core

### Free Windows 11 Cleanup tool gets a good review!

Occasionally, a tool from Microsoft appears that ends up being quite good - and it's free! There are many tools out there that you can buy to help clean up a PC that has become sluggish because of all the rubbish building up in the operating system, but this one is from Microsoft, and it's free!

ZDnet has published a detailed review of the tool, and maybe after reading the review, you may want to run it on your PC to keep it running efficiently, as buying more RAM is definitely not an option anymore!

Debloating and optimising computers in the workplace is increasingly important because of the RAM price increases - making existing hardware stretch further is now more important than ever. Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with our SAM and Windows 11 experts to help inventory your environment and then with that analysis take the necessary steps in getting your machines running more efficiently and reliably.

## PC Manager Review

## Security

### New Phishing Campaign Spreads Via LinkedIn Comments

Knowbe4 has published an article about a new widespread campaign targeting LinkedIn users impersonating LinkedIn, scaring the user by informing them that their account has been restricted due to policy violations.

ALWAYS react by doing nothing, take a closer look and ask for help.  
DO NOT follow any link to fill in your credentials!



Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to ensure that your users are always being kept up to date with the latest tricks to get them to enter their credentials.

## LinkedIn Phishing Attack

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### Bluetooth Vulnerability Affects 100's of Millions of Devices

Security researchers at KU Leuven University discovered a critical vulnerability (CVE-2025-36911) in Google's Fast Pair protocol that allows attackers to hijack Bluetooth audio accessories, track users, and eavesdrop on conversations. Dubbed "WhisperPair", the flaw affects hundreds of millions of wireless headphones, earbuds, and speakers from major manufacturers.

**This affects both Android and iPhone users, as the vulnerability exists in the accessories themselves. The flaw enables persistent tracking and surveillance through everyday consumer devices.**

**The scariest part of this vulnerability is the ability to track the victim.**

The vulnerability stems from improper implementation of the Fast Pair specification. Many vendors failed to enforce a critical check that should prevent pairing requests when devices aren't in pairing mode. Attackers can exploit this using any Bluetooth-capable device, within a range of up to 14 metres, within seconds, without user interaction or physical access.

**The only protection is installing firmware updates from device manufacturers. Disabling Fast Pair on Android phones does not prevent the attack, as the feature cannot be disabled on the accessories themselves.**

One important tip is that if your headset uses a dedicated dongle to connect to your PC, you are at much lower risk, but you must still check for firmware updates.

**This serves as a reminder that ALL devices, even those you would typically regard as benign, can be vulnerable. Imagine all the devices in your environment that are NOT visible to you? Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists who are focused on finding all those hidden (and probably vulnerable) IoT devices on your network.**

## Critical BlueTooth Flaw

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### Advanced Phishing Kits Use AI Voice Cloning for Vishing Scams

Attackers are upgrading phone scams with phishing kits that keep a fake website in sync with the caller's script, so what you hear on the phone matches what you see in the browser. The goal is to harvest usernames and passwords, then pressure the victim into approving multi factor authentication prompts in real time, sometimes using AI voice cloning to sound more convincing. Okta threat researchers warn these kits are being sold as a service and are being used against major identity platforms and crypto providers. Some recent campaigns start with a caller impersonating IT support and nudging staff to "set up passkeys" on a lookalike internal site, which acts as an adversary in the middle proxy to capture SSO credentials and one time codes as the login happens.

What makes this especially nasty is that The attacker can change the phishing page on the fly to mirror the exact MFA challenge being presented during the real sign in attempt.

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to ensure that your users are always being kept up to date with the latest tricks to get them to enter their credentials - now you must be extra careful just because you are on the phone with somebody that sounds familiar, and seems to know what you are looking at, you STILL**

cannot trust the call!!!  
ALWAYS use independant call-back procedures.....

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## Cloud & AI

### Adobe tranforms PDF's into Podcasts

Adobe has released a suite of AI tools for Acrobat enabling users to turn PDF's into Podcasts with a single prompt, much like Notebook LM. This feature builds on Acrobats PDF Spaces released in August 2025. Adobe has an oppportunity to take a lead in using it's dominance in this sector to create new forms of output from content stored in Adobe's Native format, and has received high praise for the quality of the output, but still Adobe has to swim upstream against the other giants in this space.

**Adobe transforms PDF's to Podcasts**

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to arrange for a demo of these features and how they could maybe make a big difference in making "buried information" available to your employees and/or your customers.

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### The Desktop is dead - Long live the Keyboard!

HP grabbed a lot of headlines with its EliteBoard G1a—a fully functional AI PC built entirely inside a keyboard. It is a fascinating concept that solves the "closed lid" problem, where expensive laptop screens gather dust while docked.

It features the AMD Ryzen AI 300 PRO, giving it the magic 50 TOPS needed for Copilot+.

#### **But is this the trend to follow?**

The rest of the industry seems to be moving towards the **NUC** (Next Unit of Computing) form factor.

Since ASUS took over the NUC product line from Intel, we have seen an explosion in these tiny, powerful cubes.

The biggest argument against the Keyboard PC isn't performance—it's risk - you could call it the "Coffee Cup" test.

If a user spills coffee on the EliteBoard, they have destroyed the entire \$1,000 PC, the SSD, and the motherboard.

With the NUC Scenario, if a user spills coffee on their keyboard, you replace a \$20 peripheral. The computer (safe on the corner of your desk or behind the monitor) is fine.

#### **The "Choice" Factor.**

With a NUC (like a Dell OptiPlex Micro), you can keep the computer invisible behind the screen, or tucked into a corner on your desk, but your users have the choice of input device..... ergonomic, mechanical, or compact. A keyboard can be a very personal choice.

With the HP EliteBoard, you are married to that specific keyboard layout and "feel" forever (hopefully without the addition of any coffee). As you may be aware, there are thousands of different types of keyboards to choose from - and a decent keyboard you like can have a direct effect on your productivity!

The HP EliteBoard and NUC's can be creative solutions to combat the massive price increases we are already seeing in 2026 as they allow you to avoid buying parts of a notebook a user may never use - the built-in screen and keyboard.....

If your users travel between offices and homes that already have monitors, the HP EliteBoard is the ultimate "travelling desktop."

The NUC is a variation of this, as it is a tiny "box" that you can plug your keyboard of choice into.

Lenovo launched the Yoga Mini i at CES, which had a very interesting design - and will be shipping in June.

Though you may feel that these form factors are easier to steal, they are no different from a notebook, which is a user's responsibility anyway, and if the device gets stolen, the value is lower and excludes the monitor, mouse and in the case of a NUC, the keyboard as well.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to explore different options for your users and help save on costs, combat rising prices, and shortages. When notebooks are out of stock, maybe these other form factors will still be available!

**HP's EliteBoard G1a**

**Lenovo Yoga mini i**

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