

TOP STORIES #91

This week was dominated by ThanksGiving and Black Friday, but I hope some of you managed to snag some good deals [amidst the trickery](#). Of course, there is still tech. news and several clarifications from Microsoft about what was announced at the Ignite conference.

You can read the Previous Week's [TOP STORIES #90 here](#)

If colleagues want to subscribe, you can forward this to them and ask them to [click here](#).

Hardware

Dual Screen Notebooks - a new trend

This is new trend to watch out for driving by increasing performance density. Processing capabilities, along with increasingly thinner and more power-efficient displays, are permitting manufacturers to come up with notebooks that are exceptionally powerful AND pack two displays. I do not think that corporations will be rushing out to buy them just yet, but I do think these types of machines are worth considering for certain types of workloads - especially for creatives. [Take a look at an example](#) of one of these types of notebooks here.

Expect quite a few to get launched during 2025 - a single display could end up being quite old-fashioned!

What does an AI PC do?

Gartner predicts that by 2026 AI-enabled laptops will dominate in companies where today they only account for 14% of global shipments and probably waaaaay less for South Africa.

This underscores we are in a faster release cadence than anything we have experienced in the past (**see ChatGPT Hype to Hope below**). How you spec your notebook in 2026 will be very different from how you do it today. **The problem is what you buy today will still be around in 2026 - so it is important to be aggressive with your specifications.**

AI-enabled computers will be able to help you perform tasks more efficiently like:

Search your emails and data with:

- Natural language queries of everything!
- Perform real-time transcription and translation
- Remember everything you did on your computer (Work in progress with MS)
- provide advanced image processing and search capability
- Enhance security
- Do things that we cannot even imagine today!

You can [read more about these new PC's here](#).

It is very important that you review your hardware refresh plans and maybe reconsider your minimum specifications for machines you buy going forward from next year. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help review your refresh.

Microsoft

Microsoft Places launched

Microsoft has announced the general availability of Microsoft Places, a new technology built on Teams and Microsoft 365 Copilot. Designed to enhance the office work experience, it helps users easily coordinate in-person meetings or connect spontaneously with onsite colleagues on the same day.

From a licensing standpoint, there are three feature tiers: core, enhanced, and additional. Users with a Microsoft 365 Business Basic/Standard/Premium, Office 365 F3/E1/E3/E5, or Microsoft 365 F3/E3/E5 licence have access to the core features—though a Teams licence is required if it's not already part of the plan.

Enhanced features are unlocked with a Teams Premium Add-on licence, while the additional features also require a Microsoft 365 Copilot licence.

Explore the [announcement here for insights on Microsoft Places](#), or check the [Learn documentation for practical guidance](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Teams experts in our multiple divisions to take you through all the options available to get the most out of Places. It can get complicated (which is typical for Microsoft Licensing), so it is really important to consult with our experts to help you implement the technology as it

applies best to YOU!

SQL Databases in Microsoft Fabric

Microsoft has introduced a new addition to the Fabric workload family: SQL databases. Like other Fabric workloads, they utilise the same Fabric Capacity Units, with storage and backups billed separately. However, SQL databases in Fabric can be used at no cost until 1 January 2025, when charges for computing and data storage will take effect. Backup billing will commence from 1 February 2025.

You can find more information about this announcement with some of the features from the [official Microsoft site here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Fabric experts in First Digital to see how these SQL Databases in the Fabric family can be implemented in your business.

Windows 365 Link

You will recall last week that this was announced at Ignite and that Linus Tech tips had an amusing perspective on this ([see last week's story](#)), but notwithstanding, this is something that will probably be important for companies to consider, so it is important to take it seriously.

You can find the [official announcement here](#), the [Learn material is here](#) and a more [technical video is here](#).

Even though this will only be available next year, it is important start planning to see if this super secure "thin client" offering from Microsoft has a place in your future strategy of trying to up the game on security.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our experts, who will be able to help you figure out where this technology makes sense. This could be to review and have a good understanding of it before you get a visit from your enthusiastic Microsoft account manager with a target!

Azure Local

Microsoft has unveiled Azure Local - [see the announcement here](#), allowing customers to run Azure services directly on their own infrastructure. Powered by Azure Arc, Azure Local delivers cloud-connected capabilities tailored for distributed locations.

Think of it as the next step from Azure Stack, with Azure Stack HCI now rebranded as Azure Local.

For existing Azure Stack HCI customers, there's good news: pricing and licensing remain unchanged, and new Azure Local features will roll out as they become available.

For now, Azure Stack Hub and Azure Stack Edge continue as-is. However, Azure Local already has preview solutions for lower-spec hardware and disconnected operations, hinting at a future localisation of these Azure Stack components.

It is recommended that you start exploring the possibilities of Azure Local and how it could simplify your operations. Please contact your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our experts to start reviewing how Azure Local can improve efficiency and reduce costs on-premise while retaining a foot in the cloud.

Security

"Old" never goes away

As much as we worry about AI making the bad guys smarter and attacks getting generally more sophisticated, you must never forget the old-fashioned way of getting malicious stuff into a company - the good old USB drive!

[Here is a great article that reminds you about how important it is](#) to still make sure you are secure from USB based attacks!

Please contact your account manager to connect you with our security specialists to show you how they deal with USB drives to ensure your attack surface is as narrow as possible.

Public WiFi is risky!

It is urgent that you rethink your casual use of public Wifi (that includes in hotels, conference facilities and ALL public spaces **and even your home**) and always make a point of using VPN to communicate to improve your security. [Here is a good article the goes into more detail on the increasing risks](#).

When it comes to Microsoft, there are multiple ways to ensure you connect with the "home base" and the global Microsoft network, and of course, there are numerous solutions from

other vendors. It is really important to review what technologies you are already licensed for or what could be easily implemented, and it is recommended that you contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with some of the best security experts in the country to help evaluate your position. Even if you are happy - having somebody else with a different perspective take a look and be very handy!

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT - from Hype to Hope in 2 Years

Happy Birthday, ChatGPT! You are 2 years old, and still only a toddler taking your first uncertain first steps.

ONLY TWO YEARS!!!!????? Can you imagine!?! This kid is SMART!!!!

It is hard to believe how the world has changed so much in so little time and to think how much things will change again in the next 5 years, given the pace of change we are now experiencing in just the last 2. [Here is a great article that talks about some of the ways](#) that ChatGPT is starting to become part of people's lives.

I have spoken a lot about how the spreadsheet replaced the slide rule and the calculator and how many people were threatened by that new technology, but the most important message of all is that you must figure out your own way to experiment with AI to see how you can use it to give you a SuperPower, and [I talk more about that here](#). Remember, nobody (yes, there are exceptions) is any more of an expert than you by more than 2 years. You have to figure this out as much as everybody else.

What you CAN NOT DO, IS DO NOTHING - it is essential to actively experiment with AI in any way you can to see how you can use it to enhance your life some way.

40 years ago, if you had used a calculator all your life, only by playing with new technology like a spreadsheet would you have discovered new possibilities.

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our experts and talk to you about how you start this journey in your business, even if it is just to see a demo of the award-winning PEXA to get ideas flowing!

What's up at FTG

Attend a Quickie! Nintex K2: Innovating Workflow & Governance

First Digital is hosting a webinar specifically aimed at our existing Nintex K2 customers, and those looking at this amazing technology. Discover the future of workflow and governance with Nintex K2 and join us for this exclusive webinar where we'll dive into:

- **Enterprise Project Governance Best Practices:** Learn how to implement and sustain robust governance strategies.
- **Engaging Mobile Workflow Experiences:** Unlock the secrets to building user-friendly mobile workflows.
- **Exciting Roadmap for K2 5.8:** Explore upcoming features, including localisation and translation capabilities, to support your global operations.

When: 3 December 2024 10:00 - 10:30

Where: Online Webinar - [Register Here](#)

If you join this webinar, you'll be eligible for a FREE Workflow Health Assessment from First Digital. Optimize your workflows and drive business efficiency!

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 even more sneaky, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to make arrangements to attend a session, or you can [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 - 3rd Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI, has launched a blog focused on Security—what's new, what changed, and what you need to do to maintain a sound security posture. This one, however, is about a game that Dirk learnt about while attending Black Hat in Vegas. [All BUI videos have been moved to one YouTube channel, which you can find here](#).

The Security Blog Video #003 is [now available to view here](#).

Movies

School holidays from 6 December to January 25! 50 Days! Yikes!!!!

We are now in Holiday Season, and we are in for a bumper batch of movies like Kraven the Hunter, Sonic 3 and Mufasa. Please

Now Playing: [MOANA 2](#) - It's **EXCELLENT** - With this movie, the Disney of old is back with none of the "The Message"!

Now Playing: [Elevation](#) - A middling action movie - good entertainment

Now Playing: [Heretic](#) - Scary but good!

6 December: [Solo Leveling](#)

6 December: [Reawakening](#)

6 December: [HitPig](#)

6 December: [Lord of the Rings: The War of Rohirrim](#)

6 December: [Here](#)

6 December: [Niko Saves Christmas](#)

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