



Your Weekly guide in a Changing World.
Written and edited independently by Barry Neethling
Sponsored by First Technology Group

21st September #185

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.

- **Another 3 New vendors:** Bitwarden, Docker and Teamwire are added.
- **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #185-** The bad guys never sleep
- **You have a BIG monitor?** - maybe not anymore.
- **Can you Feel it?** - Something might be better
- **Support is Ending** - A gentle reminder
- **Win11 26H2** - It's almost time
- **Teams Supports 2 Presenters** - Well, it's new for Teams
- **New PowerApps Premium pricing** - Up or Down? Guess!
- **Grok joins CoPilot** - Properly shackled!
- **Passkeys themed attacks** - No Let up - users must be reminded
- **Ghostcode Phishing** - Another way to trick unsuspecting users
- **Anthropic takes on Google Docs** - the AI is the word processor?

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Forward this mail to others who may find this useful and invite them to subscribe using the button below.

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DarkWeb Executive Report #185

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BUI scans the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks.

Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but is actually updated continuously). This is part of the DarkWeb monitoring services included with many of BUI's managed services offerings. **This report is live, and this is a "snapshot" of the top 10 events as of Sunday Afternoon.**

Last Week's Top Stories

SignUp for the Archive

You can click the top button for last week's edition or sign up for access to the archive with AI assistance to read from #1

Newest additions to FirstMarketPlace

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Bitwarden
Docker
Teamwire

Are added for this week.
Click the link above for more information on these vendors

New Movies for this week

Coyote vs ACME is doing very well and has been released in SA.....

WARNING!! The trailer for Ice Cream Man is really hectic!!!



You think you have a BIG monitor?

Well, HKC has announced an **83.4" 12K resolution 1000R Curved beast!** This monitor has also just won the IFA Innovation Award -

see the link below (apply translation).

Detailed information is limited as it is still a prototype, but it does show you that monitor technology is not standing still, and is not just increasing in refresh rates. Currently, the biggest and highest resolution monitor you can buy is the [8K Samsung 57" 1000R Odyssey G95](#). This is readily available in SA, and there are also alternatives from [TCL](#), [Acer](#) and [Cooler Master](#).

However, 1000R curvature isn't necessarily optimal.

The monitor that is actually better (well, currently) in terms of size and curvature for Gaming AND business use [is this one](#) from LG.

800R is actually the best curvature to support [ocular accommodation](#) for a monitor of this size, which keeps the viewing distance consistent across the whole screen.

Effydesk published a [nice layman's explanation of this](#).

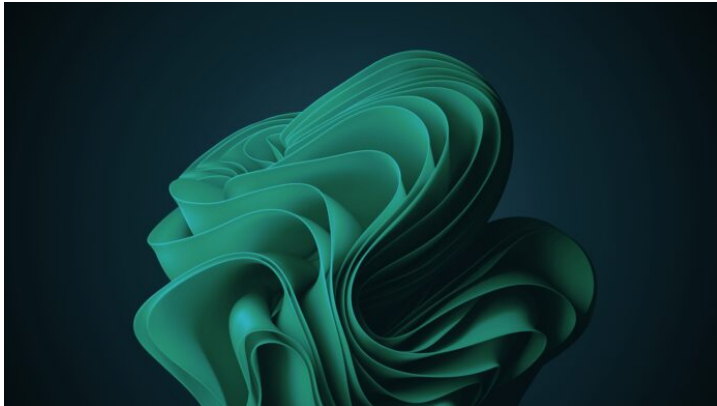
HOWEVER, some jobs are NOT suitable for this kind of curvature.

If you want to scientifically justify monitors like these to improve your productivity, be careful, and I recommend you contact me for assistance.

"While curved monitors cost more initially, the research-backed health and productivity benefits often justify the investment for users spending over four hours daily at computers (effydesk)."

Biggest 12K 83" Curved monitor in the world

Microsoft News



Can you feel it?

Maybe it's that weird feeling that Win 11 might just be getting faster?

Microsoft's design lead says early testers can already feel better responsiveness. Faster File Explorer, cleaner right-click menus

and more control over Start and the taskbar are welcome evidence that Microsoft IS listening.

Credit where it is due, these are improvements people actually asked for.

Some changes are reaching general release, but many remain in testing, with more promised over the coming months along with [old UI's getting modernised](#). There are no published before-and-after benchmarks behind the latest claims, so this is just encouraging progress rather than "mission accomplished".

Importantly, Microsoft is also working to reduce memory overhead, not merely rearrange the furniture. That could help existing, supported business PCs remain productive for longer.

It will not turn every ageing laptop into a workstation, but better optimisation could postpone some replacements without compromising the work people need to do.

With memory and storage costs squeezing budgets, getting more useful life from existing machines could give companies valuable breathing space. Windows becoming less demanding would be particularly welcome when the hardware budget is already demanding more money.

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Windows Latest: Users "can feel" Win11 speeding up

Support is ending for....

.....a number of Microsoft products, and this serves as a gentle reminder....

22 Days left (from 21 September):

- Windows 11 24H2 Home and Pro.



- Office 2021 and Office LTSC 2021
- Windows Server 2022, mainstream support ends 13 October 2026. Security updates continue under extended support.

50 Days Left

- Windows 11 23H2 Enterprise and Education

ESU Availability for

Windows Server 2016

Microsoft has announced ESU availability for on Azure ARC and CSP when Support ends 12 Jan 2027 allowing support to extend for a maximum of 3 more years.

The **Azure ARC** announcement is [here](#).

The **CSP** Announcement is [here](#).

Days remaining are calculated from Monday 21 September 2026.

Another reminder is that “it still works” is not quite the same as “it is still supported”. Maybe that is OK, but you need to consider the implications carefully.

The Windows 11 editions listed above will stop receiving security updates after their deadlines.

Office 2021 will also lose security fixes and technical support, with no Microsoft Extended Security Updates programme to buy extra time.

Please check both the Windows version and edition.

Windows 11 24H2 Enterprise and Education remain supported until 12 October 2027, so October's deadline is not a blanket instruction to upgrade every 24H2 machine.

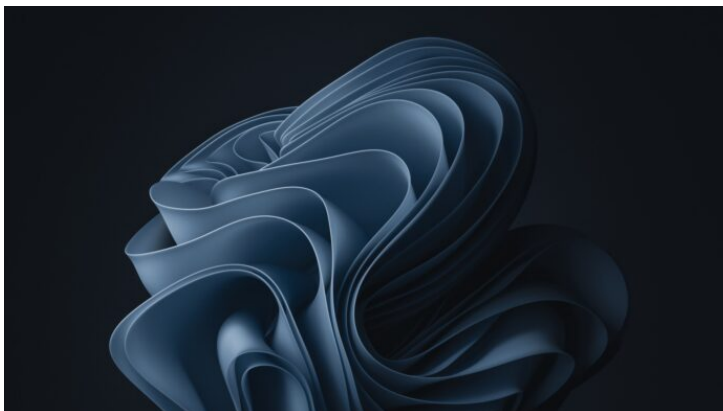
Windows Server 2022 is different. It moves into extended support, with security updates continuing at no additional cost until 14 October 2031.

This is a planning milestone, not an emergency!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to identify affected systems, review upgrade and licensing options, and arrange a tested migration plan before the relevant deadlines.

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Windows Server 2022 mainstream support ending



Windows 11 26H2, time for a test drive

Microsoft has released Windows 11 26H2 Enterprise evaluation ISOs, giving IT teams a free 90-day trial to assess the update before wider deployment. The limited period refers to the trial,

not a deadline to grab the download. This is an opportunity to test readiness, not a free permanent Windows licence.

Use a dedicated test machine or virtual environment, not somebody's everyday work PC. Microsoft warns that expired evaluation installations shut down every hour. That is one way to enforce regular breaks, but probably not the productivity improvement you might have wanted.

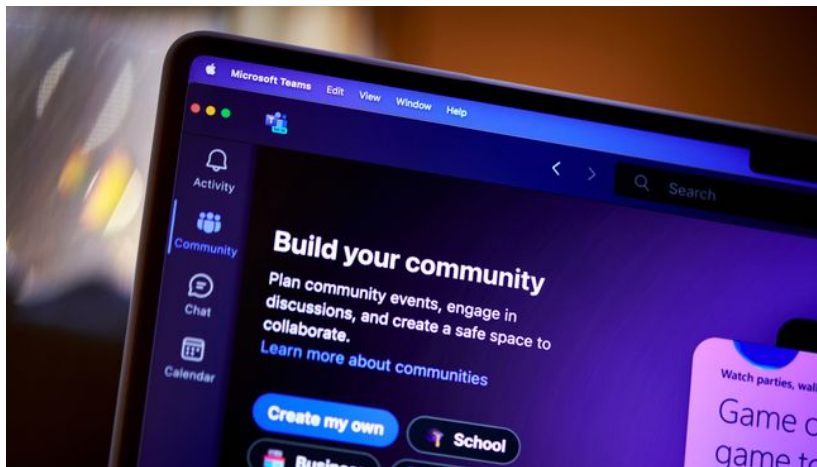
For existing Windows 11 24H2 and 25H2 installations, 26H2 will arrive through a smaller enablement package rather than a major operating system rebuild. That should simplify the transition, but it does not remove the need to validate business applications, drivers and security tools.

Microsoft is encouraging organisations to begin validation ahead of general availability.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager now for assistance with readiness checks, compatibility testing and a phased rollout plan. Do not confuse avoiding a rushed deployment with delaying preparation. Get the assistance in place before a support deadline turns a manageable upgrade into an emergency.

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Win11 26H2 Evaluation ISO's



Microsoft Teams Will Support 2 screens shared at once

“Stop sharing so I can show you mine” could soon become less

common in Teams meetings.

Microsoft is preparing to let two presenters share their screens or individual windows simultaneously, with attendees able to view both. The reported target is November 2026 for desktop and web, although that remains a planned date rather than a guarantee.

Groundbreaking? Not quite.

Zoom already supports simultaneous screen sharing by multiple participants, so Microsoft is catching up here, not leading.

In Zoom's standard setup, dual-monitor users can view two shared screens together, while single-monitor users switch between them.

For Teams users, this should make comparing spreadsheets, reviewing designs and troubleshooting together much less stop-start which is a welcome improvement.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with a collaboration specialist and get more value from Teams or Zoom implementations through the right configuration and user training.

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Teams will support 2 people Sharing Screens

New pricing for Power Apps Premium

Microsoft is increasing Power Apps Premium list prices globally from 1 January 2027. The standard plan rises from US\$20 to US\$22 per user per month, a 10% increase. The 2,000-seat minimum plan rises from US\$12 to US\$14, a 16.7% increase. These prices are based on annual billing, with comparable adjustments in local currencies.

Existing subscriptions retain their current price until their term ends. The new pricing applies to new purchases and renewals with terms starting on or after 1 January 2027. Other Power Apps plans and the entitlements included with Microsoft 365 and Dynamics 365 are unaffected.

Contact your First Technology Group account manager to review your licences, renewal dates and local pricing, understand the impact on your budget and identify potential savings before the increase takes effect.

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PowerApps Premium pricing update



Grok joins Copilot, but the bigger story is control

Microsoft is bringing Grok into Copilot in Word, Excel and PowerPoint through its Frontier preview

programme. Administrators must enable access, which can be restricted to specific users or groups.

This is another model inside Microsoft's managed work environment, not consumer Grok being given free rein over your spreadsheets.

As I highlighted in TOP STORIES #184, expect Microsoft to push Copilot and E7 hard. E7 combines E5, Microsoft 365 Copilot, Entra Suite and Agent 365, bringing productivity, identity and agent governance together.

The growing ecosystem deserves a proper assessment, rather than being dismissed as another chatbot subscription.

Microsoft's value is not just the AI, it is the security and identity control plane around it. Entra manages identities and access, Purview helps protect sensitive information, Defender detects threats, and Agent 365 provides visibility and governance for agents, including those built outside Microsoft's platform once appropriately integrated.

Choosing a clever model is useful. Controlling what it can access and do is essential.

That extends beyond Microsoft 365 and the public cloud. Foundry Control Plane brings governance to supported cloud AI deployments. Foundry Local on Azure Local, currently in preview, supports on-premises AI processing with Azure Arc management and Entra authentication.

The direction is consistent oversight across cloud and customer-controlled infrastructure, rather than forcing every AI workload into the public cloud.

But integration does NOT mean automatic safety or sovereignty. Grok's preview excludes EU, EFTA and UK customers, and its processing is excluded from applicable in-country commitments. Check the controls, data location and terms for each deployment.

My view is that Copilot's expanding ecosystem strengthens the value proposition. That is a reason to understand it properly, not to upgrade everybody blindly.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's Microsoft licensing, Copilot, Azure and security specialists to assess the value, deployment requirements and full costs, including training, governance and consumption.

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Grok in CoPilot

Security

Attackers use passkey-themed scams to hijack Microsoft 365 accounts

Microsoft is warning about criminals impersonating IT support, demanding urgent passkey or multifactor authentication updates. Calls, texts and even Teams messages from compromised colleagues trick employees into granting account access. Attackers can then register their own authentication methods and steal company emails and files.

This does not mean passkeys have been broken. The security upgrade is the bait. Attackers exploit other authentication routes, sometimes persuading victims to enter an attacker-provided code on a genuine Microsoft sign-in page. Checking that the website is genuine is therefore not enough, users must understand what they are authorising.

Once again, the human is the weakest link.

"I'm from IT" remains a remarkably effective hacking tool.

Training must be regular, practical and updated as attacks change, covering phone calls, texts and Teams, not just suspicious emails. Teach staff to verify unexpected requests through a known helpdesk channel, reject unsolicited authentication instructions and report mistakes immediately.

Microsoft also recommends enforcing phishing-resistant authentication and blocking unnecessary sign-in routes. Training and technical controls must work together.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with security specialists who can review your identity protections and arrange ongoing, targeted staff awareness training.

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Microsoft Warns Passkey Phishing Attacks

MFA worked. The attacker still got in.

GhostCode uses bogus business enquiries and requests to sign an NDA to lure staff into entering an attacker-supplied code on a genuine Microsoft sign-in page.

They complete MFA, but unknowingly authorise the attacker's access rather than simply opening a document.



In the incident examined by eSentire, attackers registered three devices within 78 seconds of authentication. MFA was not cracked. The employee was persuaded to complete it on the attacker's behalf.

The familiar TOP STORIES message remains, the human can still be the weakest link. Training must go beyond spelling mistakes and suspicious website addresses. Staff need to question unexpected codes and approval requests, verify document-sharing requests independently and report suspicious activity immediately.

A genuine Microsoft page does not make the request genuine.

Make staff training regular, targeted and continuously updated, with realistic phishing simulations rather than an annual tick-box exercise.

Teach people to question unexpected authentication codes and approval requests, verify document-sharing requests through a separate trusted channel and report suspicious activity immediately.

The human can still be the weakest link, but the answer is to strengthen that link, not blame it. Review identity and access controls alongside staff training. Neither should be treated as a substitute for the other.

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GhostCode Attack: The detail

Cloud & AI

Anthropic Unifies Claude Chat and Cowork, Launches Live Docs and Slides

Software that coalesces, does the job, then dissipates - is this a hint of where we are going?

Anthropic is merging Claude chat and Cowork into one interface, alongside new Claude Docs and Slides.

Announced on 16 September, users can create, edit and share documents and presentations within the conversation, rather than moving elsewhere to finish the job. The unified experience is rolling out first to Pro and Max subscribers, with the productivity tools in beta on paid plans. Another reason for Microsoft and Google to watch closely.

But the more interesting question is not whether Claude can replace Word or PowerPoint.....

Could AI remove the need to buy a separate application in the first place? This announcement does not go that far (yet).

Claude is adding persistent productivity tools, not making software disappear. However, other developments suggest that task-specific functionality is becoming practical.

The function is the reason for existence, not the application

Imagine comparing supplier proposals. Instead of subscribing to another product, you ask AI to assemble a comparison tool, apply agreed scoring rules and present the findings. You review the result, save the evidence and decision, then discard the temporary tool.

Next task, different functionality. The application becomes temporary, while the business information remains.

The ingredients already exist. Google's generative interfaces create interactive tools tailored to individual prompts.

Claude Artefacts can build working applications from descriptions.

[Vercel](#) provides isolated computing environments that run agent-generated code and shut down when the task is complete. These are separate capabilities, but together they support our journey.

Salesforce's September Alforce announcement provides some qualification. It allows users to generate customised interfaces while retaining Salesforce's underlying data, workflows, business rules and permissions.

The familiar application screen becomes optional, but the service underneath remains.

What could disappear, and what should not

Narrow SaaS utilities, basic reporting tools and one-off workflow applications are more exposed to "deletion" than platforms containing deeply embedded business processes.

Some products could become capabilities inside an AI service rather than subscriptions in their own right.

Others will adapt by providing the trusted functions that agents call. That is a plausible outcome, not evidence that SaaS as a whole is finished.

The commercial opportunity may therefore shift from selling another application to delivering a governed outcome. Fewer permanent tools could mean less maintenance, but costs may move into AI usage, integration and oversight rather than disappear. The valuable asset becomes the combination of trusted data, business knowledge and controlled execution, not necessarily the software screen used to access it.

Claude comes for Gemini

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