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2nd March #156

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** Progress, OneOffice & Nerdio are added.
 - **Microsoft EoL section Updated for January 2027**
 - **Microsoft Contract Renewals - You have reached the edge of the Cliff!**
 - **New Microsoft Support Services Designation**- only one in SA!
 - **SQL Server 2025 Editions Datasheet**- Very Handy.
 - **Microsoft Agent Cost Management** - Remember that Cliff?.
 - **Azure Purchasing Models Licensing Guide**- Check before you Jump!
 - **The Rise of Kratos** - Maybe Godzilla is next?
 - **SOPHOS bets big!** - There are many security blind spots.
 - **When should your AI call the Police?** Your AI will be able to profile you!
 - **Win 11 26H2 overhaul** - Microsoft is serious about AI for 2026!
 - **2026 is the Year for AI** - Microsoft insists!
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Microsoft End of Life to January 2027

Summary of what to know up to January 2027.

Click above for the highlights. The detailed PDF to download is at the bottom.

P.S. we DID warn you about EWS retirement.....

Intel's Panther Lake For Microsoft CoPilot+ PC's

DRAM prices have already tripled.

The shortages are REAL!

MORE price increases MARCH.

Quotes only valid for 14 Days!!!

TOP STORIES #155

Click button above for last weeks news.

Lenovo urges for Orders ASAP

Visit FirstMarketPLace

Progress, OneOffice & Nerdio have been added for this week.

See below for LinkedIn

Our LinkedIn

Movie releases

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

Coming up: "Hoppers"

Next big movie for 2026 is "Hail Mary".

Upcoming Shows

Review what happened at CES and see links for NAMM 2026 ISE has wrapped, it was big, and even Microsoft was there with Teams!

Request Account Manager

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Microsoft News This Week

Your Next EA Renewal: You have reached the cliff!

Directions on Microsoft has published an extremely important article that I URGE you to read.

If you have a volume license agreement of ANY sort, especially an EA, YOU NEED TO READ THIS!!!!

The levers you used for renewals have now changed. EVEN if your renewal is 2 years away, you need to start preparing and bracing yourself for what could be a significant shock.

You will find that if you are below 2500 seats you may not even be able to renew on an EA like you have always done, and that you will have to renew on a CSP or MCA-E while finding that all the levers you have been able to pull over the past decades (including your account manager) have vanished while at the same time discovering your "new" renewal could go up as much as 50%!!!!

More importantly, you also need to start understanding the shift to billing for services under your Azure consumption that is easy to underestimate.

It is now critical to also ensure that your environment is supported through additional technical and optimisation services to maximise your return on investment. Licensing and Technical support CANNOT be considered as separate negotiation processes. It is now important to

consider the processes together to ensure your Azure consumption remains optimal at all times and all other billing for services through Azure is properly accounted for by a partner that understands these complexities.

This is where structured support becomes critical. As licensing models shift and traditional commercial levers evaporate, customers need more than a renewal discussion. Universal Support combines deep technical expertise, optimisation insight, and structured governance to ensure your environment is correctly deployed, properly supported, and commercially aligned to what you actually need. In a post-EA world, value and cost discipline must be managed together by a partner focused on optimisation and outcomes, not product creep!

Please contact your [First Technology account manager](#) to connect you with our [Universal Support specialists](#) to ensure that you get the necessary advice and support to plan your renewal.

Microsoft Enterprise Agreement Cliff

Microsoft Awards Support Services Designation

BUI, a division of First Technology Group has received this award as one of the few Microsoft partners worldwide to have earned this designation ahead of its broader market rollout, following its announcement at Microsoft Ignite 2025 in San Francisco. **Awarded only to partners who demonstrate deep technical skills, mature service delivery frameworks and consistent customer outcomes, the designation signals both expertise and excellence.**

This support designation gives First Technology Group the ability to provide support 24/7/365 at a level that very few companies can achieve worldwide.

Please contact your [First Technology account manager](#) to connect you with our [Universal Support specialists](#) and ensure you receive the guidance you need to implement a [Universal Support agreement](#) that aligns with your needs.

New Support Services Designation

SQL Server 2025 Editions Datasheet

Here is a handy SQL Server 2025 Editions datasheet. It is a tight three page PDF that shows what has been added over the years, then lines up the 2025 edition differences side by side, Express, Standard, Enterprise, plus the Developer equivalents.

The last page is a clean technical feature matrix, worth saving for quick reference.

Please contact your [First Technology account manager](#) to connect you with our [SQL specialists](#) to help ensure that you are selecting the correct edition for your requirements as there are many ways to license SQL including [Pay as you GO](#)

Microsoft SQL Server 2025 Editions Datasheet

Microsoft Agent Cost Management Whitepaper Feb 2026

As part of Microsoft's website that deals with taking control of Agent costs, Microsoft has updated the eBook, which you can download below.

It is a practical guide to the key topics you need when getting started with Agents.

It covers the main options for buying and setting up Copilot Credits, plus guidance on tracking spend and applying cost controls. This latest version also includes the Copilot Credits Pre-Purchase Plan, with steps to configure it and how it can be combined with other Copilot Credits purchasing methods.

Please contact your [First Technology Group Account Manager](#) to connect you with our [Copilot and Dynamics specialists](#) to help you understand how you are affected and how you can take

advantage of these changes.

Microsoft Agent Cost Management eBook

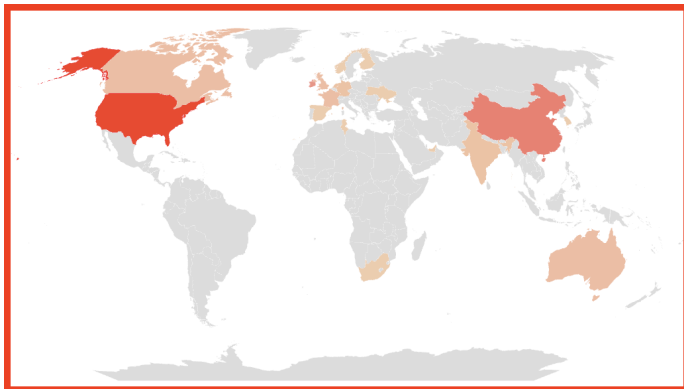
Azure Purchasing Models Licensing Guide

Microsoft has published a guide that may appear helpful, but since it is their first attempt at this, it may contain mistakes.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our Azure specialists to double-check that what is stated in the guide is actually correct.

Azure Purchasing Models Licensing guide

Security



The Rise of Kratos

KnowBe4 has published a worrying article that by the end of 2026, 90% of phishing attacks will be provided to the bad guys as a service (PhaaS). To drive this point home, they have published information about a service that is exactly like this, allowing for high-volume campaigns, which in this case exploits the Adobe brand. As you can see from the map on the left, although the USA is the primary target,

South Africa was not left out. Part of the "service" allows the bad guys to configure a payload generator with 6 different types of payloads!!!

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our training specialists to help ensure everybody is kept up to date to on how handle the latest trickery. These tricks are only going to get more sophisticated and SPEEDILY adaptable. If you do not fall for one type of attack, you might fall for another - attacks could be sequenced to allow you to think you spotted a trick, only to relax and be caught by the next one!

PhaaS industrialises cybercrime

Sophos bets big on WorkSpace Security

This is browser-first security, built for the reality that most work now lives inside a browser.

- Uses a hardened Chromium browser as the control point for hybrid work.
- Bakes in ZTNA, DNS protection and data controls, reducing the usual SASE bolt on complexity.
- Adds governance for Generative AI use, visibility and policy control over what data gets shared with AI tools.
- Extends to BYOD and unmanaged devices, keeping access policy consistent for contractors and guests.
- Managed in Sophos Central, and ties into Sophos telemetry so risky devices can be blocked from app access automatically.

As an award-winning Sophos partner, First Technology Group can assess whether Workspace Protection fits your environment, design the right policies for apps and AI use, and implement it alongside your existing controls to close the blind spots that sit in the browser. Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Sophos security specialists to see how this can fill a gap in your security.

Sophos Workspace protection

Cloud & AI

When should your AI call the police?

This is now a new problem that faces AI companies. At what point should the AI call the police because of the nature of the conversation a person is having with the AI? The AI can also start developing a psychological profile of you (it stores "memories" of you), which can also help it decide if you are going "off the rails". This is what was highlighted by the tragic shooting incident in Canada, where OpenAI actually spotted anomalies before the shooting took place. They did not act, and a tragedy happened. What if an AI gets it wrong and calls the police down on somebody innocent? What happens if there are AI's that get jailbroken and are lurking on the darkweb? This highlights that allowing AI's into a corporate environment must be done with utmost care, and right no CoPilot remains the only AI with the necessary guardrails for you deploy into your company.

For some companies in the Google ecosystem, Gemini is the equivalent.

When your AI calls the Police

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to assist with getting AI deployed securely in your environment, so that all staff know what it has been deployed to support and the type of conversations it will allow.



Win11 26H2 AI Overhaul

This is starting to look like this is the biggest overhaul of the operating system to date, but that most of the features will need Copilot+ rated machines, meaning that MOST machines will not qualify. This underscores the importance of ensuring your procurement roadmap includes CoPilot+ compliant hardware.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help explore all the different form factors and

configurations of notebooks going forward. With the shortage and price increases starting to bite, I URGE you to be more flexible about which configurations and even brands you are willing to consider as your corporate standard.

2026 is the Year for the AI PC

This is in line with the article above, where Microsoft is making it clear, this is the year for the AI PC!

One that I think could be exceptionally useful is natural language (semantic) search across everything that the "old" search used to do, often extremely painfully! This is what is being referred to in the new explorer experience.

I find it odd that Microsoft is not promoting this feature, as for many, this alone could be a game-changer!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to assist with specifying these new PCs and determining use cases for some of their features.

Semantic Search with CoPilot+

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

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