First Technology Group

FirstNet Technology Services | FirstDigital | the crm team | GALDONDATA A FIRSTNET GROUP COMPANY

BUI INNOVATION DELIVERY RESULTS | TechSonic | First Horizon

.top_stories

//barry_neethling

31st August #182

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 Cibecs, Magnific and Teleport** are added.
- **Microsoft EoL section updated for April 2027 -** New update coming in August
- **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #182-** Huge increase in attacks
- **Microsoft Promotions** - Some are out, and surprisingly they have to do with AI.
- **Cybersense** - Did you know seeing and Hearing is NOT believing?
- **AMD is winning** - We are taking the pricing elevator to the moon!
- **CoPilot Studio Licensing guide** - It is NOT getting easier or cheaper.
- **Dynamics August Licensing guide** - Commerce Scale unit price increases.
- **Win11 Taskbar changes** - Smaller is better - True Story!
- **Win11 26H2 update** - Resets the support clock
- **AI that works** - Come learn all about it!
- **The .vu Surge** - Now an island you never heard of is a BIG problem!
- **Sophos Claims Top Spot** - And in titanium!
- **DO NOT confess your secrets to your AI** - Witness for the prosecution

Microsoft Modernisation April 2026-2027

Microsoft Modernisation strategy has been updated. This addresses key EoL dates, price increases and updates up to 1 April 2027

New report in August.

DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #182

We scan the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks.
Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but 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.**

TOP STORIES #181

Click button above for last weeks news.

Visit FirstMarketPLace Link here for New Additions

Cibecs, Magnific and Teleport have been added for this week.
See below for Linkedin
[Try out our AI]() to see whats been added since launch.

Our LinkedIn

Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa.
Coyote vs. ACME FALL 2: Deadpoint and Spiderman are the movies to look out for.

TOP STORIES ARCHIVE

Register with the link above and get access to the entire TOP STORIES Archive with an AI to help you find what you want. You can also find all the vendors added to FirstMarketPlace and get a whole lot of detail about them!
It's in Beta so it could make mistakes.

Request Account Manager

SUBSCRIBE TO TOP STORIES

Did You Know?

Seeing and Hearing is no longer believing.
A picture is now not worth ANY word!

A finance employee transferred US$25.6 million after joining a video call with what appeared to be his CFO and colleagues.
None of them were real, every face and voice was an AI-generated deepfake. No firewall was breached, the human simply did what he was authorised to do.

BUI CyberSense is a Human Risk Management Programme that goes far beyond the annual fake phishing email.

- Simulates phishing, vishing, smishing, QR codes, MFA fatigue and callback attacks.
- Tailors campaigns around the customer, current threats and events such as SARS season.
- Trains users who are caught and focuses additional attention on repeat offenders.
- Provides monthly scorecards and a Human Risk Index to measure improvement.
- Is available as a one-off simulation, platform access or a fully managed service.

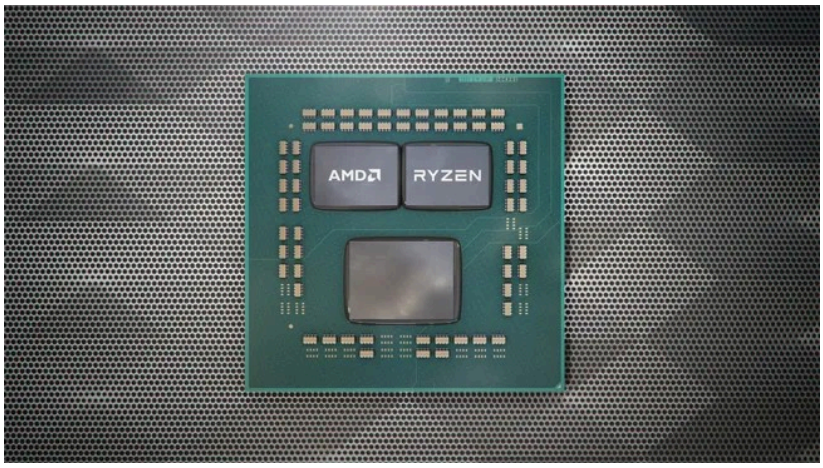
CyberSense is delivered locally by BUI's own Security Operations Centre, is available through Azure Marketplace and can be combined with BUI's MXDR, security consulting, product development and broader cyber security services.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with BUI's security specialists to better understand your requirements, choose the right CyberSense service and identify all the additional BUI services that can strengthen your overall cyber defence.

Microsoft New Promotions

The promotions are here! See the link below!

Microsoft NCE Promotions



AMD winning with price increases, but be careful.

Mercury Research says desktop CPU shipments fell by more than 20% year on year during Q2 2026, as rising memory, SSD, motherboard and GPU costs pushed up the price of complete systems.

This continues the warning from TOP STORIES #180 and #181, shortages are lasting, price increases are spreading through the entire hardware stack, and moving down the specification sheet no longer guarantees an affordable escape.

The pain is working in AMD's favour.
AMD's desktop processor share rose to 34.9%, from 32.2% a year earlier. More importantly for corporate customers, its notebook share jumped from 20.6% to 28.9%, even after Intel added millions of mobile processors back into the market.

AMD's overall client share has now passed 30% for the first time.

AMD's desktop volumes have not grown, they have simply declined less than Intel in a very weak market.
Even so, buyers are clearly becoming more comfortable looking beyond the traditional default.
Corporate customers should do the same. AMD Ryzen AI PRO commercial systems are now available across Dell, HP and Lenovo, with enterprise security, Microsoft Intune and SCCM integration, and standards-based remote fleet management.

AMD is no longer something to consider only for gaming machines or when Intel stock is unavailable.

IDC and Gartner separately expect PC prices to rise by around 17% during 2026, with IDC seeing no meaningful memory relief before the end of 2027.
Intel remains the market leader and should remain in the evaluation, but an Intel-only specification now removes a credible alternative and a useful negotiating lever.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to compare equivalent AMD and Intel corporate PCs across Dell, HP and Lenovo, benchmark the actual workloads, confirm USB4 and Thunderbolt requirements, test compatibility with your existing docks and peripherals, and update your hardware standards before price and availability make the choice for you.

TechRadar: CPU shipments fall as consumers pay the cost

Microsoft News This Week

CoPilot Studio Licensing Guide Introducing the Harness

Microsoft have managed to update the Copilot Studio Licensing Guide twice during August 2026.

The big new term is "harness", the software layer sitting between your instructions and the AI model. It provides context, calls tools, maintains state and controls how an agent plans and completes its work.

Copilot Studio now offers three options, the GitHub Copilot, Standard and Copilot Chat harnesses.
Each supports different scenarios and can consume Copilot Credits differently.
The paid GitHub Copilot harness is now listed first and has become the prominent starting point when creating a new agent, so do not simply accept the option presented without understanding what it could cost.

First Digital makes the more important point, AI models are increasingly becoming commodities, while the harness is where much of the reliability, governance and business value sits.
A properly engineered harness combines context, tools, verification and human oversight, allowing even smaller or cheaper models to deliver useful and dependable results.

The guide also clarifies the Copilot Studio Author role requirements and confirms that the relevant purchasing options draw down the Microsoft Azure Consumption Commitment, but are not eligible for Azure Prepayment. Microsoft 365 Copilot has also been renamed throughout as Microsoft Copilot, just in case the naming was becoming too easy.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Copilot Studio and First Digital specialists before selecting a harness or estimating Copilot Credit consumption.

First Digital: Harnesses are the product, not models

Microsoft CoPilot Studio Licensing guide August

Dynamics 365 Commerce Scale Unit pricing changes

Microsoft has confirmed revised pricing for Dynamics 365 Commerce Scale Unit - Cloud licences from 1 September 2026.

Unusually, this is not an increase across the board. Basic, which includes 65 devices, falls from US$6,000 to US$5,525 per tenant per month.
Standard, covering 225 devices, increases from US$17,000 to US$19,125, while Premium, covering 500 devices, rises from US$37,000 to US$42,500.
The revised prices align each bundle with the US$85 monthly cost of an Operations - Device licence.
The included storage entitlements are also being aligned on the same per-device basis.
Basic will provide 130 GB of Operations database capacity and 195 GB of file capacity, Standard 450 GB and 675 GB,
and Premium 1 TB and 1.5 TB respectively.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Dynamics 365 licensing specialists, who can explain how these changes and increases may affect your current subscriptions, renewal costs and capacity requirements.

Dynamics 365 Licensing guide August

Dynamics 365 Licensing Deck August

Win11 Taskbar and Start Menu gets a major update

Microsoft is restoring some of the Windows customisations that users have been demanding since Windows 11 launched.

The new KB5120998 preview update allows the taskbar to be moved to the top, bottom or either side of the screen, with an additional compact option for smaller displays.

The Start menu can now be set to Small, Large or Automatic, with separate controls for showing or hiding Pinned, Recent and All Apps. You can also hide your name and profile picture, while Windows Search can finally be configured without Bing web results and Microsoft Store suggestions cluttering the results.

However, KB5120998 is an optional preview update, and there are growing reports of customised mouse pointers being replaced by a large white cursor, wallpapers resetting to black and text becoming blurry or pixelated.
Not every device is affected, and Microsoft has not yet formally listed these as known issues, but it is investigating the cursor complaints.

Corporate customers should therefore not rush to deploy this update. Wait for the normal September update, test it properly and make sure that Microsoft has dealt with these problems first.

Never underestimate how much the small things matter. The taskbar may occupy only a few pixels, but move it without warning and some users will react as though Microsoft has relocated their entire office.
I'm sure glad about the small taskbar - it gives me just that extra bit of useful space!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Windows specialists to help test, manage and safely deploy these changes.

TechPowerup: Microsoft Releases new August Feature update

Windows 11 26H2, small update, big support reset

Windows 11 26H2 has entered the Release Preview Channel, the final testing stage before general availability later in 2026.

The visible improvements include more control over Start and the Taskbar, a smaller or repositioned Taskbar, a cleaner Windows Search that can exclude web and Microsoft Store results, and further improvements to File Explorer. Many of these improvements have already appeared in the August update described above.

However, this is NOT a major Windows rebuild. Microsoft confirms that 24H2, 25H2 and 26H2 share the same servicing branch, with 26H2 delivered as a small enablement package requiring only one restart.
Many of the features have already arrived through monthly updates (like for August), so this should be more like turning on a switch than performing open-heart surgery on Windows.

The important part is the support clock. From its general availability date, 26H2 will receive 24 months of support for Home and Pro, and 36 months for Enterprise and Education.
The clock starts when Microsoft releases 26H2, NOT when each customer installs it, and the exact end-of-support dates have not yet been published.

TOP STORIES #181 already warned that Windows 11 24H2 Home and Pro support ends on 13 October 2026, while Enterprise and Education 24H2 remain supported until 12 October 2027.

There is no need to panic, but there is also no reason to procrastinate. Customers should start testing applications, drivers, security tools, VPNs and device-management policies now, then deploy 26H2 in controlled waves once it reaches general availability.
Delaying a relatively low-disruption update until the existing version is approaching end of support simply compresses the testing window for no reason.
The update may be small, but the support clock it resets is not!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Windows specialists to confirm which Windows 11 versions are deployed, establish a 26H2 pilot group, and plan the upgrade before the support clock becomes the problem.

HotHardware: Windows 11 26H2 hits Final Preview

CX Forward: From AI Ambition to AI That Works

The next era of customer service will not be defined by access to AI. It will be defined by how effectively organisations turn AI capabilities into measurable business outcomes.

This executive discussion will explore how leading service organisations are leveraging AI to deliver faster resolutions, improve customer satisfaction, and reduce the cost to serve, without embarking on lengthy transformation programs.

You'll gain practical insights into:

- How leading customer service organisations are staying ahead
- How AI agents resolve requests end-to-end, not just deflect them
- How to deliver faster resolutions, happier customers, and more productive teams
- How to launch quickly and prove value early without a major transformation initiative
- Practical lessons and real-world customer success stories you can apply immediately

We'll also discuss the emerging world of agentic resolution, AI-assisted service teams, and connected omnichannel operations, with a focus on practical deployment approaches that

deliver results from day one.

Who Should Attend

• VP, Directors, and Heads of Customer Service or Customer Experience
• Customer Support and CX Operations Leaders
• Digital Transformation Leaders driving customer experience initiatives

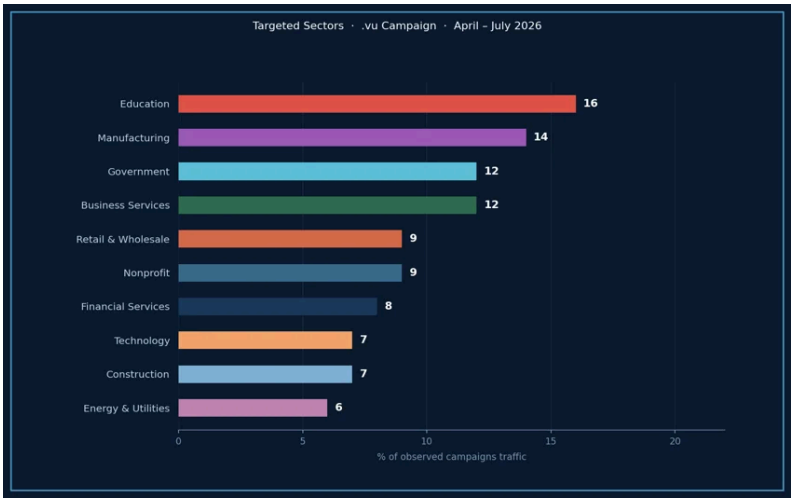
Seats are intentionally limited to encourage meaningful discussion and networking among peers. We believe your perspective would add significant value to the conversation and would be delighted to have you join us.

First Digital looks forward to welcoming you.

📅 **Date:** 10 September 2026
🕘 **Time**: 09:00 – 13:00
📍 **Venue:** Midrand

Registration: Executive CX Roundtable Event Registration

Security



The .vu Surge: Exploiting Vanuatu's Domain

Vanuatu's .vu domain has become the latest hiding place for phishing. KnowBe4 recorded a 159.6% increase in phishing sites using .vu between April and July 2026, identifying 1,660 malicious domains and 28,167 phishing emails.

In 99.9% of cases, the malicious domain was hidden inside the email as a link rather than being used by the sender. This allows a message from an apparently clean or trusted source to carry the attack.

Most of these domains were less than 20 days old and used completely ordinary lures, shared documents, invoices, voicemail notices, payroll changes and password warnings. Some landing pages used adversary-in-the-middle technology to proxy the genuine sign-in, steal the authenticated session token and get around conventional MFA.

And remember, the padlock only means the connection is encrypted, it does NOT mean the website is legitimate.

Do not become too fixated on .vu. The bigger warning is that phishing infrastructure is disposable and the criminals keep moving. Interisle found that at least 10% of new generic top-level domains registered during 2025 were subsequently blocklisted, with the actual criminal share estimated to be closer to 20%. APWG separately recorded 971,181 phishing attacks during Q1 2026, up 13.8% in just one quarter.

Where there is no legitimate business requirement for .vu, security teams should consider blocking it at email and DNS level, scanning links at delivery and click time, reviewing historic traffic and continuing the move towards phishing-resistant MFA. However, that only deals with today's hiding place.
There are a lot more islands to choose from!

Once again, the human remains the weakest link. Users need to understand today's attacks, not the examples used in last year's course. They must learn to ignore artificial urgency, inspect the real destination, open services through known bookmarks rather than email links, and report suspicious messages immediately.

Security awareness training cannot be an annual tick-box exercise. The attacks change continuously, so the training and phishing simulations must change continuously as well.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to review your email, DNS and identity controls and, critically, your continuously updated security awareness training programme.

The .vu Surge: How Threat Actors Are Exploiting Vanuatu's Domain

---

Sophos Claims Top Spot

Sophos has taken the No.1 overall position in G2's Fall 2026 reports for Endpoint Protection, XDR, MDR and Firewall. It also remains the only vendor recognised as a Leader across those four markets plus EDR, collecting 73 No.1 rankings across the global reports.
Customers particularly praised its security results, usability, synchronised protection and ability to reduce the burden on internal IT teams.

This reinforces the message previously covered in **TOP STORIES #176**.
First Technology Group is a premium Sophos Titanium Partner, making FTG the right place to come for the design, deployment and ongoing support of the complete Sophos security stack.

However, do not buy the technology and forget the people. The recent surge in phishing links using Vanuatu's .vu domain is a perfect case in point. The malicious links were usually hidden inside otherwise ordinary-looking emails and designed to steal credentials and MFA tokens. In this campaign, .vu might as well have stood for "**v**ery **u**nwise click".

Any Sophos solution should therefore include tailored, continuously updated security-awareness training and phishing simulation. Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Sophos specialists and recommended training partners. The technology may be ranked No.1, but the human remains the weakest link.

WebProNews: Sophos Claims Top Spot

Cloud & AI

Your AI confessions are NOT secret!

WebProNews has collected a growing number of US cases where chatbot conversations have surfaced as evidence, including questions about vandalism, deleting emails and allegedly

disposing of bodies.
The danger is not only the answer, it is the timestamped record of what was asked, the background supplied and every follow-up question.
That can give investigators and opposing lawyers a remarkably clear view of intent.

In February 2026, a US federal judge ruled that 31 conversations with Anthropic's Claude were not protected by attorney-client privilege or the work-product doctrine.

The defendant had used Claude independently, the AI was not his lawyer, and sharing information with a third-party platform undermined confidentiality. Laws differ between jurisdictions, but nobody should assume that talking to an AI carries the same protection as talking to a lawyer.

OpenAI's own figures show that this is not theoretical. Between July and December 2025, it received 75 government requests for user content and disclosed data in response to 62 of them, affecting 84 accounts.
Deleted and Temporary Chats are normally removed within 30 days, but may be retained longer for legal or security obligations.
OpenAI also says conversations indicating an imminent and credible threat to others may be referred to law enforcement following automated detection and human review.

This does NOT mean companies should stop using AI. It means they need an approved enterprise platform, data classification, retention, DLP, audit, acceptable-use policies and user training.
Enterprise AI services offer much stronger controls and do not use business data to train models by default, but they are not an invisibility cloak against valid legal process.

Government guidance has long made the obvious point, never enter sensitive information or personal data into public AI tools.

Let's be clear, AI is a particularly stupid place to hatch a nefarious plan. It may refuse to help, flag the conversation, preserve a wonderfully organised transcript of your intent and eventually arrive in court as Exhibit A. It's less "partner in crime", but more "witness for the prosecution".

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Cloud, AI, Security, compliance and training specialists to implement an approved AI platform and policies before an enthusiastic employee, or aspiring criminal mastermind with minions, turns a productivity tool into a very expensive witness.

Your AI Secrets are NOT safe