

# .top\_stories

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## 29th December #147

This is the last newsletter for 2025, and with that, I would like to wish one and all an AWESOME New Year's celebration. [CES 2026](#) is promising to be an amazing show with some incredible advances in technologies to be announced, which I will of course, cover. The dark clouds ahead for 2026 are major price increases driven by the insatiable demand for more AI.

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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.

- **CES 2026 Show guide** has been updated. **Pre-show edition** can be downloaded.
- **2026 is going to get expensive! DRAM prices triple.** Read on what to do!
- **Microsoft EoL section** published to see what's EoL'ng up to December 2026
- **3 New vendors Qlik, AppDynamics and Autodesk** added to FirstMarketplace
- **Did You Know guide** for the best stories since September
- **Microsoft Power Platform Guide** updated
- **Microsoft is enforcing messaging safety defaults** starting in January.
- **NVMe Driver for Windows 11** gives huge performance boost
- **Hardware Based Bitlocker encryption** announced - in time for CES 2026
- **Microsoft Reducing RAM usage in File Explorer**
- **AI Powered Phishing & Deepfakes get worse.**
- **onmicrosoft.com domain** exploited - Beware

- Dummy's guide to being safe online. Please share with your relatives.
- Claude bankrupted a vending business AI=0, Humans=1
- Cloud First to Cloud Smart - Time to get smarter!
- Tape is not dead - Long Live LTO-10!

## Upcoming Shows

Click for a summary of AWS re:Invent which ended on 5 December.  
A new update on CES 2026 has been added for this week.

## DRAM Price Increase

DRAM prices have already tripled, Dell & Lenovo announced price increases  
Read this paper on what to do as 32Gig is the new minimum!

## TOP STORIES #146

Click button above for last weeks news.

## Visit FirstMarketPLace

Qlik, AppDynamics and Autodesk have been added for this week.  
There is now a LinkedIn Page for you to follow as well.

## Visit our LinkedIn

## Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa.  
**AVATAR: Fire and Ash is a hit, but will there be a 4th?**  
In January:  
**28 years Later: The Bone Temple**  
Another movie to look out for is **Mercy**.

## Microsoft EoL

Summary of what to know up to December 2026.  
Detailed document available for download



## Did you know?

Here is a summary of some the best achievements for FTG Since September and there ARE some very interesting stories!

If you click on the number, you will be taken to the article.

- [#132](#) — Universal Support - 24/7/365 + Sev A
- [#134](#) — Scytale Automates Compliance
- [#136](#) — See.Tech Cyber Risk and monitoring
- [#139](#) — Galdon & Techsonic
- [#140](#) — M365 Backups - No.1 in Africa
- [#142](#) — FD Global Partner of the Year Finalist
- [#144](#) — FTG took CoCT from zero to HERO-5!

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# Microsoft News This Week

## Power Platform Licensing Guide Updated December

Microsoft has updated the Power Platform guide again for December, updating the Dataverse MCP Server for AI tools to communicate with Dataverse data.

- **Dataverse** is the cloud database behind many Power Platform and Dynamics 365 apps, where your business tables and records reside.
- **MCP (Model Context Protocol)** is an open standard that enables an AI assistant to use approved “tools” to securely read and update business data. Dataverse can expose those tools via a Dataverse MCP Server
- From 15 December 2025 the Dataverse MCP tools become chargeable when they are used by AI agents created outside Microsoft Copilot Studio

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Power Platform and Dynamics experts to help understand how you can take advantage of these changes as there is much more detail to unpack depending on what licensing you already have with Microsoft

### Power Platform Guide December 2025

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## Microsoft Enforces Messaging Safety Defaults from Jan 2026

Microsoft is setting weaponised file protection, malicious URL protection, and Incorrect security detection reporting to ON starting 12 January.

Microsoft is introducing these protections to reduce the impact of malware using channels other than email to attack companies.

These changes will need to include some user education and training as IT departments could end up being flooded with calls from users about why their Teams is behaving differently.

### New Teams Safety Defaults

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Teams and security specialists to help address the new security measures that **Microsoft is enabling by default.**

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## Hidden NVMe driver gives SSD's a Performance boost

**WARNING! Try at your own risk!**

For 14 years, Microsoft has treated NVMe storage devices as legacy SCSI devices, and now, by releasing drivers that communicate natively with NVMe storage devices, you get a huge speed boost - much like what Microsoft has announced for Windows Server 2025. These drivers need to be manually activated, provided you have Windows 25H2 installed. As this is not an official release, things could easily break, and in some cases WILL break - like the SAMSUNG magician utility will no longer work. For whatever brand of SSD you may have, check that the firmware is up to date, and make SURE you have a complete backup of your computer before embarking on this experiment! DO NOT DEPLOY IN YOUR COMPANY!!!

Windows 11 SSD Performance  
Boost

Windows Server 2025  
Performance boost

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## Microsoft Announces Hardware based Bitlocker encryption

Support for hardware-based encryption will be available from Intel's Panther Lake CPUs that will be announced at CES 2026. This will result in a massive performance boost by offloading all CPU work to dedicated silicon, saving 70% of CPU cycles.

This, combined with the new NVMe native drive and PCIe Gen 5 support, you will have an incredible boost in performance - something that may be very welcome should you be forced to buy new machines with 16Gig RAM and not 32Gig. Additionally, it seems most GPU requirements will be easily met with the integrated GPU instead of having to get a notebook with a second GPU, unless you are a serious gamer.

### BitLocker Hardware Acceleration

This reinforces the importance of completely revising your RFQ's for new hardware in 2026, and making sure you are planning your hardware refreshes accordingly to accommodate these new features. Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to assist with this planning for 2026.

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## Microsoft Announces Improvements to File Explorer

Microsoft seems to be acknowledging that the RAM crisis is going to be serious, and realises that Windows has to be made more efficient.

Microsoft is now working to reduce the amount of RAM used during indexing and file search, and we should see it in production soon.

### Reducing RAM usage in File Explorer

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## Security



### Phishing and deepfakes get worse

There is a dramatic spike in deceptive communications this festive season taking advantage of the pressure to act quickly, overriding caution, aggravated by AI-written messages mimicking human writing styles. Combating this requires a multilayered strategy, with the most important being training humans to be alert to different methods of trickery.

As we look forward to 2026, the attacks and scams are going to get consistently worse, and we have to keep revising our vigilance, and most of all,

acknowledge that we, the humans, will always be the weakest link in the chain, needing the most help to stay alert!

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to update your staff on how to look out for new ways you could be tricked into losing your money to a scammer or allowing a hacker to gain access to your company.**

### **.onmicrosoft.com domains exploited. BEWARE!**

This is a particularly nasty attack as it makes use of the legitimate Microsoft infrastructure to bypass the normal security checks. Companies should not be relying on the default Microsoft domain and should instead configure a custom domain, as companies should be blocking the default onmicrosoft.com domain going forward.

Microsoft has already started throttling the sending of emails using the onmicrosoft.com domain to further discourage its use.

**Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to update your staff on how to look out new ways you could be tricked into installing apps or clicking links that can compromise your security and/or privacy.**

onmicrosoft.com exploited

onmicrosoft.com email  
throttled

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### **Dummy's Guide to online safety - REALLY READ IT!**

In light of these new AI inspired attacks, I have left this article for you to PLEASE read and to share with your family, it is more important than ever before to be alert! Endgadget has published a guide on what to look out for when it comes to online safety. I really recommend you review it, and it may be a very good idea to share with your family. Even though some of these points may appear to be really simple, sometimes it is a good idea to share even the obvious with everybody in your circle as a reminder to be careful.

Contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners, who are experts in helping you train your users to stay abreast of the latest attack methodologies. This guide does NOT replace professional training!

Online Safety Guide

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# Cloud & AI

## Claude Bankrupted a Vending machine business

This is a great example that AI is not ready to run an economy of any sort - even just a vending machine business, as it got outsmarted and manipulated by humans at their capitalistic best! This unmitigated disaster is a great example that AI is not ready to autonomously take on humans in the business of making a profit!

Though this is an amusing illustration that AI's still have a way to go, there ARE many things that an AI can do if prompted correctly, and for that, you need engineers that have become skilled in working in practice with AI's to perform tasks reliably.

**Claude goes Bankrupt**

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI experts to show how agents can be built today that could make a big difference in your business without bankrupting you!

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## Shifting from Cloud First to Cloud Smart

Organisations are moving away from blanket “cloud-first” mandates and toward “cloud-smart” decisions that pick the best platform per workload, based on value, cost, performance, and risk. Cloud spend waste is real..... one cited study estimates 21% of enterprise cloud infrastructure spend is wasted, about \$44.5bn in 2025

Another CIO.com analysis references a VMware report where around one in three IT leaders say cloud waste exceeds 50%

**Better on-prem tech, longer refresh cycles, and “surprise” costs like migration and data egress are pushing firms toward hybrid-by-design rather than cloud-by-default.**

**“AI without cloud-smart thinking becomes an invoice generator”**

Please contact your First Technology to connect you with our specialists who can help turn AI into a controlled programme with clear workload placement, governance, and cost discipline, not just experimentation

**CIO - Cloud First to Cloud Smart**

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## Tape is NOT Dead!

It is early days for LTO-10, but if you REALLY want an LTO-10 tape drive today that can store up to 40TB of uncompressed data on a single tape (from Fujifilm) you can get one today from IBM, and [even for your MAC from here](#).

It is not backwards compatible with older formats like LTO 8 and 9.

As proven with the release of LTO-10, tape will continue to be the cheapest and most stable form of offline storage you can get, and will remain a critical part of backup strategies for enterprises and data centers.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our enterprise hardware specialists to help plan your long-term storage roadmap, as tape will remain a critical part of your strategy, especially as ransomware is here to stay!

**40TB LTO-10 Tape backup available**

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