

.top_stories

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9th February #153

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** Shodan, kberos (Lotus Notes Lives!!) & MSP360 added to FirstMarketplace
 - **Did You Know?** - FirstNet has capabilities that no other ISP has!!
 - **Your (old) printer is going to die!** - start making plans.
 - **Exchange online EWN shut down by 2027** - It's time to say goodbye
 - **Microsoft EoL section Updated for January 2027 - Note the Biztalk Zombie!**
 - **Microsoft brings new features to teams** - Best warn your users!.
 - **Microsoft to disable NTLM by default**- clock is ticking - there is work to do?
 - **Phishing and OAuth Token Flaws Lead to Full Microsoft 365 Compromise** - Beware!
 - **Your Heard about WinRAR last week?** - Now it's Notepad++ turn to shine!
 - **OpenCLaw now THAT is a cautionary tale!** - Protect yourself now, adopt later!
 - **Claude Opus 4.6** - Shatters benchmarks - OpenAI scrambles.
 - **Panther Lake Delivers** - It's early days, but reviews are starting to Leak.
 - **Don't be caught with Slow Ram!** - Intel mandates a minimum speed - or else!
 - **Maximum resolution of the Human eye and choice of display** - [document here](#)
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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.

Intel's Panther Lake

DRAM prices have already tripled.

Read how Intel's Panther Lake changes the game now that CES is done.

TOP STORIES #152

Click button above for last weeks news.

Price increases hit SA IT Hard

Visit FirstMarketPLace

kberos, MSP360 & Shodan have been added for this week. **If you wonder how to migrate Lotus Notes click the link above!!!**

See below for 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 if you into Pro AV, and then of course you cannot miss the big show of the ProAV industry - **ISE 3-6 of Feb in Barcelona.**

Our LinkedIn

Request Account Manager

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Did You Know??

- **FirstNet FTG Group's Connectivity Division was the first client** connected to the South African 2Africa segment, and now runs the most international peering points out of any South African ISP.
- **FirstNet provides the best latency of any ISP** in SA for global connectivity.
- **FirstNet is the only ISP** in South Africa that has an online portal to **check coverage across all available mediums and carriers** with **immediate pricing**.
- **NEW & Unique** - Provides INSTANT feasibility and budget pricing through a portal across ALL carrier types.
- FirstNet is one of the few true **carrier agnostic service providers** in South Africa.

- We have over 5,000 business sites already connected to our network.
- **FirstNet is ISO/IEC 27001:2022 certified.**

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager connect you with our experts in FirstNet to immediately help you with connectivity requirements.

FirstNet Connectivity

Microsoft News This Week

Your old printer is going to "die".

Microsoft has decided (for good reasons) that support for legacy V3 and V4 drivers will end. Microsoft is moving toward supporting only Windows Protected Print Mode, restricting printing to Microsoft-class drivers.

Many companies have really old printers that just keep running and have not seen any need to replace them, but now is the time to take a look at your printer estate and decide what needs to be done.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help inventory you printer environment and identify the printer that will need replacing, and use it as an opportunity to review your printer strategy.

Legacy Printer Drivers coming to an end

Microsoft to shut down Exchange Online EWS in April 2027

Microsoft has announced that the final shutdown for EWS (Exchange Web Services) will be on 1 April 2027, but note that EWS will continue to function in on-premise installations. Microsoft actually first warned of the demise of EWS in 2018, so this should not be a huge surprise, but more of a reminder.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Exchange specialists to assist with understanding if you are impacted by this, and what the best way to move away from being dependant on EWS

Exchange EWS retirement

Microsoft is bringing new features to Teams

Microsoft has announced new features for Teams that will roll out, including hiding the meeting toolbar to free up screen real estate, enhancements to the image viewer, easier access to frequently used emojis, and more.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our Teams specialists to ensure you can take advantage of these new features and to provide training and guidance for users so they are not frustrated by changes in how Teams works because nobody told them!

New Features in Teams for March

Microsoft to Disable NTLM by Default

The process to bury NTLM completely is being accelerated. Microsoft has now announced a phased roadmap to ultimately disable NTLM. Microsoft is advising all customers to engage their security and application owners to ensure a smooth transition.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our security and application specialists to assess your reliance on NTLM. Once that is determined, they can advise on next steps to transition away from this ancient, vulnerable technology.

Disabling NTLM

Security



Phishing and OAuth Token Flaws

Lead to Full Microsoft 365

Compromise

Modern applications allow for more seamless engagement and also introduce opportunities to take advantage of flaws, especially related to email, to abuse a system to gain legitimate access to send malicious emails. Yet again a new attack has been discovered where yet again you last line of defense is the user alert to something appearing to be suspicious.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training partners to ensure that your users are always being kept up to date with the latest tricks to grant access or to enter their credentials when they are not actually needed!

OAuth Token Flaws Lead to Full Microsoft 365 Compromise

You heard about WinRAR, now it's Notepad++ turn!

The shocking news is that Notepad++ has been hijacked by state sponsored hackers going back to June 2025. Like WinRAR you may be shocked to discover that this app is lurking on machines on your network that you are completely unaware of!

It is VERY popular, used by ~24% of Windows developers, so I really recommend you take this notice seriously!!!

You need to remove and update Notepad++ to the latest version 8.9.1 urgently!

A managed SAM service with a broader scope than Microsoft Technology alone helps detect and alert on these anomalies.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you our SAM specialists that can assist you with such a process.

Notepad++ under attack

The Rise and lockdown of OpenClaw

OpenClaw took the world by surprise, and even caused inventory shortages for MAC minis! Then came the shocking revelations that these autonomous agents had free rein with people's data and what they could do with it. YouTube is awash with stories about OpenClaw/Moltbook,

and admins in corporate networks are required to ensure any presence is removed! What is scary is that it exploded on the news-wires as OpenClaw to the world on 31 Jan 2026!! The OpenClaw debate is only going to expand as it is now being added to cloud providers' platforms, so reading the paper on these risks below will be interesting as well.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Security specialists in helping ensure that OpenClaw does not appear in your corporate environment in any way and then with our AI specialists start engaging on how to safely start working out how to accommodate this and where it fits (or not) into the CoPilot ecosystem which IS secure from it's inception.

First Steps to securing OpenClaw

Security risks and Benefits of OpenClaw

Cloud & AI

Anthropic Claude Opus 4.6 raises the stakes

This is more relevant to CoPilot than what you may think. You will see under researcher in CoPilot - you have access to Claude. Though there is no official mention of it being available in Copilot now, it will probably be soon as it is already available in Microsoft Foundry and GitHub. 4.6 has shown significant advances in legal reasoning, autonomous execution and has a MASSIVE context window of around 1500 pages of text. OPenAI will not be far behind.

The Story behind Claude Opus 4.6

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to start working on how you get CoPilot deployed in your environment and to see how advantage can be taken from using these super advanced models that you have access to through CoPilot.



Panther Lake Delivers

What is starting to become clear is that Panther Lake is delivering performance similar to what was promised at CES 2026.

A review of the Lenovo and the Intel Core Ultra X9 has been posted, and the results are positive.

Of course these CPU's will have to contend with AMD's Ryzen AI 400 CPU's which are also giving really good results

and will probably compete well on price.

You may also notice the minimum RAM configuration for the Lenovo is 32Gig.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to explore different options for your users and help save on costs, combat rising prices and shortages.

When your usual notebooks are out of stock, maybe other form factors and even those with AMD CPU's will need more serious consideration!

Intel Mandates 7,467 MT/s RAM speed for Panther Lake

Intel has mandated that if a manufacturer uses RAM slower than what it specifies, Windows will report the GPU as just a standard Generic GPU.

This is a good example that your RFQ's need to be re-written to ensure that you are accurately specifying what you expect to be supplied in your new notebooks that you may be paying dearly for!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to assist in writing these new specifications to ensure you get the maximum value for every \$ you spend.

Intel Mandates minimum RAM speed

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