

TOP STORIES #108

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!

It is now more than 2 years since we have been publishing weekly.

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you're 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. I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" below to see if you missed something coming to End of Support (EoS) that may impact your business. **Note a new addition about Publisher.**

NOTE! Microsoft will start enforcing email limits from April (see below)

REMINDER - MAJOR POWER BI price increase 1 April (the date is not a great choice!).

Remember to check out the **official movie release dates** in South Africa for all studios at the end of this email. The schedule has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #107 is here](#)

If you would like to invite other colleagues to join this newsletter (even if it is just for the movie release dates), they can [click here](#).

If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link right at the bottom of the mail.

[NAB](#), the Show for the Entertainment & Education Business and Movie Technology geeks, kicks off in Las Vegas from **5-9 April**. **AI is going to play a huge role at the show**. News of what to expect at the show is **leaking out**, and one of them is that IMAX is set to announce new technologies to improve the quality of streamed content, you can [read the teaser here](#). The Show Daily is [also live here](#).

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Did you Know?

It took **ONLY 3 Weeks** for First Digital to get TOP STORIES AI ("TSAI") working!

You can access the AI here: <https://ai.firsttech.news>

You will need an MS ID to sign in, and if you are using your corporate ID, this might require organisational permission.

You can use "TSAI" to answer any questions about all the TOP STORIES published over the last two years, including the movies being released next week! In the coming weeks, TSAI will become much smarter based on the feedback we receive.

What would YOU like from an AI like this?

Would you like to see what we can do with YOUR data?

This is an example of how fast you can get an AI to start answering questions about your data.

Imagine this is not TOP STORIES but a repository of YOUR data you would like your staff to be able to query and/or give your customers access to.

When you get an AI working this fast and expect it to "know" everything about what it is being asked, it will occasionally get the answer wrong or give a partial answer until we train it better.

If you encounter glitches, PLEASE let us know at help@firsttech.digital and cc your Account Manager.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with the people who got this AI running to see how they can get an AI working as a POC for you in your environment.

Hardware

Panther Lake and Nova Lake "on track"

Just as we start getting stock of Lunar Lake based notebooks, we now hear that Panther Lake is on track for a 25H2 release, which probably means we will get volume shipments in early 2026 - as the definition of a "release" is becoming more creative!

With this release and Nova Lake right after that, we are going to see a dramatic leap in

processing performance along with new functionality in the ecosystem that will drive another major release from Microsoft - that may be called Win11 25H2 - Windows 12 rumours seem to be dead and buried for now.

You can [read more here](#).

It is crucial to stay updated with your hardware suppliers' release roadmap. Knowing that all these changes are coming, be cautious about making long-term commitments based on a specific generation of CPUs. Additionally, AMD may become increasingly significant as an alternative to your standard choice of Intel.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help ensure you are making the right hardware choices.

LG Taking pre-orders for the 800R curved 45" 5K OLED display

This monitor got a lot of attention at CES, and is now available for you to order for a "low" price of \$1999. You can see [all the specifications of this monitor here](#), and [read more here](#).

This monitor is in the perfect "sweet spot" of being the ultimate monitor for both gaming and professional use and comes at an excellent value.

In my opinion, there is only one monitor that is better (provided you have good eyes), which is the [Samsung Odyssey Neo 57"](#), but it only has a 1000R curve - it needs an 800R curve and is not OLED. Interestingly, ACER has a variant of this monitor as well, which [you can see here](#).

Microsoft

Exchange Outbound Email limits announced

Microsoft originally announced this at the end of February but has now clarified how journaling messages are handled (they are not counted as part of the rate limit).

What is really important to note is that currently, YOU DO NOT get notified when you reach your quota. Microsoft has introduced this to prevent misuse of Exchange Online resources. This is also known as the **Tenant External Recipient Rate Limit (TERRL)**. You can [read about all this, along with an FAQ here](#).

Enforcement starts from 3 April starting with companies with less than 500 seats. If you DO need to send high volumes of emails, you have to add a High Volume Email account (HVE). The limits are pretty generous, but if you exceed them, you will get a 505 5.7.233 error.

All online services limit the number of emails you can send in a certain period. For example, Google limits the number of messages per day to 2000 per user (but like with Microsoft, it can get complicated).

If you need assistance understanding if and how you may be impacted and need help with establishing HVE accounts, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Exchange specialists to assist further.

Step-up, Dynamics, 365 Apps & Power Platform Licensing guides updated

Microsoft has a place where you can find most of these documents - [They are here](#).

- The step-up Licensing Brief deals with how Step-Up licensing works for On-premises and Subscription licenses.
- The Power Platform guide (Power Apps.) was updated with the rights to premium features for managed environments.

If you need assistance in understanding how these updates and/or changes could affect you, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing specialists, who can assist you with your specific situation.

Microsoft Plan Comparison Documents March 2025

The latest plan comparison document can be [downloaded here](#). There are only minor additions for Defender Experts for Hunting and XDR.

CoPilot for Admins

Microsoft has announced that CoPilot is available for Admins who use the Admin Center. This will help Admins deal with tasks they may not be familiar with. As long as your company has bought at least 1 CoPilot license, the Admin will be able to use CoPilot for this. The [Microsoft announcement is here](#). The guide to [get Copilot for Admins is here](#).

Power BI Licensing Set to increase

Reminder As of April 1 (Tuesday), Power BI pricing will increase by 40%, while Power BI Premium will rise by 25%. This increase is attributed to what seems to be a general rise in the prices of BI tools, along with Microsoft stating that the increased value of the product also drives

the increase. Additionally, this increases pressure on customers to migrate to the E5 suite and, of course, the Fabric platform, which remains very competitive. You can [read more about this increase here](#). The migration to Fabric and the implications were already discussed in [TOP STORIES #59](#), and the increase coming into effect now was first announced in [TOP STORIES #89](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Power Platform and Fabric experts to explore your options based on your current investment and future plans. It is very important to consider your options if your agreement renews soon.

Windows 11 Quick Machine Recovery is available for testing

Microsoft is adding another way to recover from a machine that suddenly cannot boot. This is in response to the CrowdStrike debacle, and though it is meant for IT Admins, it will also help individual users recover as well. You can [read more here](#).

Security

Stop Users from uploading OneDrive for Business files into ChatGPT

As though it may be tempting to connect your ChatGPT subscription to your company's OneDrive, this could lead to a major compromise of your company's data. ChatGPT does not work with your files in your OneDrive accounts like CoPilot does. Admins, please be careful giving users access to OneDrive without taking the correct measures. You can [read more on how to block access here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists if you need assistance in implementing this security measure.

If HE can be Phished, anybody can be!

The owner of the credential leak website HavelBeenPwned is notifying thousands of subscribers after falling for a MailChimp phishing scam.

He was emailed a fake notification encouraging him to click on a link. He went to a website to fill in his credentials, which did not autocomplete from his password manager, a fact that should have alerted him. However, he was tired and not thinking clearly, which led him to be socially engineered into responding to a "fear alert."

You can [read about how he was tricked here](#).

This is a reminder about just how careful we must be - if you are tired and feel you are not concentrating, DO NOT DO ANYTHING that has to do with authenticating your credentials. Either call somebody to help you think clearly or put it off till tomorrow when you are rested. In most cases, doing nothing can be better than doing something without thinking clearly.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to ensure that your users are being updated with the latest tricks to score them into doing something they should not be.

Cloud & AI

Microsoft introduces deep research for CoPilot

Microsoft has launched new agents based on OpenAI's reasoning model designed for work on large amounts of data. It can pull data from multiple sources to function like a skilled data analyst. Microsoft expects to release this in April, [and you can read more about it here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to see how this new advanced reasoning functionality can be applied in your business.

Don't Forget

This new section is dedicated to reminding you about important dates or events in IT. Note that this list is not complete.

The Microsoft Product Lifecycle Page

[Here is where you can find out when ANY product is ending](#) mainstream or extended support.

Of course, the list of products is huge, and it's easy to miss important dates and their implications. Even though you can access the list yourself, I'll highlight important dates.....

Microsoft Office

There is a long list of Office EOL dates, including when Publisher will be discontinued (13 October 2026), Outlook "Classic" EOL (at least 2029), and more.

Outlook Classic for Enterprise switches to "Opt-in" April 2026 (removed from Office install)

The [complete list of Office EoS is maintained here](#).

It is important to remember that Office 2019/6 and Exchange Server 2016/9 Extended support, along with Windows 10, will end on 14 October 2025.

Microsoft Publisher

Publisher will reach end of Life in October 2026, after which **M365 Subscribers will no longer be able to open or edit Publisher files**. You have until then to save the files in other formats. The perpetual version of Publisher will continue to work (without support). [You can read more detail here](#).

Microsoft notes that "*documents may not be a one-to-one replication of your original Publisher file. If your document has a lot of graphics, you may see significant changes.*"

Unlicensed OneDrive accounts to lose data

As advised in [TOP STORIES #95](#), as of now, OneDrive accounts will be archived after 93 days. After another 93 days, they get PERMANENTLY deleted. Up until then, you can still re-activate the accounts. You can [read about how all this is working here](#). **THE FINAL DEADLINE (for a price) is before 29 July 2025!**

(disclaimer - Microsoft can change the rules anytime - so get your data out FAST!!!)

Windows 10 - End of Support (EoS) October 2025

Everyone should be aware of this, but it is important to remember that Extended Support is available if you cannot get rid of Windows 10 in time, albeit very expensive.

It will only protect you from vulnerabilities Microsoft chooses to protect you from. You can get more information on [the program here](#).

Plan "C" comes from a company called [Upatch](#).

NOTE!!!!!! ALL support for any product, INCLUDING O365 running on Windows 10, also ends.

The exception - Windows 10 LTSC 2019 is supported till 2029.

Note the use case for LTSC is very narrow (POS, Medical Devices, ATM's etc.) and not recommended for general use.

Windows 11 - End of Support (EoS)

It is essential to track the builds, and as you can see, it is very important to make sure you are trying to deploy Win 11 24H2 and NOT earlier builds.....

Win 11 22H2 October 2025 (**Note: Microsoft will force upgrade this version**)

Win 11 23H2 November 2026

Win 11 24H2 October 2027

Win 11 Ent. LTSC 2029

Windows Server End of Support

Windows Server 2012 ESU ends October 2026 - **that's 100% the end of the line.**

Windows Server 2016 Support ends Jan 2027, ESU ends Jan 2029

SQL Server End of Support

2012 SP4 ESU July 2025

2014 SP3 ESU July 2027

2016 SP3 July 2026 (this is your next big one to worry about)

2017 Oct 2027

Azure AD and MSONline End of Support

Both these services come to **end of support on 30 March 2025**

Microsoft has posted detailed information about this [here](#).

What's up at FTG

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRMTeam, of First Technology Group [have published a document on ITWeb](#) about avoiding the pitfalls of a D365 Customer engagement implementation. If you are looking to dive down the D365 rabbit hole, this is a good article to read. Then, contact our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

CoPilot Security Demo

BUI, FTG's security division, can present CoPilot for Security information-sharing sessions, workshops and demos.

In light of ongoing attacks that will only get sneakier, it is essential to contact your First Tech

Group account manager to arrange to attend a session. You can also [request a session here](#).

What does a World Class SoC look like, and how does it work?

You are invited to book a tour of one of our SoC (Security Operations Center) nodes (and there are still parts we can't show you). You can [book for the tour here](#).

BUI blog - 5th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, is now in its fifth edition, [available here](#). This edition focuses on security news from Microsoft for February. If you work with the Microsoft security stack, this is a handy video to watch—it's only five minutes long.

BUI Open 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

BUI was announced as a Diversity in Security award finalist in the Microsoft Security Excellence Awards. The company was honoured among a global field of industry leaders who demonstrated success across the security landscape during the past 12 months. You can [read more about this award here](#), where on the 28th April Microsoft will recognise the finalists in 9 categories.

Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI

With 63 healthcare facilities in southern Africa, the security of Life Healthcare's data is paramount. A move to the Azure Cloud, facilitated by BUI, became the clear and strategic choice.

As a leading South African private healthcare provider, Life Healthcare plays a key role in the health of our nation. While their primary business occurs in wards, theatres and consulting rooms around the country, it is underpinned by a solid IT foundation.

Read more about how BUI enabled Life Healthcare's move to the cloud..... [Navigating the Cloud: Life Healthcare's Seamless Transition, With Support From BUI - BUI](#)

Movies

Grp 1 Pvt School Holidays 21-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

Public School Holidays 29-MAR-25 until 07-APR-25

Grp 2 Pvt School Holidays 05-APR-25 until 05-MAY-25

Now Playing: [Night of the Zoopocalypse](#)

Now Playing: [A working Man](#)

4 April: [Locked](#)

4 April: [A Minecraft Movie](#)

4 April: [Riff Raff](#)

11 April: [The Amateur](#)

11 April: [A Kind of Madness](#)

11 April: [Drop](#)

11 April: [Warfare](#)

18 April: [Old Guy](#)

18 April: [Sneaks](#)

18 April: [Sinners](#)

18 April: [King of Kings](#)

18 April: [Hunting Jessica Brok](#)

25 April: [Until Dawn](#)

25 April: [The Penguin Lessons](#)

25 April: [The Accountant 2](#)

25 April: [Jungle Beat 2: The Past](#)



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