

TOP STORIES #110

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 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. 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.**

Reminder that you can access [TOP STORIES AI \("TSAI"\)](#) to search for anything in the archive. You can read more about TSAI in [TOP STORIES #108](#)

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

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 #109 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 at the bottom of the mail.

[NAB](#), is now a wrap!. [AI played a huge role at the show](#). You can read up on coverage of the show at publications like [tvtech](#) and [others](#). RaVepubs has an [excellent overview of the show here](#).

[All the Show Dailies are here](#). There are numerous YouTube videos on what has been released - just search for what interests you.

Account Manager?

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

Did you Know?

FirstNet, a division of First Technology Group has the most Teams and Zoom phone skills in the country - we are the biggest!

- IS the ONLY company that is Zoom and Teams phone certified.
- First Technology Group is the #1 YeaStar Hosted PBX provider in Africa
- FTG has over 180 Zoom accreditations
- One of only six operator connect partners

FirstNet is operating the biggest cloud PBX platform in the country, **offering seamless scalability from 1 to 3,000 users per company**, with advanced analytics, 24/7 support and near-perfect uptime.

If you are looking at upgrading or installing a brand new voice communications solution and would like to have the most certified experts in the country help you with this, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with them to get started. Even if you are happy with your installation, another opinion could be quite interesting!

Hardware

Avoid GPUs with 8GB of VRAM in 2025

Not long ago (2021), GPUs with 8Gig of VRAM were considered to be sufficient for most games, but now 12-16Gig is considered the minimum for a great experience. There are many reasons for you to "buy up" when it comes to your next GPU - you can [read more here to justify a bigger investment in your next GPU!](#)

A new connector standard to replace HDMI

What happens when you get a new standard to replace older standards?

You [get another standard!](#)

A new standard that was developed in China called GPPI has been announced.

It uses the USB-C form factor, is backward compatible with USB-C, and will outperform HDMI and DisplayPort at the higher end of its standard, including boosting Power Delivery to 480W. It is early days, but has the backing of the industry giants, so let's see if this standard will gain traction. You can [read more about the announcement here](#).

Microsoft

Recall is almost ready to ship - should I buy CoPilot+ enabled PC's?

[With Recall about to ship](#), CoPilot+ PCs are not just a good idea — they're becoming essential. Gartner expects AI PCs to be the standard by 2026, but the PC you buy today will still be running in 2028.

Even if the "killer app" hasn't arrived yet, AI is already weaving itself into everything we do.

Waiting risks ending up with hardware that can't keep up.

You'll need AT LEAST an [NPU \(≥40TOPS\), 32GB of RAM, and 1TB PCIe 4.0](#) (at least) storage to stay ahead.

Bottom line: Buy CoPilot+ PCs now. Waiting will only make it harder — and more expensive — to catch up later.

You can [read more about why this matters here](#). In summary, **Waiting comes at a cost:**

- By 2027, software will assume you have local AI capabilities.
- Older machines without NPUs and sufficient RAM will become bottlenecks
- Recall and other new features won't even run properly on older hardware
- Upgrading later will be far more expensive and disruptive than planning properly today.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to talk about the CoPilot+ PC roadmap for Intel and AMD and to see when it makes sense to transition to standardising on this new generation of computing. It is inevitable.](#)

Security

Don't open that JPEG!!!

There is a bug in WhatsApp for Windows that allows you to think you are clicking on a picture, but it actually runs a nasty EXE. For many of us, our guard is down when we are clicking on things in WhatsApp, so this is quite dangerous!

[You can read more here](#).

As always, this serves as a reminder to ensure that your users are always kept up to date with training to ensure that they are aware of these vulnerabilities, and WhatsApp is a very common app to find installed on PC's.

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to ensure that you are up to date with your user awareness training - you can never let up!](#)

Hackers Exploiting Domain Controllers

There is an increase in ransomware attacks exploiting Domain controllers through the RDP protocol. Attackers are able to use tools to extract the password hashes for all AD accounts and then, with privileged credentials, move laterally across the network. Microsoft's Defender for Endpoint now has the "Contain High Value Assets" feature to deal with this attack successfully.

[Please contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our specialists to ensure that this capability is enabled.](#)

Cloud & AI

ChatGPT gets a real memory! CoPilot - sort of....

GPT has now been empowered with a memory that spans all your conversations, allowing the AI's responses to become increasingly more personalised as it learns more about you as it gains insights from your conversations. You can [read more about this new capability here](#),

Though CoPilot has also [been blessed with a memory](#), it is not as extensive as ChatGPT's (just ask it).

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 [Opatch](#).

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

Power BI is dead, Long live Fabric

It is well documented that Microsoft wants customers to migrate to Fabric for many reasons, one of them being migrating to a unified capacity model under Azure and being the foundation for integrating CoPilot.

Fabric will be part of your Microsoft journey going forward; thus, it is important to understand where it will be important in your business.

Microsoft Fabric is an all-in-one analytics platform that combines business data engineering, integration, warehousing, and intelligence in a single SaaS experience.

Join First Digital on 15 April 2025 for an exclusive online deep dive into Microsoft Fabric – the game-changing platform transforming how organisations manage and unlock the value of their data. From seamless integration to powerful analytics and real-time insights, discover how Fabric empowers teams across IT, operations, and strategy to make smarter decisions faster. If you're ready to ignite insight and unleash results, this is the webinar for you.

When: Tuesday 15 April 2025 @ 10H00am

Where: Webinar - [Register Here](#)

FT-KZN Upgrades Senate Chambers

The chambers at Mangosuthu University have been completely upgraded with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate how modern meetings and presentations are conducted. This is one of many examples of what the team in KZN is able to achieve. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you think your installation might be a bit complicated and needs integration across many different vendors, contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with this team that will be able to help.

The Umbrella for FinOps

First Technology Group is stepping up your cloud financial management game with Umbrella (formerly Anodot Cost) — our preferred platform for FinOps and Cloud Cost Management. Umbrella unlocks faster innovation, deeper insights, and robust cost optimisation, empowering you to proactively manage your cloud spend and enhance financial efficiency.

As a Platinum preferred partner across Africa, FTG brings you unmatched expertise and tailored support, ensuring a smooth integration of Umbrella into your current systems with minimal operational disruption.

Here's what [Umbrella](#) means:

- **Enhanced Cost Management:** Full visibility of your cloud expenses to pinpoint savings.
- **Improved Financial Efficiency:** Powerful analytics to guide smarter cloud investments.
- **Seamless Integration:** Effortlessly combines with your existing infrastructure.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our SAM or FinOps teams to see how they can help you optimise your cloud costs. Even if you may think you have your costs under control there is no harm in asking somebody else to take a look.... just in case!

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRM Team, 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.

Movies

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

In a blow for Disney, Jason Statham's movie, A Working Man, beat Snow White for the highest box-office revenue in the opening week. This is not what Disney was hoping for, but with all the negative press, I suppose it is unsurprising. You can [read more about this here](#). I think the negative press overshadowed a movie that was not THAT bad.....

We can already see Minecraft has done very well, coming in at \$162.7 million in it's opening weekend, and [already the highest grossing movie for the year](#).

Now Playing: [The Amateur](#)

Now Playing: [A Kind of Madness](#)

Now Playing: [Drop](#)

Now Playing: [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](#)

02 May: [Thunderbolts](#)

02 May: [Fight or Flight](#)

02 May: [Die KwikSilwers](#)

02 May: [Riff Raff](#)

09 May: [Juliet & Romeo](#) (Trailer) [IMDB Summary here](#).

09 May: [Sabbatical](#)

09 May: [Shadow Force](#)

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