

TOP STORIES #102

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years! As a user of Microsoft technologies, you're receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.

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

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

If you want colleagues to receive this newsletter, they can [click here](#) to subscribe. The previous week's [TOP STORIES #101 is here](#).

ISE 2025 [has come to an end](#) which was attended by representatives from many different divisions of the Group, and they will be able to share their experiences with you, but for a great summary of the show, you can read the show dailies here: [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#) **RaVE publications** wrapped up their coverage of ISE with 2,400 videos of the show. This is the best place possible to find anything that was exhibited—it's almost as good as being there! The official TV channel for the show [can also be found here](#).

[Mobile World Congress \(MWC\)](#) will kick off in Barcelona from **3-6 March**. This is a significant event for the mobile connectivity industry with a focus on 5G, 6G, AI, and the Internet of Things.

This is the 2nd mail using **firsttech.news** - I hope you are still getting it!!!!

Account Manager?

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

Did you Know?

You probably pay 50% more for your cloud workloads than you should!

Disclaimer: there are exceptions!

FinIntel, a division of First Technology Group, specialises in Cloud Cost Management across multiple cloud hosts (AWS, Azure, and many more).

The division uses some of the best tools in the world, including its own!

The team has over 40 FinOps and multi-cloud certifications and over 20 years of experience.

Their deep FinOps expertise and tooling allow for **precise cost analysis and immediate savings**.

This optimisation service has been operational for over two years, so the Team has many real-life examples to share.

This service complements all the other SAM and ITAM services already available from the group.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with this Team, or [click here to request that an account manager contact you](#).

Hardware

Intel Panther Lake - What We Know

What we know for sure is that we will **have these CPUs in volume in early 2026**, and they will completely replace the current Lunar Lake lineup. [You can read more here](#).

The emphasis on efficiency could result in significant improvements in battery life.

While the lack of a high-core count is interesting, the overall package appears compelling for a wide range of users.

Panther Lake has the potential to reshape the mobile computing landscape again, ushering in a new era of performance, efficiency, and AI-powered experiences. As explained in [TOP STORIES #94](#), everything is changing, and you cannot use your RFP from 2 years ago as the same template to buy new hardware today!

The message is clear: **You must replace Lunar Lake with Panther Lake as soon as possible in 2026. Don't make long-term commitments to current tech!**

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Lenovo, Dell, and HP specialists to assist with your procurement roadmap into 2026.

Microsoft

Win 11 24H2 support for Intel Gen 8,9 & 10 CPU's removed

In a new twist, Microsoft has removed support for some Intel CPUs and added some AMD CPUs to the list. This is actually quite important, as we are all scrambling to deploy Win11 24H2. It is also important to stay up to date on what Microsoft officially supports (see the End of Support dates below under the "**Don't Forget**" heading). However, a change like this so late in 2025 without a proper explanation is not very welcome!

There are many ways to get Win11 working on unsupported CPUs, but it is still important to know the "official" list. You can [read more about this story here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Account Manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to ensure you can handle this new update when upgrading your older hardware.

As I have mentioned many times in the past, for multiple reasons, it is important to try to make sure the hardware is upgraded to SSD storage and at least 32GB of RAM.

Dynamics 365 Contact Center update

Microsoft has updated this guidance document, which you can [download here](#). The document includes examples for different scenarios, integrations and of course, the FAQ.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to assist with any questions you may have.

Microsoft adjusts Office/Teams costs again.

There are reports that Microsoft is working on increasing the price difference between Office and Teams to avoid further EU penalties. You can [read more about this here](#). I do not think anything will actually change other than M365 prices going up more as companies remain fully committed to Teams, which is deeply integrated into the ecosystem. Unfortunately, we have no idea if or when these changes will be implemented, but this is a **reminder to make sure you are getting as much value as possible from your Microsoft investment**.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Licensing specialists to also talk to you about deploying our tool to uncover poor consumption of Microsoft services to right-size your licensing or to use the data to drive more initiatives to improve consumption of what you are already paying for.

The upgrade window for Exchange Server 2016/9 narrows

Directions on Microsoft has released a blog that provides extensive detail on the even tighter deadlines for upgrading your old Exchange servers **before support expires on 14 October 2025**. You can [read the original Blog here](#).

It is clear that even though we are still waiting for CU15, Microsoft is not extending the deadline, so it is very important to be ready for the final transition to Exchange SE.

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our Exchange experts to help you navigate any specific problems with your migration to a new system, whether on-premise, hybrid, or cloud.

Security

Deepfake attacks increase - are you next?

Attacks using Phishing and social engineering are surging, assisted by AI, making attackers difficult to spot. Even QR codes are no longer so innocent. These attacks increasingly mimic individuals you trust, tricking you into doing something that benefits them—even if it is just clicking on that fateful link you should not have!

It remains important to keep your users up to date with the latest tricks, and it will remain so for as long as there are bad guys out there!

[Here is an example](#) of how an AI can clone your voice with only 24 seconds of speech! Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange for up-to-date user training, which can help prevent your business from being compromised.

Cloud & AI

Gemini gets a memory

This is a very important update from Google - [you can read more here](#).

ChatGPT has had a memory for a year, making it very effective when training it to remember how you want it to respond to requests; Gemini's memory, combined with its deep research capabilities (Perplexity has [just announced its own](#) but remains forgetful), makes it a much stronger competitor for ChatGPT users.

Of course, don't ignore CoPilot because of its advantage of being deeply integrated into corporate systems, especially email with M365, but needs to catch up - as it still has no memory!

AI Agent is a Game Changer

We will likely get OpenAI's Deep Research agent in GPT Plus. This agent can work independently, which you can already get a taste of from Gemini.

These AI agents are game-changers for how we research and validate our work. How much they will change your life depends on what you do and whether AI can support you, but as soon as you can get access, I recommend you start exploring it.

Read [more about what is coming here](#),

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists so they can show you how agents can be deployed in your company today.

Microsoft does not fear DeepSeek

The shockwave of DeepSeek's arrival is still travelling around the world, proving that AI is not as expensive as we thought it would be.

We have now discovered that you can do "clever stuff" with very little computing power, and it does not need to run in a huge data centre. Research into building even more efficient reasoning models continues apace, [pushing the financial bar even lower](#).

However, as much as you can do really very clever things with DeepSeek, in a company where you would use AI to improve productivity, it requires integration into all other systems. That is where Microsoft comes in, which is all about securing and integrating CoPilot with data. You can [read more about this here](#).

There is a place for DeepSeek and many other AI solutions in the future. As we continue to learn about how much can be done with these new, more efficient models, it is clear the road forward is now fundamentally different from what was initially anticipated when OpenAI arrived on the scene.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to see what is possible with AI today by showing you what they are actually implementing in companies to inspire a discussion on what is possible in your company

Don't Forget

This is a new section dedicated to reminding you about important dates or events in IT

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.

The [complete list 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.

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 at any time - so get your data out FAST!!!)

Windows 10 - End of Support 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" will come from a company called [Opatch](#), but we have no technical expertise with this company's offering to assist.

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 important 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

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

What's up at FTG

Navigating the Cloud: 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](#)

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, reach out to our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

Municipality Solution Demonstration

Join the CRMTeam at Microsoft for an event that showcases how cutting-edge technology can transform the way municipalities handle service delivery, from ticket management to AI-powered insights. You can [read more about the event here](#).

When: 19 March 2025 from 10H00 - 12H30 ([RSVP by March 12](#))

Where: Microsoft Offices, 3012 Winnie Mandela Dr, Bryanston, Sandton.

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 - 4th Video Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI, has launched a blog focused on Security—what's new, what's changed, and what you need to do to maintain a sound security posture. The 4th Video in the series is [available here](#). This video covers some of the Purview announcements at Microsoft Ignite 2024.

Movies

Grp 2 Pvt ½ Term Break 21-FEB-25 until 24-FEB-25

Now Playing: [Captain America: Brave New World](#)

Now Playing: [Bridget Jones: Mad about the Boy](#)

Now Playing: [Chhaava](#)

Now Playing: [Presence](#)

21 Feb: [Paddington in Peru](#)

21 Feb: [September 5](#)

21 Feb: [Inheritance](#)

21 Feb: [Unbreakable boy](#)

28 Feb: [Brave the Dark](#)

28 Feb: [The Monkey](#)

07 March: [The Great Lillian Hall](#)

07 March: [A Scam Called Love](#)

07 March: [Mickey 17](#)

07 March: [Rule Breakers](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!