

TOP STORIES #105

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. 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.

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 #104 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.

The big news of the week is that Microsoft has announced a ±\$300 million investment to expand its data centre and AI infrastructure and to train 50,000 people in the next 12 months. You can [read more about the announcement here](#).

[Mobile World Congress \(MWC\)](#) has come to an end with many new advancements in mobile tech on display and [slimmer phones being a major theme of the show](#). There were all sorts of crazy tech on display, and one that got a lot of attention was a [foldable projector that could fit in your pocket!](#) Lenovo made a huge impact at the show with many different types of concept notebooks and displays. From a [foldout display](#) (instead of rollable) to a [solar-powered notebook](#) to a [display with a built-in NPU](#), and [many other interesting designs](#).

[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.

Account Manager?

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

Hardware

Extending/Flipping screens in our (Near) future

It is not only Lenovo that is proudly showing off an [extending rollable flippable screen](#), but Compal is also showing a [prototype of a horizontally rollable extendable screen](#). What is clear is that as we go into 2026, notebooks with extendable screens are going to be a serious option that we can buy. This option will be desirable for those of us who are highly mobile and need more screen real estate than what a normal notebook can give. A standard 1920X1080 FHD screen is simply not good enough anymore.

I think most people would like more screen real estate for their notebooks without having to [carry around external screens to plug in](#), which right now is the only option (though relatively cheap).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to review your options regarding external displays and to discuss planning your first extendable display notebook in H2 of this year!

Huawei HarmonyOS PC could launch in April

This is interesting as it marks the launch of a PC with a new operating system developed by Huawei, which will offer a different experience from what you currently get. Clearly, this is going to be an uphill battle to find a spot in the Universe dominated by Windows, Linux and macOS, but a new entrant backed by Huawei is going to make things interesting. [You](#)

[can read more here.](#)

Microsoft

You will be prompted to back up your files in OneDrive

Starting Mid-March, M365 will start prompting users to enroll in OneDrive Known Folder Move (KFM). This is part of a broader effort to increase the number of customers using the OneDrive service. **Admins can block this notification.** You can [read more about this here](#). **If you need assistance in blocking this notification for your business, please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our engineers to assist you.**

Business Premium has been added as a Prerequisite to M365E5 Security

Microsoft has announced you can extend your Business Premium capabilities by adding M365E5 security to your subscription. You can [find the Microsoft announcement here](#), and note further that Microsoft has updated the [Product Terms to reflect this here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our licensing specialists to provide a quote for this add-on. We would also like to connect you with our security specialists so that we can walk you through the features and capabilities of the M365E5 Security add-on.

Security

Microsoft Teams and other Windows tools hijacked to hack networks

Hackers are using social engineering tactics to get access to your network to be able to drop backdoor malware. Though this attack started in the USA, it is now spreading. The best defence is to train employees to be on the lookout for somebody trying to trick them into giving access and also to implement MFA, and limit access to remote desktop tools unless specifically required. You can [read more about this attack here](#). Microsoft is also quite alarmed by the Malvertising attack, [which you can read about here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to assist you with making sure your training schedule for your users is up to date. New techniques are being employed daily to trick your staff into granting access or giving away credentials.

Cloud & AI

AI Agents for \$20,000 a month???

This is not a typo!! OpenAI is reportedly developing advanced AI agents that could cost as much as \$20K a month to perform complex tasks autonomously, eliminating the need for human intervention. This is an inevitable step forward in adopting AI, and if you are not experimenting with AI, I urge you to start because the longer you wait, the further ahead your competitors will get. You can [read more about OpenAI's plans here](#). **Please contact your First Technology account manager, who will connect you with our AI specialists. They will show you what they are already doing and explain how AI can make a difference for your business today.**

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.

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" 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 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

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

AI in Client Computing - an In-Person event

With AI in 2025 reshaping how we live, work, and interact with the world, client device computing is also undergoing significant changes driven by technological advancements and evolving user needs.

It's an exciting time to witness these advancements!

Join Acer and First Technology as they showcase and share some technology trends which will redefine industries and improve productivity in the years ahead.

When: 13 March @ 10:00am

Where: Umhlanga Ski Boat Club, 75 Twilight Dr, uMhlanga, KZN

RSVP: [Here](#)

HPE Aruba New Networking Solutions Unveiled

Join us for an Exclusive First Technology KZN event in partnership with Aruba to discover how our AI-powered, secure, and scalable infrastructure can transform your business with guest speaker Alan Knott-Craig

When: 27 March @ 8:30am

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

Municipality Solution Demonstration

Join the CRM Team 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 - 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 Newsflash

The first MVP, Samson Barasa Wanjala from BUI has been accepted into the program. You can read [more about his journey here](#).

BUI announced it is 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 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

Human Rights Day 21-MAR-25

The Line-up for 21 March is going to be INTENSE!!

Now Playing: [The Great Lillian Hall](#)

Now Playing: [A Scam Called Love](#)

Now Playing: [Mickey 17](#)

Now Playing: [Rule Breakers](#)

14 March: [Buffalo Kids](#)

14 March: [Cleaner](#)

14 March: [In the Lost Lands](#)

21 March: [Disney's Snow White](#)

21 March: [Som Van Twee](#) - Please support your local cinema!

21 March: [Black Bag](#)

21 March: [Novocaine](#)

21 March: [Last Breath](#)

28 March: [Night of the Zoopocalypse](#)

28 March: [A working Man](#)

4 April: [Locked](#)

4 April: [A Minecraft Movie](#)

4 April: [Riff Raff](#)

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