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13th July #175

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** Rayon, postman & Cursor are added.
 - **Microsoft EoL section updated for April 2027** - New update coming in July
 - **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #175**- No rest for the wicked, no good at all
 - **Did you Know?** - All your security can come in one BIG box!
 - **Microsoft Promotions** - now with it's own home page.
 - **Microsoft Killing Copilot+?** - not enough membership in the Mile High Club.
 - **Power Platform Licensing guide** - Pay as you Go!
 - **Microsoft announces new consulting business** - You WILL enable AI!!!
 - **The 8GB Trap** - It's real, and it has teeth.
 - **New Outlook gets new features** - Finally, some features we want!
 - **The Bots in the Lobby** - Your company secrets exposed to the world!
 - **Passkeys under Siege** - Call from your IT dept. what could go wrong?
 - **WhatsApp attachments as bait** - You get file from a colleague. What's not to trust?
 - **GPT-5.6 for CoPilot** - Speedily adopted by Microsoft.
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Microsoft Modernisation April 2026-2027

Microsoft Modernisation strategy has been updated. This addresses key EoL dates, price increases and updates up to 1 April 2027

DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #175

We scan the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks. Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but actually updated continuously). This is part of the DarkWeb monitoring services included with many of BUI's managed services offerings. **This report is live, and this is a "snapshot" of the top 10 events as of Sunday Afternoon.**

TOP STORIES #174

Click button above for last weeks news.

Visit FirstMarketPLace Link here for New Additions

Rayon, postman & Cursor have been added for this week. See below for LinkedIn [Try out our AI](#) to see whats been added since launch.

Our LinkedIn

Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa. **July marks summer blockbuster season with The Odyssey, Moana and Spiderman coming up.**

TOP STORIES ARCHIVE

Register with the link above and get access to the entire TOP STORIES Archive with an AI to help you find what you want. You can also find all the vendors added to FirstMarketPlace and get a whole lot of detail about them! It's in Beta so it could make mistakes.

Request Account Manager

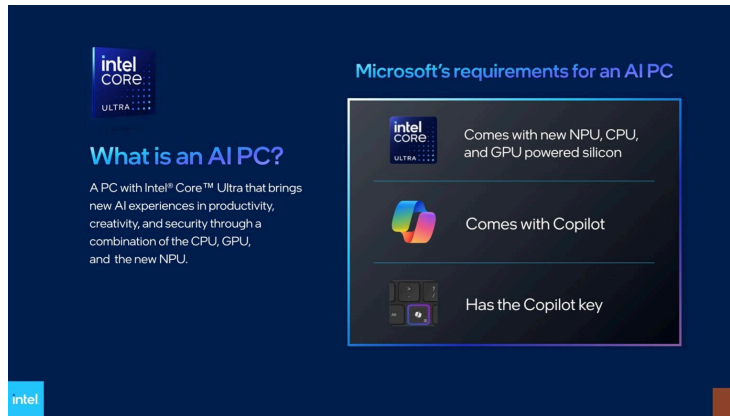
SUBSCRIBE TO TOP STORIES

Microsoft New Promotions

There are going to be MANY promotions coming, so these have been moved to their own home page.

Microsoft Promotions - Coming Soon

Microsoft News This Week



Microsoft is killing the Copilot+ PC advantage

It seems the RAM shortage is pushing new computer prices to insane levels and having a cascading effect that is actually benefiting us! Microsoft has quietly relaxed the rules relating to the NPU firewall that restricted you from accessing useful AI features

on your local PC. Not everything is accessible, but I suspect soon, it will be.

Microsoft has opened one of Windows 11's local AI capabilities to PCs with an NVIDIA RTX 30-series or newer GPU and at least 6GB of VRAM.

Developers can now test local language model APIs for summarising, rewriting, and generating text, with the model downloaded through Windows Update and running locally rather than in the cloud.

Recall, Click to Do and the other headline Copilot+ features are still NPU-only, and this is experimental code requiring Developer Mode and a Windows Insider build.

But the Copilot+ "exclusive" club is now not so much!

This is a HUGE "Heads-Up" - it is a big reason for you go back and revisit your current inventory, potentially downgrade your requirements, and maybe avoid rushing out to buy new notebooks at crazy prices when your existing ones may be perfectly capable.

Suddenly a whole lot of notebooks get a new lease on life - with maybe just a RAM and SSD upgrade.

Corporate machines have a lot more things running in the background, so you should always try to target a minimum of 32Gig memory and 500Gig SSD, but it is more important than ever before to understand exactly what you HAVE to be running on the machines and maybe a big portion of them could be running 16 GB if you optimised them.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to review your inventory and reconsider keeping or re-purposing notebooks give that the NPU "firewall" in Windows has just "sprung a leak"!

Warning!! It is NOT that simple to find all the notebooks that will qualify for CoPilot+, so I urge you not to embark on this exercise all by yourself (even with an AI helping you).

Microsoft is killing the CoPilot+ PC advantage

Microsoft Power Platform Licensing Guide July 2026

Microsoft has updated the Licensing guide where the biggest change is the emphasis on Pay-as-you-go as the preferred method for purchasing CoPilot Credits followed by Copilot Credits Pre-Purchase Plan, the Agent Pre-Purchase Plan, and finally the Copilot Credits Capacity Pack.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Power Platform specialists to assist in working out the best way to consume these resources for your business based on the type of agreement you have with Microsoft.

Microsoft Power Platform Licensing Guide July 2026

Another warning about the 8Gb Trap.

This issue is not just restricted to Microsoft, but the new 8Gig Surface models cost more than last year's 16Gig versions..... and cannot use all the CoPilot+ features, which require at least 16Gig.

So, you pay more, get half the RAM and lose some of the AI capability the machine was supposedly built for!

TOP STORIES has repeatedly warned about this. #46 more than 2 YEARS AGO already recommended 32Gig as the practical corporate minimum, while #145 explained that 16Gig should only be considered where Windows has been carefully debloated and background applications tightly controlled.

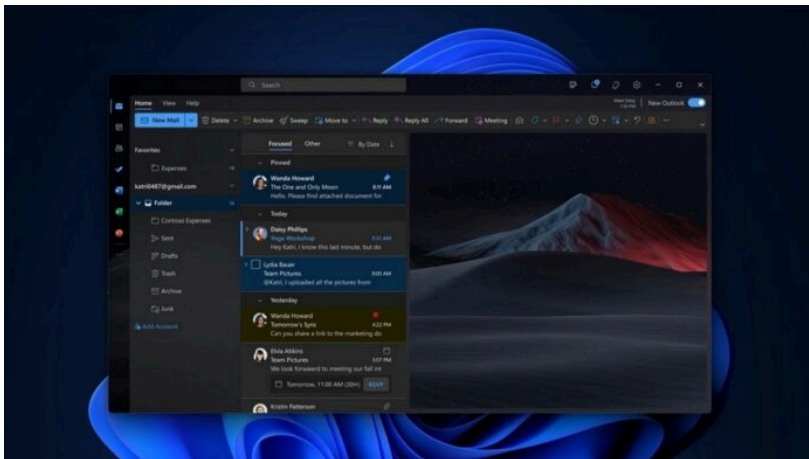
The recommendation remains unchanged:

For corporates, avoid 8Gig at all costs, but for personal use it might be OK

16Gig is the absolute minimum for carefully managed machines..... and 32Gig remains the corporate standard.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our experts to help you get the best possible performance out of notebooks that need to live longer than what you initially thought!

OfficeWatch: The 8Gb Trap



Microsoft's New Outlook is getting three more features

Microsoft is finally adding a useful guardrail to New Outlook.

From August 2026, it should warn you when you reply to an older message while a newer one is waiting in the thread.

September should bring automatic template replies through rules and easier categories you can pin and drag messages into.

Small changes...but potentially fewer embarrassing "please ignore my previous email" moments. It seems Microsoft is taking getting the New Outlook to reach feature parity with the Old one more seriously and is adding useful features that the old one is missing.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft messaging specialists to start working on a full migration to the New Outlook, which could take a long time, especially if you need to start replacing COM add-ins with new solutions.

WindowsLatest: Microsoft adds some useful features to New Outlook

The Bots are in the Lobby.....but the problem is MUCH bigger!

In [TOP STORIES #174](#), I covered Microsoft's new "bot bloodhound" controls, which detect external meeting bots, send them to the lobby and require organiser approval before they enter.



Useful.....but Computerworld points out that this is only controlling the front door.

Once admitted, bots can record unexpected HR, legal, board or M&A discussions, store the transcript in an unapproved cloud and produce a very convincing summary that may also be WRONG.

Transcripts can get horribly messed up because the audio was of bad quality and the AI "mishears" the word or sentence, and before you know it, you could have a huge incident on your hands.

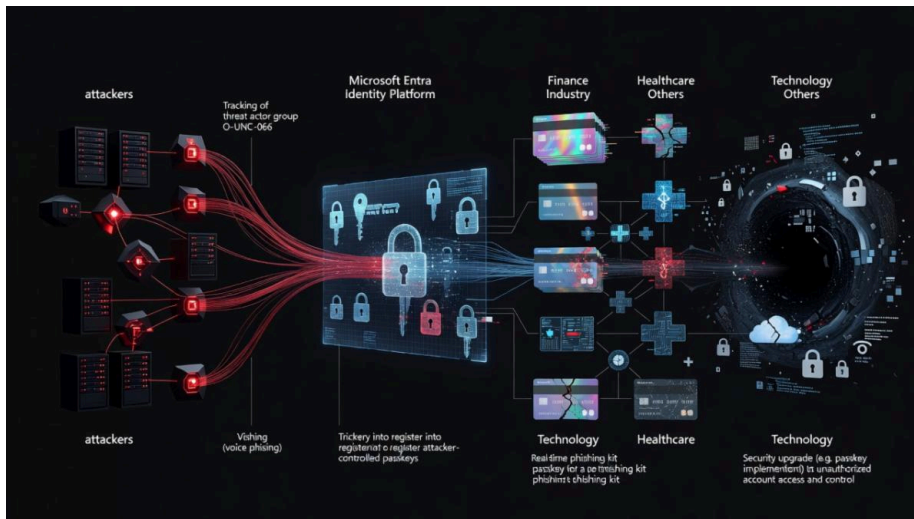
The controls also do not govern Microsoft's own note-taking, browser extensions or personal devices.

Companies need proper meeting AI governance.....not just a better lobby.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft Teams, Purview and security experts to get control of the bots.....including Microsoft's own.

ComputerWorld: Bots in the Lobby are not the only problem

Security



Microsoft Passkeys Under Siege How Vishing Attackers Turn Security Upgrades Into Account Takeovers

Passkeys are meant to make Microsoft 365 accounts much harder to steal, so naturally the

criminals have found another way around them.....they phone the user!

Posing as IT support, they claim an urgent Microsoft Entra security upgrade is required, direct the employee to a very convincing fake passkey enrolment page and guide them through the process.

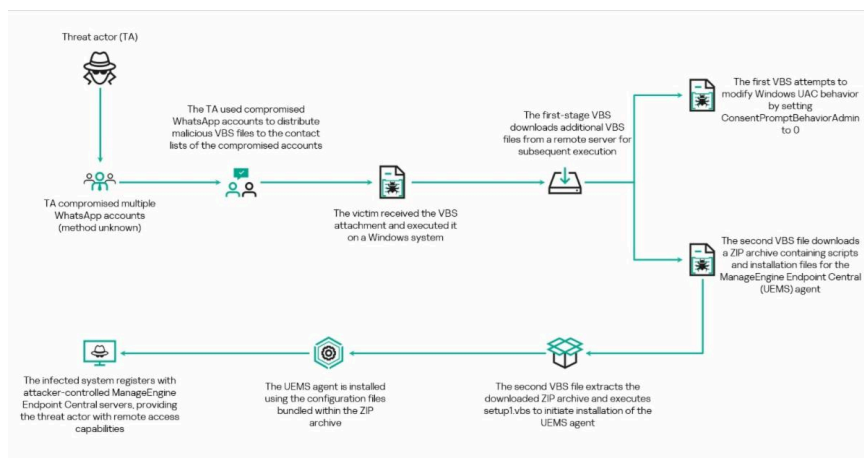
While the user obediently enters credentials and approves MFA prompts, the attacker registers THEIR passkey against the victim's account, giving them persistent access. **The passkey has not been hacked.....the user has been persuaded to open the door.**

This is another reminder that security technology cannot protect a user who trusts an unexpected caller. NEVER register a passkey, approve an MFA request or follow security instructions because somebody phoned you. Hang up and call IT using a known internal number. Organisations also need to train users on what legitimate passkey enrolment looks like and monitor for unexpected new authentication methods.

Zero Trust must include the person claiming to be from IT!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our training specialists to ensure that your users are being trained to watch out tricks and to have the training customised to ensure that they know how to deal with these situations that will be different in every company.

WebProNews: Passkeys under attack with new Vishing trick



Now you are being baited via WhatsApp!

Attackers are compromising WhatsApp accounts and using them to send fake business and financial documents to the account owner's contacts.

The files have

convincing names such as Financial Reports, Account Statement or Outstanding Payment List.... and because they appear to come from somebody you know, curiosity and trust do the rest. By doing homework on you and your colleagues, the bad guys can send a document that may appear relevant to your current work, so of course you will open it, right?

The attachment is actually a malicious VBScript file. The victim must first download it and then open it, and may even have to approve an administrator prompt. Once the human being has kindly helped it through all those security barriers, it installs a legitimate ManageEngine remote-management tool, giving the attackers remote access to the computer.

The lesson is simple.... a familiar name and photograph in WhatsApp does NOT mean the message is safe.

Never open an unexpected attachment without independently checking with the sender, preferably by calling them.

Files ending in VBS, VBE, EXE, BAT, CMD, JS or PS1 should immediately set off alarm bells. Technology can block a lot.... but it cannot always protect somebody who downloads the file, opens it and then clicks YES!

This is why security awareness training is no longer a nice-to-have annual tick-box exercise. Users need to be trained continuously, because the attacks are now continuous, personalised and increasingly AI-assisted. Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to get in touch with our training specialists, who can help you review the right security awareness and phishing simulation options for your organisation..

HackerNews: WhatsApp VBScript attack

Cloud & AI

OpenAI's GPT-5.6 is the preferred model in Microsoft 365 Copilot

Microsoft has selected OpenAI's new GPT 5.6 as the preferred model for Microsoft 365 CoPilot, with the upgrade available across Word, Excel, PowerPoint, CoPilot Chat and Cowork. Microsoft says it should produce better documents, deeper Excel analysis, more polished presentations and stronger results from complex tasks.....with fewer rounds of prompting required to get there.

Once the rollout is complete, CoPilot will be able to automatically use GPT 5.6 when it is the best model for the task, while users with access to the model selector can choose it themselves. The bigger story is that Microsoft is increasingly turning CoPilot into a multi-model platform.....Anthropic had moved ahead for some advanced knowledge work, but OpenAI has now fought its way back to the front of the queue. Even the AI has to compete for its job now!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI and CoPilot specialists to help you understand how these model improvements can deliver more value from Microsoft 365 in your organisation.

OpenAI's GPT-5.6 preferred model for CoPilot

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