



Your Weekly guide in a Changing World.
Written and edited independently by Barry Neethling
Sponsored by First Technology Group

14th September #184

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: Wiris, Faronics and Dynatrace are added.**
- **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #184- A Bank got Phished**
- **Did you Know? - What happens at 3:00am?**
- **Lenovo Swan** - Ready to Fly?
- **Microsoft AI on every Desk** - It's inevitable
- **Hidden Costs of Copilot** - But is there a deal?
- **Patch Tuesday biggest ever** - but Ooops.....
- **Security Suites Licensing Guidance** - It's needed!
- **Microsoft to improve Bluetooth** - So it was not your device!
- **Windows 11 Goes on an 8-Gig Diet** - 32 Gig still Corporate minimum
- **Passkeys are the Phish** - no end to how you can be tricked
- **Astra GPT 6** - An ethereal Alien Mind? Really?

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Forward this mail to others who may find this useful and invite them to subscribe using the button below.

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DarkWeb Executive Report #184

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BUI scans the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks.

Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but is 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.**

Last Week's Top Stories

SignUp for the Archive

You can click the top button for last week's edition or sign up for access to the archive with AI assistance to read from #1

Newest additions to FirstMarketPlace

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Wiris
Faronics
Dynatrace

Are added for this week.
Click the link above for more information on these vendors

New Movies for this week

Coyote vs ACME is doing very well and is releasing this week in SA.....
WARNING!! The trailer for Ice Cream Man is really hectic!!!

Did You Know?

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QUALITY SECURITY OPERATION!



- 03:00**
Something gets in. The alert fires.
- Immediately**
Your named squad investigates. Awake. Qualified.
- Then**
It is isolated, on authority you agreed in advance.

YOU SLEPT

Handled overnight, and on your desk by morning.

It's 3:00am and All Hell has broken loose!!

Attackers do not work office hours. Most of the tooling scanning your network right now is automated, so there is probably not even anybody awake on their side.

24/7 monitoring and alerting has become very common.

Almost every provider offers it. They watch, they detect, they send you a notification.

Then everybody goes back to sleep.

You read it at 08:00 am.

By then the attacker has had at least five uninterrupted hours inside your business.

Detecting a threat and telling somebody about it is **not** managing it.

So ask one question.

Who acts on the threat at 3am, and what are they allowed to do without waking you up?

Did you know BUI looks after security for organisations worldwide, from small businesses up to multinational enterprises?

AND

Did you know that qualifying BUI Cyber MXDR customers may be eligible for up to a 25% discount on their cyber insurance premiums?

**By combining industry-leading managed detection and response services with improved cyber risk management, businesses can strengthen their security posture while potentially reducing insurance costs.
Subject to insurer approval and policy eligibility.**

Three 24/7 operations centres in South Africa, another one in Kenya, and another in Ireland.

A huge team of people around the clock, and a dedicated squad with a named consultant who knows your environment before the incident, not during it.

And BUI Cyber MXDR has been enhanced.

Now in Standard or Premium, with modular add-ons, so you take the parts you need and keep doing the parts you already do well.

It now accommodates businesses of all sizes.

Qualifying South African customers are also covered by the BUI security warranty, and the terms are short enough to actually read!
Ask to see them.

THEN ask your current provider for theirs.

Come and see it working. BUI will walk you through the operations centre.

Then ask your current provider for the same tour - the answer, and the tour (if you get it) could be "interesting"!

So..... at 3am, who is awake?

(If you are supporting customers in other time zones, you cannot fake being awake)

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to arrange a security operations review with the BUI Cyber team.

24/7 alerting is common. Quality security operations is not.



This concept might be ready for production

I have been writing about Lenovo's rollable and extendable notebook concepts for quite some time, and Lenovo deserves credit for continuing to experiment with new form factors instead

of just producing another slightly thinner notebook.

Project Swan may be one of the concepts that actually makes it into production. It looks like a fairly normal 14-inch notebook, but press a button and the display rolls out horizontally to 17 inches, giving you considerably more workspace for side-by-side documents. Even better, it is only 17.9mm thick and weighs around 1.6kg.

Engadget's hands-on found that it already feels remarkably like a finished product rather than a fragile show prototype. Lenovo has NOT announced production plans yet, but this one looks tantalisingly close.

For highly mobile users who want more screen real estate without carrying a second monitor, I really like where this is going.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with their Lenovo hardware specialists to discuss what is coming next and how it should influence your future notebook refresh plans.

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Lenovo's Swan ready to Fly

Microsoft News



Bill Gates wanted a PC on every desk. Now Microsoft wants AI there too!

Bill Gates' had a vision of a computer on every desk

and in every home that helped define Microsoft's first era. The company is now dusting off that ambition for AI.

At IFA 2026, Microsoft's Mark Linton described the new goal as "unmetered intelligence on every desk and in every home". The idea is to run more AI directly on Windows PCs, using the cloud for the heavier work. That could reduce response times and the cost of sending every request to a remote model.

Unmetered intelligence does NOT mean Microsoft has lost interest in sending you a bill!

Alongside this Windows strategy, Microsoft is enthusiastically pushing Copilot and the upgrade from Microsoft 365 E5 to E7. Its partner programmes explicitly target accelerating that move, with briefings, proof-of-concept engagements and deployment assistance.

E7 bundles E5, Microsoft 365 Copilot, the full Entra Suite and Agent 365, bringing productivity, identity and agent governance together.

The published US price is US\$99 per user per month with an annual commitment. For customers already buying several of these components separately, the consolidated proposition deserves a proper look.

There are already commercial incentives. Microsoft lists eligible E7 promotions offering 10% or 15% discounts, depending on the offer and commitment. However, its latest update says these promotions close to new purchases after 30 September 2026. Eligibility and local pricing need checking.

My reading is that Microsoft's determination to expand AI adoption could produce some compelling customer proposals. That is a reason to start the value

discussion NOW, without assuming that tomorrow's deal will necessarily beat today's (but it might). 😊

As I warned in TOP STORIES #172, the licence is only the start.

Customers should compare their actual E5 and add-on spend against an E7 proposal, identify which users will benefit, and include training, deployment, governance, consumption charges and renewal pricing in the calculation.

A discount is useful. Paying for capabilities nobody uses is still expensive.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Microsoft licensing, Copilot, First Digital and security specialists to assess the value proposition, confirm available offers and build an adoption plan that delivers measurable business benefits.

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Windows Latest: AI on every desk



Hidden Costs of Microsoft 365 Copilot

Directions on Microsoft has highlighted another problem with Microsoft's rapidly evolving AI strategy, the licence is increasingly only the entry ticket..... then the consumption meter starts

running.

This fits exactly with Microsoft's wider AI vision covered above. Microsoft is moving from traditional predictable per-user licensing towards licensing PLUS consumption as agents start doing real work.

This is not speculation. Microsoft CFO Amy Hood described the emerging model as a licence business plus a consumption business, while Satya Nadella said Microsoft's productivity, coding and security businesses will increasingly become per-user AND usage businesses.

Copilot Credits are already becoming the common currency across Cowork, Copilot Studio, Work IQ and other agentic services. More complicated work can consume more because the meter can include the model used, context retrieved, runtime and tools accessed.

[TechTarget](#) and other licensing analysts are now raising the same concern around E7, ROI and the additional consumption costs sitting beyond the apparently simple per-user price.

So..... AI still needs to be fit for purpose, technically AND financially, but at the same time AI ending up in your organisation is inevitable, so being in control of this is essential.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with FTG's Microsoft licensing, Azure and AI specialists. Having a partner continuously watching the consumption meter, setting sensible limits and checking that the AI is delivering enough value to justify what it is consuming is going to become just as important as negotiating the licence in the first place.

Directions: Hidden costs in M365 CoPilot



September is the biggest update ever but breaks multiple features

In TOP STORIES #182 I warned not to rush the optional August Windows update because it was breaking cursors, wallpapers and other things, and recommended

waiting for the normal September security update.

Microsoft has now managed to make both warnings correct at the same time!

The mandatory September update, KB5124008, fixes those earlier problems, but has introduced some new ones. Microsoft now confirms problems with Remote Desktop Services, some USB audio devices and shared folders used by Hyper-V Linux environments, including WSL and Claude Cowork. There are also reports of File History failing and Explorer.exe crashing in some virtual desktop environments.

PLEASE READ the linked article carefully to understand what could break in your environment.

BUT... counterintuitively, DO NOT use these problems as a reason to hold back the security update.

This is Microsoft's biggest security release ever. Microsoft's September release lists 974 CVEs, with 723 affecting Windows, and two vulnerabilities are already being actively exploited. Windows Latest calculates that more than 600 of these fixes map directly to current Windows 11 builds.

The answer is therefore not to freeze patching, it is to test quickly, understand the known problems, prepare workarounds and keep the staged deployment moving. Leaving hundreds of known vulnerabilities sitting there while attackers increasingly use AI to find and exploit them is not a better plan.

And if you are already testing Windows 11 26H2 in Release Preview, you do not escape this update. KB5124008 is also published for 26H2. That makes sense because 24H2, 25H2 and 26H2 share the same servicing branch, with 26H2 essentially being a small enablement package that turns on code already delivered through the monthly updates and resets the support clock.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's Windows specialists to test the update against your applications, drivers and endpoint configuration, manage a controlled rollout and deal with any machines that misbehave.

Sometimes the choice really is..... install the update that breaks things because NOT installing it could break a lot more!

Security Suites Licensing Guidance

Microsoft has published a useful new Microsoft 365 Security and Compliance licensing guidance site, bringing together the increasingly complicated security portfolio across Defender, Purview, Intune and Entra.

There are helpful comparison tables covering Enterprise, Frontline Worker and SMB licensing, including some of the smaller security and compliance suites that have become a little lost amongst all the E3, E5 and add-on noise.

Information Protection and Governance, Insider Risk Management, eDiscovery and Audit are all easier to find, alongside the broader Defender, Entra and Intune offerings.

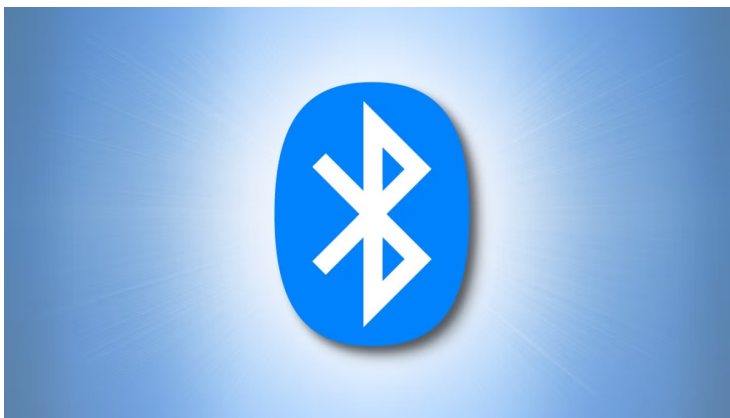
It certainly makes understanding the options easier..... but Microsoft licensing is rarely as simple as ticking boxes in a table.

What you already own, which capabilities users actually need, and whether a suite or individual components make more sense can materially change the cost.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's Microsoft licensing and security specialists to review what you already have, what you actually need, and how the different suites or individual components can best be applied to your business.

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Microsoft: Security Suites Licensing guide



Microsoft to improve Bluetooth Experience

If you have ever fought with Bluetooth on Windows 11, devices showing as connected when they are not, audio stuttering, microphones misbehaving or

connections randomly disappearing..... you are NOT alone!

Microsoft's latest Windows 11 Release Preview contains a surprisingly long list of Bluetooth fixes, improving connection reporting, audio and microphone compatibility, LE Audio performance, shared audio and even fixing a crash while streaming Bluetooth audio.

Microsoft has also acknowledged that Windows quality needs work and is tackling Bluetooth at both Windows and driver level through its Driver Quality Initiative. So the good news is that Microsoft appears to agree with everybody who has been shouting at their Bluetooth headset!

These fixes are still being rolled out, and remember Bluetooth reliability also depends on the PC hardware, firmware and OEM drivers.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with their hardware and Windows specialists to help ensure your Windows builds, Bluetooth drivers and firmware are properly updated.

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TechRadar: Microsoft to improve Bluetooth Experience



Microsoft puts Windows 11 on a RAM diet

Microsoft is promising more work on the fundamentals of Windows 11, including faster boot times, better Windows Hello responsiveness and, importantly, optimisations intended to make machines with

only 8Gig RAM run better. No performance numbers or release date yet, so for now it remains a promise.

This fits perfectly with the TOP STORIES theme that with RAM prices still painfully high, we need to get more life out of existing hardware. Microsoft making Windows leaner will help 16Gig machines considerably and may make some existing 8Gig machines less painful.

But please don't read this as 8Gig is suddenly enough. TOP STORIES has been recommending 32Gig for new corporate machines since #46, with 16Gig increasingly becoming the pragmatic survival option where budgets force the issue.

So, optimise what you already own, but don't use Microsoft's optimisation work as an excuse to underspecify what you buy next.

Contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's hardware specialists to review your existing fleet, optimise Windows 11 images and make sure your next hardware specification balances RAM, performance, lifespan and the rather unpleasant reality of 2026 hardware pricing.

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Microsoft Promising to Improve the 8Gig RAM experience

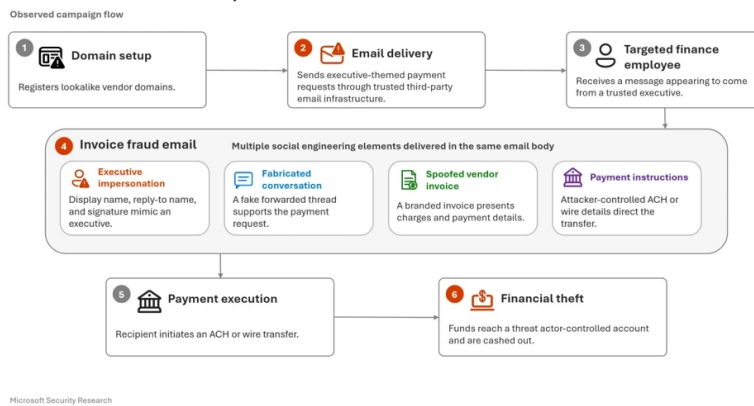
Security

Passkeys may be Phishing-Resistant... Humans aren't!

Passkeys are supposed to help kill phishing, so naturally the bad guys are now using passkeys themselves as the phishing story!

Attackers are impersonating IT helpdesks and telling users that they urgently need to update their passkey, MFA or SSO settings. The victim is directed to a very convincing Microsoft login experience, but the real objective can be to capture credentials and session tokens through an AiTM attack, or trick the user into approving a device-code

AI-assisted executive impersonation and invoice fraud attack chain



authentication request. The attacker can then add their own authentication method and start harvesting Microsoft 365 data.

Importantly, this does NOT mean passkeys are suddenly useless. The attackers are circumventing the

technology by attacking the person using it.

Once again, the human being remains the weakest link.

And this is exactly why CyberSecurity awareness training cannot be an annual tick-box exercise. Users need regular, targeted updates explaining the latest tricks, particularly fake IT calls, unexpected authentication requests, MFA changes and passkey enrolment. What they were trained to recognise six months ago may no longer be what the attack looks like today.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with their security specialists to review your identity protection AND, just as importantly, continuously updated user security awareness training.

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Hackers using passkeys to phish

Cloud & AI



GPT-6 Astra - Do you really need an Alien Mind?

OpenAI's new GPT-6 Astra is certainly impressive. It was trained using more than 100,000

NVIDIA Blackwell GPUs.

Jensen Huang says AGI has arrived, while OpenAI's own chief scientist describes AI as something increasingly "grown" rather than designed, and warns about the challenges of keeping increasingly powerful models aligned.

Astra is VERY clever, but calling it an "Alien Mind" may be getting a little carried away.

However, the most important part of the article may actually be one sentence in the headline..... "low-cost, intelligent-enough solutions are exploding in popularity."

Models such as DeepSeek V4, Kimi K3, Gemini Flash 3.8 and others are making useful AI dramatically cheaper.

Laptop-scale models of 30 billion parameters or less are getting progressively closer to frontier models.

Gartner now recommends tiering AI inference across local, on-premises and cloud models to control both cost and sovereignty risk.

And that reinforces the point I keep making..... use AI that is fit for purpose.

You do NOT need an “Alien Mind” to summarise documents, classify support tickets, interrogate internal knowledge or automate many repetitive business processes. Use smaller, cheaper AI where it is good enough, keep sensitive workloads local or sovereign where appropriate, and only unleash the expensive frontier models when the problem actually requires them.

This is also why technologies such as NVIDIA PAIR are becoming interesting. PAIR can route AI inference between suitably equipped machines on your own network, with prompts and data remaining local rather than automatically heading for somebody else’s cloud.

The future is probably not ONE AI..... it is using the RIGHT AI for each job.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's AI specialists to help determine which workloads belong in the cloud, on-premises, locally on the endpoint, or in a sovereign environment.

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Astra an ethereal Alien Mind?

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