

TOP STORIES #101

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years! This publication addresses important issues related to Microsoft licensing, end-of-life dates, and other important issues that you should be aware of. Of course, don't forget the Movie Release dates for ALL studios at the bottom of the mail.

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

If you would like colleagues to receive this newsletter, they can [click here](#) to subscribe. The previous week's [TOP STORIES #100 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](#). You can find extensive coverage of the show from [RaVE publications here](#)

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

Account Manager?

If you don't have (or don't know who is) your account manager with First Technology Group, [click here to complete the form](#), and we will help connect you.

NEW! TOP STORIES GOES AI!

At the end of February you will be able to interrogate TOP STORIES with an AI for anything you may need to find, even if you are not sure in which edition it was published. And we are going to get "cleverer and cleverer" from there!

NEW! DON'T FORGET

From this week, I'm adding a new section that will be updated weekly. This section will remind you in one place of all the important dates, such as when products expire (end of life), features are deprecated, or new ones are added. The focus will be on Microsoft, but it will also include other products and services.

Hardware

Intel Panther Lake & Wildcat Lake details leak

These two families make up most of the Intel lineup into 2026. What's clear is that it is abandoning the onboard memory experiment with Lunar Lake and going back to various new types of traditional off-board configurations. What is becoming clear is that Panther Lake is going to be Intel's biggest release in a decade. You can [read more here](#).

Intel Nova Lake on the Horizon

More details are starting to leak with designs that could reach up to 52 cores and are expected to support PCIe 6. Nova Lake is the generation after Panther Lake. This is early days as we will probably only see production volumes in 2027 even though engineering samples are [rumoured to be circulating](#) and Intel still promising a 2026 production launch

Microsoft

Microsoft Subscription Licensing Suite Guide Jan 2025

This is a better-organised guide than the one you find in the [product terms](#), which is also regularly updated. You can download the [latest guide here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager ([click here](#) if you don't have one), who will connect you with our Licensing Specialists. They can assist you with unpacking

the suites' contents and explaining how to get the maximum value from what you are probably already paying for.

M365 Apps licensing guidance Jan 2025

Microsoft has [released a comprehensive document](#) that should cover most question about the the licensing. Please note the FAQ at the end of the document.

Security

Risky Change to Microsoft Account Logins

Microsoft has changed how you log in, affecting what you must do when you finish accessing your M365 account on a public terminal (i.e. some terminal other than your PC). **You now need to make sure you sign out when have finished your session** . You can read [more about this here](#).

Don't be tricked by DeepSeek

No, not by DeepSeek, but by scammers taking advantage of its popularity. Be super suspicious of "free Apps" with amazing offers. If the offer or promises are too good to be true, they are [probably a scam](#). **As always, please make sure that your user awareness training for 2025 is in place you cannot ever relax when it comes to training your users to look out for the latest ways to try and trick you into clicking a link that you should not. Please contract your First Technology account manager to help ensure your training schedule is up to date**

Cloud & AI

The democratisation of AI gathers pace.

The democratisation of AI is accelerating, but we must [pause and reassess what this means](#) for businesses, security, and strategy.

Just as spreadsheets revolutionised business in the 1980s, this new AI wave will change everything—**but the real winners will be those who adapt thoughtfully rather than react impulsively**.

The latest AI breakthrough—[an open-source reasoning model built for under \\$50](#)—proves that cutting-edge AI is no longer exclusive to Big Tech. Just weeks after DeepSeek shook up the market, smaller, more efficient models are already emerging, challenging the idea that AI must be tied to billion-dollar cloud infrastructure.

Those billion-dollar infrastructures are not going away, and given the lowered barrier to entry, consider what they may be capable of very soon.

Maybe significantly more powerful intelligence is closer and cheaper than what we originally thought.

I will not be cancelling any CoPilot or OpenAI subscription in a hurry just yet!

[Ethan Mollick](#) has pointed out that we are reaching an AI tipping point (which we actually realise in hindsight), where almost anyone can run highly capable models on consumer hardware.

This shift means businesses and individuals will soon have far more autonomy in deploying AI, rather than relying on expensive proprietary APIs.

The AI landscape is shifting so quickly that [locking into long-term commitments now may be premature](#)—what seemed like the best option two weeks ago might already be outdated.

It's time to assess the situation, let it play out, and rethink AI strategies before making significant moves.

What you must NOT STOP doing is preparing and securing your environment for AI - no matter what you end up deploying, you must KNOW what data it is accessing and that it is secure. There is always some stuff you do [NOT want an AI to access!](#) It is so important that you have security experts advise you on how you store and grant access to data.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists and security specialists.

They can show you what they are doing with these new models and brainstorm with you about how they can be applied (and secured) in your company.

We have real-world solutions to demonstrate, not worthless demos on conveniently massaged fake data. For example, nothing is more real than showing you how we digitally

transformed blood donations (have you ever filled out THAT form?).

Don't Forget!

This is a new section and will rapidly get longer.....

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 Extended support will end on 14 October 2025, along with Windows 10

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 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.

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

The list of movies coming up every week is from the official release schedule for South Africa.

Now Playing: [One of Them days](#)

Now Playing: [Dog Man](#)

Now Playing: [The Brutalist](#)

Now Playing: [Love Hurts](#) (looks like fun)

14 Feb: [Captain America: Brave New World](#)

14 Feb: [Bridget Jones: Mad about the Boy](#)

14 Feb: [Chhaava](#)

14 Feb: [Presence](#)

Movies for 2025

There is a great lineup for 2025 - [IMDB has updated the schedule](#).

The first big release for the year is Captain America

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