

## TOP STORIES #126

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!

It has now been more than 2 years since we have been publishing weekly.

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.

I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" which is now a separate document for you to download - it was making TOP STORIES too long to read through.

**Reminder that you can access [TOP STORIES AI \("TSAI"\)](#) to search for anything in the archive. You can read more about TSAI in [TOP STORIES #108](#).**

**You will need an MS ID to sign in**, and if you are using your corporate ID, this might require organisational permission.

Check out the **official movie release** dates in South Africa for all studios at the bottom of this email.

The schedule provides you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate! **I believe this is the only place in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.**

There are some really interesting announcements in the "What's up at FTG" section this week, with some new events and a **major bombshell** from our CyberSecurity division - go take a look below....

Last week's [TOP STORIES #125 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 at the bottom of the mail.

## Upcoming Shows

With summer holidays in the northern hemisphere, the number of large shows slows down, but there are still a few worth paying attention to.

### Black Hat USA 2025

This is a **major security conference for 2-7 August** that is a "Must Attend" for everybody who is serious about security.

### CEDIA Expo - Denver CO - 3-6 September

This is the premier event where System Integrators for residential and commercial customers come together to see the latest technologies. You can **read more about the show here**.

It is likely that these shows will fade into the background of the bigger shows like Computex, CES, NAMM etc... as the technologies to transmit audio and video merge with the same tech to transfer data - see the story in [TOP STORIES #120](#) of the frog starting to boil.

## Account Manager?

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

## Don't Forget

We all know about the end of Windows 10, which has been documented repeatedly in TOP STORIES over the past year, but there are also changes that have been missed along with new updates, all summarised in the "Don't Forget changes August 2025-2026 complete" document, [which you can download here](#).

Here are a few changes you should pay attention to:

- The end of trust-based licensing for Dynamics is explained on **Page 11**
- Note the retirement of the Azure AD Graph API 31 August on **Page 7**

- CoPilot Features enhancements for August 2025 **Page 4**
- Azure Services being retired are updated on **Page 7**
- Windows Server 2022 ends mainstream support in October 2026 **Page 16**
- The end of Windows 10 has implications for Office, summarised on **Page 10**

## Did You Know?

Companies spend on average more than \$4500 per employee per year on SaaS.

**You can be efficient and spend less!**

**First Marketplace has landed** – and it's about to make software procurement as painless as ordering a takeaway without delivery fees!

- **SIX routes** to market (Azure, AWS, Huawei, private offers, local aggregation and more) – utilising a central catalogue.
- **Procurement in any Geo**, in any currency.
- **For South Africa**, Rand-based invoicing, BEE credits.
- **Zero credit card drama** means finance signs off in minutes, not months.
- **Always-on price intelligence** auto checks your existing cloud commitments and applies the best deal – we'll even work to beat your current quote.
- **Hard to find title sourcing** specialists hunt them down to your exact requirements while you get on with what's really important in your day.

Why wrestle with the how, where and when of software procurement, when **First Marketplace does it all?**

**Book a 5-minute meeting with your First Technology Group Account Manager and watch "advanced" procurement become effortless.**

## Hardware

### AMD brings datacenter-level AI to Windows PC's

AMD has announced the **AI MAX+ 395 processor** capable of running Meta's Llama 70B model locally (with 128 GB of RAM). You can [read more about this release here](#). This is a reminder of how important it is to be working with Sovereign AI's as many of them have all the power you need to perform many tasks in your environment. **Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to arrange for them to demonstrate their capabilities and discuss how AI can be deployed in your environment.**

**Even TOP STORIES has a sovereign AI that you can interact with!**

**You need to request access from your M365 admin.**

## Microsoft

### Microsoft beats Q4 earnings - the implications

Directions on Microsoft has published an assessment by long-time Microsoft veteran, Mary Jo Foley where she summarises the implications of Microsoft's exceptional results for customers. What's clear is that the pressure to upsell customers to E5 and then to upsell into a never-ending stream of add-ons will continue with AI being attached to everything.

You can [read the Directions on Microsoft article for more details here](#).

If you are on M365E3, expect many calls from Microsoft to persuade you to upgrade, and if you are not already buying CoPilot licenses, expect more calls to persuade you to start investing in that too!

**Please contact your First Technology to start planning on how to deal with those inevitable calls, and be ready to understand where you see value in upgrading (or not)!**

**What is VERY important is to start planning how you start your journey to experiment with AI, as that is inevitable, and it is so important not to get left behind.**

### IT Admins can run Teams calls to test network performance

Microsoft has announced a proactive monitoring capability to run 60-second test call simulations to monitor for any network instability issues and, through establishing a baseline, proactively address developing issues.

This feature is expected to roll out worldwide in September. [You can read more about this feature here](#).

**Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Teams specialists to assist in getting the feature activated and establishing a performance baseline.**

# Security

## Microsoft's Direct Send feature hacked to deliver Phishing attacks.

A brand new attack vector for getting attacked has been discovered targeting M365 tenants, by worming their way in to access email security appliances with valid SSL certificates, allowing malicious messages to be sent using spoofed internal addresses that look completely legitimate, and they are! You can [read more about this particularly clever attack here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to get the necessary assistance in making sure this new type of attack is stopped in it's tracks.

# Cloud & AI

## OpenAI prepares for GPT-5

It seems that GPT-5 is going to launch very soon indeed, as Microsoft is also preparing to launch it's version of GPT-5 ([Smart Mode?](#)).

It looks like we are going to get quite a leap in intelligence for OpenAI and CoPilot, and it might be as soon as this week! [You can read more here](#).

As we wait for GPT-5 it is becoming even more urgent to start experimenting with AI in your environment, starting with securing and categorising your data, and then to start encouraging users to start experimenting with CoPilot to see how it can enhance what they are doing. This needs to take place along with workshops to show users how to start using AI. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to start this journey.

# What's up at FTG

## First Digital Makes AI History

First Digital just became the first SA-headquartered company to earn [Microsoft's Advanced Specialisation for Building AI Apps on Azure](#).

**This confirms what we already knew: our AI isn't hype. It works. And now Microsoft agrees!**

Please contact your First Technology account manager to explore what we can do for you.

The AI you use to query the TOP STORIES archive(TSAI) is one of those apps!!

## South Africa's First Cyber Warranty

While other companies are saying you should have this, **BUI has done it!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division, has become the first Microsoft Cloud Solutions Partner in South Africa to launch a Cyber Security Warranty.

That's right — they're so confident in their security operations, they're backing it with a financial warranty.

**Think of it as putting your money where your Security is.** *If you suffer a cybersecurity incident, they will assist your organisation up to the value of R1,000,000.00.*

It's the kind of assistance customers didn't even know they needed — until now.

[You can read more about the announcement on ITWeb here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with the BUI team to discuss how you can take advantage of this new level of protection.

## Cloud costing you more than expected?

First Technology Group is stepping up your cloud financial management game with Umbrella (formerly Anodot Cost) — our preferred platform for FinOps and Cloud Cost Management. Umbrella unlocks faster innovation, deeper insights, and robust cost optimisation, empowering you to proactively manage your cloud spend and enhance financial efficiency.

As a Platinum preferred partner across Africa, FTG brings you unmatched expertise and tailored support, ensuring a smooth integration of Umbrella into your current systems with minimal operational disruption.

Here's what [Umbrella](#) means:

- Enhanced Cost Management: Full visibility of your cloud expenses to pinpoint savings.
- Improved Financial Efficiency: Powerful analytics to guide smarter cloud investments.
- Seamless Integration: Effortlessly combines with your existing infrastructure.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our SAM or FinOps teams to see how they can help you optimise your cloud costs. Even if you may think you have your costs under control, there is no harm in asking somebody else to take a look.... just in case!

## **The END of free Microsoft Support**

Microsoft has ended free technical support for Azure.

The only free support you now get is for billing and subscription issues.

Microsoft now charges **\$650 per support incident - NB! Not a typo!!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division has introduced a new support model that mitigates some of this impact - you can [read more and sign up for more information here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss your support requirements, as First Technology group can provide [GLOBAL SUPPORT 24/7/365](#) for a wide range of vendors, **including Microsoft**.

## **New Asset Visibility Assessment Available**

The most certified SAM team in the country has announced a new service, which every company should be interested in, even if it is to validate inventories that you already have.

- **One scan**, full picture of every on-prem, cloud, HW & SW asset
- **Block64 tech** → shows what's installed, licensed and actually used
- **Pin-point over/under-licensing** & the real cloud cost drivers
- **Built-in FinOps** actions to kill idle spend, right-size, reserve & save
- **Results land in a single Power BI dashboard**

You can also contact the SAM division to participate in a 7-10-day PoC with First Intel and apply Real World FinOps practices.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our SAM specialists to see how their service can best be applied to the challenges in your business, to gain insight into all assets.

## **Pitfalls with Dynamics 365**

The CRM Team, the same Team that does the Monday.com workflows [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.

## **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 - 8th, 9th and 10th Videos Available**

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted 3 new videos focusing on Entra ID. It is highly recommended that you review these videos as they give you an understanding of how to squeeze value out of the Microsoft suites as opposed to buying alternative products which may not be necessary.

**No. 8:** Streamlining employee onboarding

**No. 9:** Modernise Remote Access

**No. 10:** Secure Internet access based on business requirements.

## **Joint Standard 2 on Cyber Security and Resilience**

BUI has published a 1-page guide for you to gauge your compliance and, if you have concerns, to reach out to the BUI specialists for assistance. The [guide is available here](#).

## **Movies**

Fantastic Four is turning out to be one of the best movies of the year!

Even [The Critical Drinker](#) thinks so!

Unfortunately, August does not have any major blockbusters lined up, but there is the 50th Anniversary screening of Jaws.....

Now Playing: [Bring her Back](#)

Now Playing: [The Bad Guys 2](#)

8 August: [Freakier Friday](#)

8 August: [Tin Soldier](#)

8 August: [Weapons](#)

8 August: [Sketch](#)

15 August: [Nobody 2](#)  
15 August: [Together](#)  
15 August: [Grand Prix of Europe](#)  
15 August: [Red Sonja](#)  
22 August: [The Myth of Maracuda](#)  
22 August: [Relay](#)  
22 August: [Hunting Jessica Brok](#)  
29 August: [The Roses](#)  
29 August: [Caught Stealing](#)  
29 August: Jaws 50th Anniversary - [watch the documentary here](#) .  
29 August: [Afterburn](#)  
29 August: [My F\\*CK Marelize](#)

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