

TOP STORIES #133

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.

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](#).

If you have not tried TSAI yet, I recommend that you do, as it is getting cleverer and faster! 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 independent source in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies.

Last week's [TOP STORIES #132 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](#).

There is big news this week with us announcing a refined version of our Universal Support Agreements. See under "Did you Know"

Every week, new vendors are being added to First Marketplace - see below for updates.

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

Upcoming Shows

With the summer holidays now over, the show schedule for 2026 is set to ramp up again. With NVIDIA buying \$5 billion of Intel stock and admitting they have been secretly working on this for a year is going to cause significant disruption, which will certainly start appearing at CES and shows after that. We're in for an exciting ride!

AWS re:Invent 2025 - 1-5 December Las Vegas

This is a "MUST ATTEND" for any organisation that uses or competes with AWS. [Register here](#). It is the single most important event for understanding the future of the world's recognised cloud platform.

The product announcements made during the keynote addresses can have immediate and far-reaching implications for technology stacks, budgets, and competitive positioning. The event's structure is notably dual-focused: it provides deep, practical technical training for practitioners who need to implement AWS services, while simultaneously offering high-level strategic sessions and executive networking for leaders making long-term technology decisions. This makes re:Invent a multi-layered and highly efficient event for entire technology teams. **Of course, First Technology Group will have representatives attending and will report back on how AWS's announcements will impact business and opportunities in particular for South Africa.**

CES 2026 6-9 Jan 2026 Las Vegas

CES is the event that sets the **consumer technology agenda for the entire year**. Its primary value is not in enterprise strategy but in product launches, generating media buzz, and forming partnerships within the consumer product ecosystem.

If you want to attend, you need to plan now! [Sign up here](#). A more hidden and serious part of the show is that it is also a major destination for startups, with a dedicated area called [Eureka Park](#)

that hosted 1,400 in 2025 - this is actually the most exciting part of CES - what is announced in the main halls, is usually leaked to the internet weeks in advance so attending physically unless you have a specific reason is actually pointless - TOP STORIES gets quite busy for December with all the news leaks!

NAMM 20-24 Jan 2026 Anaheim

The first big ProAV show of 2026 kicks off with new products, performances and new ideas freshly baked for 2026. You can already [register here to attend](#).

Account Manager?

In many cases, the stories below recommend that you contact your First Technology Group account manager. If you are not sure who your account manager is, [click here for us to connect you](#).

Don't Forget

Microsoft starts Phase 2 Mandatory Azure MFA

This is a reminder that Microsoft has started with enforcement at the Azure resource manager layer, and if you are an Admin, you need to prepare for this, [which you can read more about here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to assist with this process.

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 Feature 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?

[You can have Microsoft-certified Consultants supporting your company 24/7/365?](#)

Universal Support gives you always-on, human support. Real consultants across Azure, Modern Work, Dynamics, Purview and more, using support credits to resolve issues end-to-end, with seamless escalation when required.

Add our Concierge service to enhance any Microsoft Unified Support agreement you may already have.....

We drive escalations, eliminate the follow-the-sun handoff pain, prevent downgrades, and extract more value from what you're paying.

We then help you consider alternatives when you are ready. We are **ISO-certified**, CSM-led, and extend beyond Microsoft (yes, AWS too), with no chatbots at the front door, just real certified consultants speaking your language who pick up the phone, day or night.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our dedicated Universal Support consultants to craft a support agreement tailored to your specific requirements.

Hardware

NVIDIA gains \$150 billion on it's \$5 billion investment in Intel

With the shocking news that NVIDIA has made an investment in Intel, NVIDIA's stock has soared to new heights, gaining more in value than Intel's entire market capitalisation! [You can read](#)

[more about this here.](#)

In a [posting on STH](#), NVIDIA says it plans to work with Intel to build NVIDIA custom x86 CPU's across server and infrastructure platforms.

Intel has gone on to insist that the NVIDIA GPUs and its own GPU platforms are complementary and development will be continuing, [which you can read more about here](#).

Though AMD stock has predictably fallen with this announcement, AMD has [come out with a statement that exudes confidence](#) in that they will be able to step up to this heightened competition, and I think they will - and we as consumers will be winning all the way!

Of course, nothing changes today with what we can buy, but roadmaps for 2026/7 are definitely going to undergo a lot of change, so it is more important than ever to stay close to your favourite hardware supplier to understand what is coming in the near future. We will probably see how this new partnership will be affecting us with announcements at CES 2026 - as Intel and NVIDIA [have been planning this for more than a year](#).

Of course, there are concerns as well. What is going to happen with the ARM roadmap? Could the NV1 be different? How is AMD going to respond? [These issues are explored in this informative article here.](#)

Top 10 Conferencing Pitfalls

Getting a conferencing solution to work requires that professionals with different skill sets come together to collaborate in delivering a solution that results in a fantastic experience for both those in the room and those connecting remotely.

You have to understand how to apply acoustic treatment cost-effectively (however, glass "fish bowls" remain expensive nightmares), and most importantly, you need to have the experience to match the right equipment with the room.

To this day, many rooms end up with terrible installations, so many in fact that AVIXA in the USA has published a guide on ["The Top 10 Conferencing Mistakes to Avoid"](#), and still the No. 1 problem is No.2 on the list - which tends to go with No.1!

If you have a room that is not great acoustically and/or if the equipment is frustrating to use or if the camera just does not pick up everybody in the room and Teams is still not identifying the speakers in the room, [then it may be an idea to contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AV and Teams/Zoom specialists who have been doing installations for decades to see what they could be doing for you.](#)

Microsoft

Microsoft continues to "Simplify" CoPilot Licensing and add free features.

In addition to including Role-Based CoPilots, which is explained in [TOP STORIES #132](#), Microsoft has also enhanced what agents and features are included in your CoPilot license. **So, from September, all CoPilot Studio capabilities are included in the M365 CoPilot license, including agent flows.** You can read more about this in the [official PDF from Microsoft here](#). [Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect with our licensing and CoPilot specialists to help understand how you can benefit from these additions to CoPilot.](#)

What are Reservations?

Microsoft has published a guide in its Azure governance and management blog that explains why it is important to consider TWO types of reservations - Capacity and Instances. Making the wrong commitments in a multi-year agreement can be financially devastating. Being offered a discount to make commitments on your Azure consumption can also backfire badly, but you can also benefit if you know enough about your environment and what you will be doing with it going forward.

You can [read more about the two types of reserved instances here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our specialists, who will help assess and optimise your environment to ensure you take maximum advantage of any offers while minimising any unused commitments at the end of your agreement.](#)

After October 16 you can only buy your VMWare licenses from Broadcom

Directions on Microsoft has published a paper explaining this change, where in future you have to bring your own license that you buy from Broadcom.

You cannot get it bundled from Microsoft or AWS anymore. Existing contract terms remain in place until they come to an end. [You can read more about this change here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our VMWare and Microsoft licensing specialists to unpack how this change can affect you and when,](#)

based on the contracts you already have in place.

M365 Business Premium gets security and compliance add-ons

Microsoft has introduced two new add-ons for Business Premium. On the security side, there's the Defender Suite for Business Premium at \$10 per user per month. For compliance, there's the Purview Suite for Business Premium, also \$10 per user per month.

Of course, Microsoft would like you to consider buying both for \$15 per month.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to see if you could benefit from the features in these add-ons or possibly alternatives that may be more suitable for your environment.

Dynamics Business Central price increases delayed to 1 November

The price increase has been delayed to November, with changes in your benefits that reflect the price increase, including an increase in your storage entitlements. You can [read more about the changes here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Dynamics specialists in our dedicated division, the CRM Team, to assist with unpacking the implications of this increase and how you can best take advantage of the changes for your business.

Security

Retail under attack!

It seems retailers worldwide are constantly under attack, and it makes sense as they sit on troves of data of lots of people. Getting the companies to "share" their data and hold them to ransom is very lucrative.

Increasingly, the attacks are started by tricking a user into resetting a password, disabling MFA or allowing access to a critical system. A weak point is the Service desk where staff are frequently overlooked for specialised training to spot signs of a cyberattack or social engineering. The service desk, acting as the frontline human firewall can be critical to preventing an attack from succeeding. [Here is an interesting article that explores what happened](#) in the Mark & Spencer attack, and how it emphasises the importance of the human firewall in preventing further attacks.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss how you can implement regular training for your users (including yourself) to help empower your staff, especially those manning Service Desks to be more alert "Human Firewalls".

Don't Touch my WhatsApp!

ESET and KnowBe4 [warn in an article published in MyBroadband](#) that WhatsApp is increasingly being used in South Africa to trick users into providing OTP codes or other information by pretending to be someone trustworthy - but it's not really that person. If you receive an urgent message from a friend or a family member needing something quickly, you are more likely to trust and respond because you are not thinking clearly.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss how you can implement regular training for your users to empower them to protect themselves, their family and the company they work for from these increasingly sophisticated attacks.

Cloud & AI

Biggest Study ever on how ChatGPT is used

This is the biggest study to date, and it has some surprising information about how it is being used. Techradar has [published some of it's conclusions here](#), but I recommend you read the actual paper [which you can download here](#).

What is really surprising is that 70% are using ChatGPT in a non-work related way.

It is sobering to remember that the consumer product was first launched in November 2022 - we are only three years into interacting with AI in our daily lives, reminding us that we are just at the beginning of the journey!

Already, OpenAI has over 700 million users, and there are probably more than 1.1 billion users in total when you include all platforms.

This is a reminder of how important it is for you to start encouraging people in your business to use AI to boost efficiency and profitability, and to embrace it to stay ahead of competitors.

Those companies that enthusiastically prepare for AI and start planning ways to utilise it

will be the companies that lead in their industries in the future.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI specialists to explore what they can do for you to accelerate YOUR journey.

What's up at FTG

FirstMarketplace.com adding Products Weekly

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

You can be efficient and spend less!

Added this week for #133: Nutanix and more -read here for the complete list of additions and who to contact for support.

Check with your account manager to see if you can get a better deal!

We are adding new products every day - **check with us** before you procure ANYTHING!

- **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.

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 Group 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 all 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 Group 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 Group 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.

BUI blog - MFA Relay attacks - how they work

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted a very important video explaining how an MFA relay attack works and how to protect yourself.

You can **watch Video #11 here**.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help implement ways that are best suited for your company to protect against these attacks that are going to become increasingly common.

Need Branded Gifts?

Sometimes it is a mission for companies to find year-end gifts for their clients.

You need to find some decent and relevant gifts, have them branded with your company logo, ensure that you are not getting ripped off, place the order, and hope to receive them in time for year-end in packaging that matches your expectations, as seen in the mockups.

So, if you are looking for gifts and for people who do this all day to do the heavy lifting, you can go here: <https://impactgifts.co.za/> and look through some options, and of course, you can also call the **Gifting Hub** to discuss your requirements.

You can also contact your **First Technology Group account manager** to connect you with the "Gifting Experts" to help come up with the perfect gift for your clients!

Movies

The next big blockbuster coming up in October is TRON

In October, Kanu Reeves Stars in "Good Fortune".

I'm not sure what inspired the change from John Wick?

Now Playing: **Chickenhare & the secret of the Groundhog**

Now Playing: **Threesome**

26 September: **The Strangers: Chapter 2**

26 September: **Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie**

26 September: **One Battle after Another**

26 September: **The Dead of Winter**

26 September: **Carissa**

26 September: **Loved Out**

3 October: **Avatar: Way of Water (re-release)**

3 October: **A big bold beautiful Journey**

3 October: **Him**

3 October: **The smashing machine**

10 October: **TRON:ARES**

10 October: **Hen**

10 October: **Doramon the Movie: Nobita's art world Tales**

17 October: **Good Fortune**

17 October: **Black Phone 2**

17 October: **Shell**



Try email & social marketing for free!