

.top_stories

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8th December #144

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.
- **AWS re:Invent** Las Vegas show summary
- **USB Cables** are a web of different types, colours and.... trouble - find out more!
- **Microsoft EoL section** published to see what's EoL'ng up to December 2026
- **3 New vendors** added to FirstMarketplace
- **The most Remarkable Public Sector transformation in the World!!**
- **Microsoft Increases Prices across the board!** They are even MORE than just this!
- **Defender of Office 365** - careful what you enable!
- **Teams Performance upgrade** coming in January
- **Critical flaw** in React Server Components a 10/10!!!!
- **Multi-Level M365 phishing attacks** trick users
- **OPenAI** to Launch GPT 5.2
- **Intel Panther Lake Looks good** - time to think about a shiny new Notebook!

Upcoming Shows

Click for a summary of **AWS re:Invent** which ended on 5 December and more info on the upcoming technology shows like CES 2026

USB Cables De-mystified

USB Cable standards and connector colours are a mystery.
It also includes info on the new **Microsoft WHCP specifications** you need to update your RFQ's with (note the Panther Lake Story)

TOP STORIES #143

Click button above for last weeks news

Visit
FirstMarketPLace

We have added Postman, ConnectWise and Secret Double Octopus. There is now a LinkedIn Page for you to follow as well.

Movie
releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa. AVATAR: Fire and Ash for 19 December.

Microsoft
EoL

Summary of what to know up to December 2026. Detailed document available for download

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LinkedIn

Did You Know?



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

FTG's Federated
Excellence Delivers
One of the Most
Remarkable Public
Sector
Transformations in
the World

The City of Cape Town placed its trust in First Technology Group (FTG)'s specialist divisions to guide an entire metropolitan government from ageing on-premises systems such as Exchange 2016, Windows Server 2012 R2 and Skype into a fully modern cloud-first Microsoft 365 E5 environment supporting **more than 30 000 users**. This transformation was achieved in only twenty four months through the coordinated expertise of FTG's federated structure.

The scale of the modernisation is extraordinary. The work included the migration of 31 921 mailboxes and 94.1 terabytes of mail data representing more than 20.6 billion messages. Nearly thirteen thousand mailboxes were archived to Exchange Online. Over 38 000 identities were moved to Microsoft Entra ID, and more than 23 000 devices were enrolled into Microsoft Intune, and processing 27.5 million SMS messages and 3.1 million bulk emails each month, with uninterrupted availability for both City staff and external customers.

To extend secure access and strengthen workplace flexibility, the programme also implemented Windows 365 to replace the legacy on-premises VDI system.

This upgrade delivered secure access to internal systems from any location, improved onboarding speed, reduced infrastructure overhead and elevated the overall user experience.

These changes directly support a more modern digital operating model, as highlighted in Microsoft's public statement relating to this project.

This achievement demonstrates the strength of FTG's federated "Top Gun" model.

The programme was delivered end to end under a unified governance framework

The program was delivered end to end under a unified governance framework involving 2 796 project tasks, more than two thousand approval signatures and over four hundred planned change communications. Thirty five specialists from three of FTG's most advanced divisions collaborated seamlessly throughout the engagement.

BUI, First Technology Western Cape and Galdon combined their capabilities to deliver a single cohesive outcome.

The project was delivered using FTG's own in-house expertise, with no reliance on third party contractors.

The City of Cape Town's Zero to "Hero-5" transformation now stands as one of the most comprehensive public sector Microsoft 365 E5 transformations anywhere in the world that no other partner globally can match.

With this modern foundation in place, the City of Cape Town is now fully prepared for the next phase of its digital journey, including the adoption of secure and responsible AI capabilities across the city.

The move to Microsoft 365 E5, Entra ID, Intune and Windows 365 gives the City the identity, security, data governance and device management baseline required to confidently embrace AI-powered solutions as they evolve into the future.

[Microsoft Press Release](#)

[Microsoft LinkedIn Post](#)

Please talk to your First Technology account manager to connect you with the people who led the team that delivered on this amazing project at the City of Cape Town to see what this Team can do for your Company!

[Request Account Manager](#)

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Microsoft **News This Week**

MAJOR price increase

Microsoft has announced a significant price increase, justifying the increase by adding new features related to AI, security and management.

This price increase is only part of a bigger picture of other price increases resulting from [removing price differences in "levels"](#) that will impact commercial customers in different ways.

When you take into consideration all the changes, the increase in your pricing on the renewal agreement could end up being a major shock.

Directions on Microsoft has kindly summarised the price increase that you can click on below for more.

[Price Increase Summary](#)

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing and security experts to help assess the licensing implications and then with our security experts to evaluate enabling the Microsoft solution (as you may already be licensed for it) or alternatives as they be more cost effective, such as Sophos Email Security and others.

Defender for Office 365 Licensing Terms updated

Microsoft has clarified the licensing terms for Defender for Office 365. A license is required for ANY user or mailbox that benefits from Defender for Office 365 protections, which includes anyone using OneDrive, Teams or SharePoint with safe attachments or safe links enabled. This clarification is a good reminder as to why you need to be careful about enabling tenant-level services without checking your entitlements.

[Defender of Office 365 License Clarification](#)

[Defender for O365 overview](#)

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Teams Performance upgrade coming in 2026

Microsoft plans to decouple the calling functionality from the main application, spinning it off into a dedicated background process.

By isolating call handling, the update is expected to cut down on the time it takes for features to load, making the experience more seamless for professionals who rely on the app for daily communications.

Microsoft recommends that IT teams review their endpoint management systems to accommodate the new process. This includes updating antivirus whitelists and monitoring for any compatibility issues with third-party tools.

The update will be delivered via the standard Teams update mechanism, with no opt-out option.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with with our Teams and security experts to help you prepare for this rollout in January.

[January Teams Upgrade](#)

Security

Critical Flaw in React Server Components

React powers much of the Internet today, and this bug is so severe that it can allow for low-skilled bad guys to execute malicious code.



According to *The Register*, React powers almost two in five of all cloud environments, so the attack surface is large, to put it mildly. Facebook, Instagram, Netflix, Airbnb, Shopify, and other giants of today's web, all rely on React - as well as millions of other developers.

It is critical to patch now, already 30 companies have been compromised and 77K IP addresses have been identified as vulnerable

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security and application development experts to assist in

urgently mitigating this flaw.

React2Shell Flaw

Advanced multi-stage M365 phishing campaign to evade security

KnowBe4 has published an article that explains how a very sophisticated campaign is able to bypass security to eventually harvest your credentials.

As always, it is the USER that remains the weakest link in realising that something may not appear to be normal and they are clicking through links that can only end up in a bad place.

Contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialist partners, who are experts in helping you train your users to stay alert to these attacks.

Multistage Phishing M365

Cloud & AI

OpenAI to launch GPT 5.2

OpenAI seems to have felt enough pressure from the Google Gemini 3.0 advances to accelerate the work they have been doing to get ready to launch GPT 5.2 as soon as they possibly can - maybe even before 2025 is done.

As is still the case, when OpenAI releases GPT 5.2, Microsoft will follow soon after, so it is important to be up to date on the improvements in CoPilot.

GPT 5.2 rolling out Soon

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our CoPilot experts who can assist helping with understanding how you can benefit from this latest upgrade.

Hardware - Panther Lake looks good!

Some pictures of MSI's Panther Lake notebooks have leaked along with some

MSI

GeekBench scores being posted, and it looks like Intel is going to deliver a generational leap in performance.

What this means is that you need to take this new generation seriously by urgently updating your RFP documents for 2026.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists who will be able to help you get up to speed with what is coming from your chosen brand.

**Panther
Lake
Notebooks**

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