

TOP STORIES #117

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 has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

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 #116 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

InfoComm - the coolest Pro AV gathering on the Planet is coming up June 11-13 - This show is more relevant than ever to the IT industry because many of these technologies are used in meeting rooms. The line between Pro AV and IT is now very blurry indeed! So, even if you are just interested in meeting rooms, this is **still an important show to follow!**

Computex wrapped last week with a slew of announcements and cool stuff. You will find hundreds of hours of content posted on YouTube. **"Just search for: "best of Computex 2025"**. The industry will be chewing over the announcements from Computex for weeks, and you can see some below in the "Hardware section".

Microsoft's Build Conference also wrapped last week, and if you have registered, you will be able to go back and review a lot of the content of Build, though it has been extensively covered in most of the main IT publications on the web. You can find an [overview of the Build Keynote here](#).

The Verge put together a great summary of all the [demos from Build](#) (including the keynote) and a [summary of Build in 15 mins](#). I will cover the impact of what was covered by Build in the coming weeks in Top Stories.

Google's I/O conference also wrapped with some announcements relating to it's AI roadmap, which are quite impressive. This is good, OpenAI will continue to have serious competition. You can watch an [overview of I/O in under 10 minutes here](#).

AWS Summit is up next in New York

This is a [major event for AWS](#) on 16 July to showcase to customers and developers what is on the roadmap for AWS.

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. Of course, FTG will have people attending, and there will surely be

some interesting feedback.

Account Manager?

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

Hardware

PCIe 6, 0.9PB SSD storage and other news from Computex

We had the 1st demo of the NEXT storage standard that will deliver over 30GB/s R/W!! We will probably see commercial adoption in 2027, so in the meantime, you need to make do with PCIe 5, which will drop rapidly in price this year, and if you have around \$130 000 lying around, you can [buy almost a Petabyte of storage in a tiny box](#) render your latest holiday videos..... You can read about [this and many other advances here](#) .

Dell Changes the Game in Workstations

Dell has announced a whole new category of high-performance workstations.

The new Pro Max Plus workstation laptop forgoes the GPU in favour of the NPU in the form of a Qualcomm AI 100 Inference card.

This notebook is likely to have a rating of 450 TOPS and will be able to run standalone 109-billion-parameter models. This will be supported with Dell's Pro AI Studio integrated with Microsoft for resource management. This notebook differentiates Dell as a leader in this space, with the nearest competitor being a fully maxed-out Apple M4.

Though Dell is likely to lead in this space for a while, rest assured, the other big OEMS will play catch-up.....

You can [read more about these unique workstations from Dell here](#) .

These are really interesting machines, and they're worth looking at when they're released. Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Dell specialists to determine when you can receive one of the machines for evaluation.

Own your humanoid Robot for \$3000

It seems robotic vacuum cleaners have new competition.

Humanoid robots that can operate an old-fashioned vacuum cleaner. It is quite possible that in a few years we will have affordable humanoid robots helping us in our homes!

We are already seeing signs of manufacturers developing affordable, open-source solutions. If you want to start planning on what robot to invest in, you [can begin by reading this article here](#) . Also, take a [look at the TED Talk with the NeoGamma X1](#) wow!

A significant challenge we face is developing a much more energy-dense power source, [despite our considerable progress already](#) .

Microsoft

SQL Server 2025 is now in Public Preview

Microsoft announced at Build that SQL 2025 is almost here. You can [read more about the announcement here](#) .

Many improvements are worth exploring, and SQL 2025 may be a sensible upgrade for your environment.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our SQL database specialists to see if and how your databases can benefit from this new release from Microsoft.

Windows 11 25H2 Incoming

Although it has not been officially announced, 25H2 is being referenced in preview builds, so we can be fairly certain it **is** coming in 2025.

It is likely to be a much smaller update than 24H2, and it is important that you do not delay your plans in favour of 25H2.

Major publications are starting to mention 25H2 [like here](#) , so it is a good idea to start following any news, but for now, it is early days, and more important to stay focused on getting 24H2 deployed...

Windows 11 23H2 and 22H2 emergency update

If you have been experiencing recovery errors like this: "*Your PC/Device needs to be repaired. The operating system couldn't be loaded because a required file is missing or contains errors. File: ACPI.sys. Error code: 0xc0000098*" you need to [download this emergency update here](#) .

Windows 11 24H2 is not affected.

It is very important to stay up to date with patches. Please contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our specialists who can help keep your systems up to date.

Perhaps we can handle everything for you 24/7/365?

10 Takeaways from Microsoft Build

Directions on Microsoft has published a summary of the top 10 most important announcements at Build that companies should take note of - all 10 are important, note No. 8 where Microsoft is expanding Entra, Defender for Cloud and Purview by embedding them into CoPilot Studio. You can [read about the 10 announcements here](#).

Cleanup in the Dynamics 365 Aisle

In another important notice, Directions on Microsoft has published a warning about a change clarification in Dynamics Finance + Operations licensing regarding security roles assigned to users. You now need to "clean up" these roles instead of just assigning higher security roles than actually needed to prevent you from having to field multiple requests.

There is no automatic compliance check that will stop anything from working, but you do need to clean up in advance of your next audit or renewal. You can [read all about the details and how it might impact you here](#).

As mentioned by DOM, this opens a "Pandora's Box" of licensing issues, as this transitions a discussion from what a user "actually does" to what a user "could" do. To navigate THAT discussion, you need a seasoned licensing specialist to help, and AI (for now) won't help!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists, who will assist in determining how you may be impacted and the extent of any necessary cleanup.

Security

Watch Out for Fake Microsoft 365 Purchase Emails

This is a particularly nasty scam designed to scare you into calling a number, where you will be tricked into installing "special" software to "fix" the problem. Again, YOU are the final frontier between a hacker gaining a foothold or committing the "nasty" to the bin. You must never allow yourself to be tricked into clicking a suspect link or be persuaded to download some software.

There is [more about this story here](#).

This is a reminder that your users need constant updates about how they can be tricked into clicking on links or, worse, persuaded into downloading something malicious. Please contact your First Technology account manager to update your training schedules for your users. You cannot get left behind!

Cloud & AI

DeepSeek throws a spanner!

DeepSeek R1-0528 has been released, bringing it to near parity with the best models in the world, but with a huge difference: it's a LOT cheaper, and the [distilled model can run on a single GPU](#) (not your average gaming GPU) and is claimed to be more efficient than other models.

Deepseek is going to continue to put the more expensive models under pressure with better pricing, while simultaneously bringing the possibility of running powerful LLMs in your own data centre closer to reality, and for some tasks right to your notebook (see the Dell Story above).

[You can read more about this announcement here](#).

If you are thinking about deploying AI in your business or even giving people access to CoPilot, it is very important to contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our AI experts to both help secure your environment and then apply AI to datasets you may want to give people access to through an AI. We have many examples that we can show you.

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](#) — and nailed the audit.

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!!

BUI Just Dropped a Bombshell: 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 guarantee.

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 assurance customers didn't even know they needed — until now. You can read more about the service here: [Cyber MXDR - BUI](#)

Please contact your First Technology Group Account manager to connect you with the BUI team to see what they can do for you, or [visit the BUI stand this week at the ITWeb Security Summit](#), for more information.

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!

Free Microsoft Support Ends

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**.

The Future of Customer Service: Smarter, Faster, Friction-Free

The CRMTeam FTG's Microsoft Dynamics experts are holding an in-person event at Microsoft's Office in Bryanston on the 12th of June to explore how your contact centre can be transformed into an AI-powered customer service hub.

This addresses changing customer service expectations and how organisations can consider adapting.

Where: Microsoft Offices, 3012 Winnie Mandela Drive, Bryanston, Sandton

When: 12 June 09H00 to 14H00

[Register Here](#).

Freddy Knows Best

Reinventing ITSM with AI That Thinks Ahead Join First Digital for a live session on how Freddy AI is transforming IT service management in Freshservice.

Learn how AI-powered automation, insights, and smart features like ticket summaries, reply suggestions, and dynamic actions help reduce workload, boost productivity, and cut costs.

Don't miss this look at the future of ITSM with Freshservice + Freddy AI.

Where: Online with Teams - [Register here](#)

When: Wednesday 11 June from 10H00 to 11H00

FT-KZN Upgrades Senate Chambers

The chambers at Mangosuthu University have been completely upgraded with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate how modern meetings and presentations are conducted. This is one of many examples of what the team in KZN is able to achieve. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you think your installation might be a bit complicated and needs integration with multiple vendors, contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with a team that can help.

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRMTeam, 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, 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 - 6th and 7th (Entra Suite Overview) Videos Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, has been updated with 2 more videos.

The [6th Edition addresses improvements to Defender XDR](#), and the [7th Edition is crucial to review, as it provides an overview of the Microsoft Entra Suite](#).

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](#).

BUI Opens 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

Movies

Lilo & Stitch DID work it's magic and appealed to kids of all ages, and took in 3X more from the Box Office than Mission Impossible!

30 May: [Karate Kid: Legends](#)

30 May: [The Phoenician Scheme](#)

30 May: [Guns Up](#)

6 June: [Ballerina](#)

6 June: [Life of Chuck](#)

13 June: [Materialists](#)

13 June: [How to Train your Dragon](#)

13 June: [Dangerous Animals](#)

20 June: [Elio](#)

20 June: [28 Years Later](#)

20 June: [Bride Hard](#)

27 June: [Sharp Corner](#)

27 June: [M3GAN 2.0](#)

27 June: [F1](#)

27 June: [A Jungle Beat 2: The Past](#) (Trailer on [YouTube is here](#))



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