

TOP STORIES #71

Welcome to all the new members of TOP STORIES

This is a surprisingly busy week for Microsoft stories - all of them important, from Dynamics to Entra to Teams and No Azure on EA's and more.

If colleagues want to subscribe, they can click [here](#).

Last Week's [TOP STORIES #70 is here](#).

Hardware

CPU Version Numbers are misleading - bigger/higher is not better

Linus Tech Tips has [posted a very good story](#) explaining how CPU version numbers from AMD, Intel, NVIDIA, etc.... are extremely misleading, where the "higher" number does not mean the CPU is better.

The level of deception is becoming quite intense, and it is really difficult to figure out what is actually the better CPU to choose for a given task and/or budget. As you have seen in many stories I have written here over the months new generations of CPU and GPU's are coming out faster than ever before.

Buying hardware - and getting it right when it comes to budget vs. performance is now really tricky. There are many websites where you can check and compare benchmarks of different CPUs, like [Passmark](#). [Toms Hardware also publishes a CPU ranking summary for different categories](#),

So, when it comes to buying the best notebook for your business, there are many factors to consider, and it is just getting more complicated. It is SO important that you contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to help you make sure you are buying the best value hardware and that you keep updating the specifications.

Lunar Lake Due Q4

[We have more news from Intel that we can expect Lunar Lake CPUs](#) with a 50% improvement in integrated graphics performance and an NPU coming in at 48 TOPS. More detail is still missing, but we do know that by early next year, we will have a very different range of computers based on AMD and Intel CPUs to choose from—but note that understanding the model numbers will be very confusing—see the article above!

Microsoft

Dynamics Licensing Guide July

Microsoft has updated the guide which you can [download here](#).

The products have now been arranged alphabetically,

There is a new Table with pricing showing Base applications and the qualifying licenses and the brand-new Customer Service Premium and Dynamics 365 Contact Center licences are added across the entire document.

The on-premise licensing guide has only minor changes and can be [downloaded here](#).

NB! ALL the licensing guides are [downloadable from one place here](#).

Please contact your First Tech Account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to ensure you can benefit from any of these changes in your environment.

External Users Definition change.

I had already sent out a notice about this relating to Dynamics in [TOP STORIES #68](#), but [here is the official announcement](#) from Microsoft confirming the change as of 1 October 2024 listing all the products that are affected - **it is important to note the list as it includes Office for the Web** and more. This is important to note external users **DO NOT require a license**.

It is important to get an update from our SAM teams to understand how this change can affect your licensing and if you could benefit from it - if you are a 24/7 shift worker type business or have lots of contractors, this can be interesting!

Power Platform Licensing guide update July

Microsoft has updated the guide, which you can [download here](#). There are two changes:

1. Dynamics 365 Professional and Teams Members licences can now be used with Managed Environments, not just the Enterprise licences.
2. A new tier of Dataverse Database capacity add-on licenses are available in increments of

1 GB with a minimum purchase of 1,000 units.

Please contact your First Tech account manager to put you in touch with our Power Platform specialists to check if any of these changes may be of benefit to you.

M365 Gets better compatibility with LibreOffice

This improvement is not just with Libre, but with all programs that support Open Document Compatibility. Microsoft is updating the format to support V1.4

You can [read more about the changes and when to expect them here](#).

Entra Security and Identity Tools are now Generally Available

One aspect of these new tools is **conditional access**, which is very important to understand. In addition, the new tools will help businesses implement a cloud-based security and identity system that should eliminate the use of features such as VPNs, on-premises Secure Web Gateway, and others. [You can read more about this announcement here](#).

[We have the best Cyber Security teams In South Africa to help you understand how you can benefit from these Tools and others from Microsoft.](#) Please see "**Support Terminated**" in [TOP STORIES #69 to understand why I say we are, without a doubt, the best in South Africa!](#)

Why is Microsoft Support so Bad?

[Here is an interesting article published by Redmond Magazine](#) that talks about how bad Microsoft support has become, which can now be even more annoying because no matter what support you need, you have to pay for it. Obviously, there are many reasons for these support issues, and all of them are hard to solve, though AI will eventually go a long way to improving the situation.

Dealing with competent and awake humans that you can actually call and when you speak with them, can understand your problem and speak back in a version of English you can understand can go a very long way toward helping resolve your problem quickly.

[As the Premium Microsoft Services partner in South Africa, First Technology Group is able to provide you with personalised support 24/7/365 - you can read more about our Services that you can get in South Africa here.](#)

Microsoft Says You Are Ready for the New Outlook! Are you?

[Directions on Microsoft has published a detailed discussion](#) on what it means that Microsoft has announced that the "New Outlook" is ready for General availability without a significant number of features critical to corporates being available.

[At this stage, the general availability](#) date is more for planning purposes than anything else. Directions on Microsoft analyst Rob Helm said, "GA's only direct impact on IT managers is that you can get support for new Outlook."

He added: "**However, we project new Outlook will permanently displace classic Outlook from Microsoft 365 Office suites in as little as 24 months after GA.**

So treat GA as a reminder: Get new Outlook rollout into your technology roadmaps and budgets."

[I have been warning about this issue for some time.](#) Please refer to [TOP STORIES #52](#) where you can see where I talk in more detail about this problem and [some solutions to them from our Division, First Digital.](#)

Teams is no longer laying the golden egg

[In a new article from Directions on Microsoft,](#) Mary Jo Foley talks about the (expensive) future of Microsoft Teams, and that as a product reaches maturity, Microsoft changes gears, and typically starts charging for features that normally would be included in an update to milk more revenue from a maturing product (Mary Jo explains how this works).

Part of the evidence of this change in strategy is that Microsoft quietly announced last week that the Teams Office feature Connector will be phased out - [the blowback on this announcement has been intense!](#)

[It is really important to Contact your First Tech account manager to understand the implications and make plans.](#)

[The first is to see what your options are if you are using Teams Connectors with our Development teams, and the second is to start re-evaluating whether Teams is the core of your Unified Communications strategy going forward. There are two divisions in the First Technology Group that can help with this important discussion. Both of them are really good with Teams and Zoom.](#)

You want Azure? No EA for you!

According to Directions on Microsoft, Microsoft aims to have new MACC agreements signed under MCAs. This is part of Microsoft's strategy to keep only REALLY large customers on EAs (don't bet on that one). **If Directions on Microsoft posts an article like this, it is very important to pay attention. They are usually right!**

It is VERY important that you ask your First Technology account manager to put you in touch with our Licensing Specialists to discuss your options going forward, as to get the best value from Microsoft, you will find a blend of agreements may be the best way going forward, but this needs to be worked out and managed. We have the experience, the tools and access to every single type of agreement Microsoft has to help you come up with the best plan going forward. For enterprise agreements, this planning needs to start a YEAR before you come up for renewal. If we have not contacted you already, PLEASE get in touch with us - we need to talk about this!

Security

A reason to upgrade

It seems that the old browser is still used by enough people to deploy malware. Even though a patch has been released, it is a good idea to try to move away from using these really old programs. [You can read more here.](#)

Cloud & AI

What is the right LLM for your company?

AI is developing at an incredible pace, so being too conservative could mean you get left behind. It is important to accept that this technology is moving so fast that we are ALL researchers trying to figure out how AI can make a difference to us as individuals and also as a company. [Here is an interesting article to read and ponder as to how it may apply to your business.](#)

What's up at FTG

CoPilot Readiness Workshops

They are available.

You can register for them [here](#) or [here](#).

Copilot for Security

Join BUI, (FTG's Azure, Cloud and Security specialists) for an exclusive one-on-one demo session featuring Microsoft Security Copilot!

This is a prime opportunity for your team to experience the forefront of technology with our latest release. Dive into discussions about defining and understanding the consumption needs specific to your organisation.

Reserve your spot now! [Sign up here.](#)

NEW! FTG's BUI MonthlySecurity Blog

FTG's Azure and security division has launched a blog focused on Security - what's new, what changed and what you need to do to maintain a good security posture. The blog will be published monthly - [and here is the 1st one](#) (2nd edition [next](#) week) - it's only 4mins long, and has some interesting information about:

- New Recommendations in Entra ID
- Entra Admin Center Updates
- Conditional Access Policies Renaming
- Phasing Out Legacy Identity Protection Policies

Movies

We are all waiting for Deadpool and Wolverine at the end of month!

19 July: [The Bad Bishop](#)

19 July: [Gundam Seed Freedom](#)

Now Playing: [Blue Lock the Movie: Episode Nagi](#)

Now Playing: [Fly me to the Moon](#)

Now Playing: [Twisters](#)

Now Playing: [Long Legs](#)



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