

TOP STORIES #124

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 #123 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

This is a list of **ALL Microsoft services and products that are "expired" for whatever reason for the next year.**

The downloadable documents are very detailed, spanning 24 pages, so I recommend searching for what you need within them to stay up to date.

The material is presented in a way for you to copy the relevant pieces and send them to teams focused on different aspects of Microsoft technologies.

The guide for July 2025 to July 2026 can be downloaded [here](#)

The July guide is focused on the changes relating to the end of Windows 10
This should be read in conjunction with the [previous guide here](#).

The most critical update to note is that Microsoft has announced that [security updates for Microsoft 365 Apps \(e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook\) running on Windows 10 will continue for three years after the Windows 10 end-of-support date.](#)

This means Microsoft 365 Apps **on Windows 10** will receive security updates until October 10, 2028. Now, how do you do that while not supporting the host operating system?

UPDATE: It appears we are receiving a partial answer to this, with Microsoft now stating that you will receive free security updates for 1 year under certain conditions (see the Microsoft section below).

However, this still does not address the issue for enterprises where the "brick wall" of Windows 10 Support ending remains.

Important Caveats

- [This extension applies to security updates for M365 Apps only.](#) The Windows 10 OS itself still reaches end of support on October 14, 2025 (unless ESUs are purchased for the OS).
- If an issue with M365 Apps occurs only on Windows 10 (and not on Windows 11), Microsoft support will advise moving to Windows 11. Troubleshooting assistance may be limited if unable to move to Windows 11.
- Bug reports or feature requests for M365 Apps on Windows 10 will not be accepted after October 2025.

This significantly impacts planning for organisations, offering more flexibility for the M365 Apps component while still necessitating a Windows 11 migration strategy for the underlying OS. [More on this below.](#)

Did you Know?

FTG builds Workflows faster than anybody else!

If you're looking to automate any processes in your business, the [CRM Team](#), a division of First Technology Group, can implement a process with [Monday.com](#) faster than anyone else.

If you are trying to manage a repetitive process in Excel, Outlook and other inefficient tools, then it is probably time to consider talking to our team of Monday.com experts to automate it for you.

There are over 200 pre-built integrations for Outlook, Teams, Slack, Salesforce, etc...so building this for you will probably happen really fast!

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Monday.com experts in the CRMTeam to talk to you about your workflow requirements.](#)

Hardware

Intel is Planning a Super Powerful mobile CPU to compete with AMD

Intel is planning a Nova Lake-AX laptop CPU with 52 cores with a massive iGPU expected to land in 2026.

This is great news, as even as Intel is downsizing, competition between AMD and Intel is heating up. This good news also means roadmaps keep shifting, and you need to stay up to date with the changes. You can [read more about this new CPU here](#).

[Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to review your roadmap for new hardware and ensure that it is kept up to date.](#)

Microsoft

Windows 11 is getting a useful new feature.

Currently, all editions of Windows have never been able to play audio over more than one device simultaneously without needing complicated programs to do it for you.

It seems Microsoft is preparing to add this feature to Windows 11, and although it may appear to be a minor tweak to the operating system for audio routing, it is a significant development, making routing of audio to multiple devices a breeze.

You will find this especially useful in meeting rooms! [You can read more about this here](#).

Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide updated July 2025

The refreshed Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide is now available, featuring just two tweaks.....

Page 27 now spells out that the Expense Mobile Role only needs a Team Members licence – no

upsell required.

The Copilot Studio Paid Offers table (formerly Appendix G) has been removed from the document entirely and now lives in the standalone Copilot Studio Licensing Guide.

The [latest guide can be downloaded here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Dynamics specialists to assist with the best ways in licensing and deploying your Dynamics solution.

Hotpatching for Windows Server 2025 Licensing

Microsoft has announced that hotpatching for Windows Server 2025 is available as a subscription service at \$1.25 per core per month. This is a new way of applying patches without having to reboot the server. The Servers must be Datacenter Edition and connected to Azure Arc. [You can read more about this announcement here](#). Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing specialists, who will provide accurate pricing for your agreement and assess the number of licenses required for this feature.

Limited ESU for Exchange and Skype servers extended

Directions on Microsoft has published an update on the availability of critical security updates for legacy editions of Exchange and Skype. These ESUs are different, you have to apply for them specially - you can [read more about how to get them here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to assist you in establishing if you qualify for these ESU's and then work with you to apply to Microsoft for access to them.

M365 CoPilot Search is rolling out - will it deliver on the Hype?

Microsoft is now starting to roll out M365 CoPilot Search to license holders of CoPilot from August 2025.

The idea is to provide contextual results to natural Language queries and has the potential to make a big difference in helping find documents or work you have done with other colleagues. You can read a detailed guide from Directions on Microsoft on what to expect and [how it will work here](#).

It appears that there will be some very useful features like "Who can see this" - which you can read about in the last section of the Directions Document. Will this be enough to justify an investment in CoPilot? Maybe, but for now it is a bit early to tell, though it looks promising.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our AI and security experts to discuss how to prepare and secure your environment for the deployment of CoPilot. **You must start working with CoPilot in your business, as it is crucial not to get left behind.**

Outsourcing Software Management guidance updated for CSP

This is an update to the 2024 guide, and you can [download the latest version here](#).

Unfortunately, Microsoft has made a mistake in the document and has not clarified the CSP hosters' rights.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing specialists who will assist you in ensuring you fully understand your rights as a client and as the CSP.

Security

Now we must worry about our AI getting Phished!!!

We have a long way to go when it comes to integrating an AI into our lives, especially when you trust it to make decisions for you. [Here is a discussion about the risks associated with the new ChatGPT agent](#), which could automatically make decisions and possibly be deliberately hacked to cause damage.

This underscores the importance of ensuring that as AI gets smarter and able to make decisions automatically, you MUST make sure you are working on categorising and securing the data in your company to be ready for when an AI starts accessing it.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists, who will help ensure that you are starting this process with them.

Microsoft Teams Hijacked to Spread Malware

There is an ongoing campaign to deploy malware via Teams to trick users into granting remote access to allow the malware to be deployed. What is super dangerous is that the victim is carefully picked and manipulated into granting access. This is a [prime example of how hackers exploit your trust and manipulate it to their own advantage](#). Being "carefully picked" means they research you, your online presence, your vulnerabilities, and exactly what your job entails to

find the weakest link that prompts you to do something you shouldn't.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW YOU COULD GET CAUGHT!!!

You can [read more about how it works here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to arrange specialised training, ensuring that your users know how to identify attempts to abuse their trust and/or manipulate them through threats or extortion and then to raise the alarm safely.

Cloud & AI

Soon, AI's will hide how they think

The pace of development is not slowing down, and soon, AI's will get smart enough to hide how they reason and go further and present reasoning in English just to "look good" while inside the reasoning takes a different path in more efficient "AI speak".

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

It will not be long before AIs are smarter than you, and by that time, it is very important to have been working with AI's already. Don't encounter an AI that is smarter than you for the first time! PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to plan your deployment of CoPilot, even if it is just for a few people to start experimenting with the capability, along with understanding how it interacts with your company's data to learn the importance of categorising and securing it.

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!!

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 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!

[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**.

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 CRMTeam, 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

Superman is getting good reviews - go see it!

The next big movie is coming this weekend - Fantastic Four - which everybody is hoping will be the biggest movie of the year. Let's see!

Now Playing: [I know what you did last Summer](#)

Now Playing: [Four Letters of Love](#)

25 July: [Fantastic Four: First Steps](#)

25 July: [Don't let's go to the Dogs tonight](#)

25 July: [Lucky Fish](#)

1 August: [Bring her Back](#)

1 August: [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](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

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