

Your Weekly guide in a Changing World.
Written and edited independently by Barry Neethling
Sponsored by First Technology Group

9th November #192

New for this Week

- **FirstMarketPlace is your 1-stop for ALL your migration needs, see below for AvePoint, BitTitan and PowerSync Pro**
- **DarkWeb Weekly Intelligence Report #192**- November is looking good!
- **Did you know?** - FTG has it's own mining specialists.
- **Intel Nova Lake** - On track for Q1 2027 - a major leap!
- **Windows 12?** -Maybe..... maybe not.....
- **Microsoft Ignite** - Important sessions to attend
- **Windows Server 2016** - FInal warning - End of Support Jan 2027
- **Patch FASTER** - The bad guys are hacking faster!
- **AvePoint** - Introduces a trust platform for all your M365 Agents
- **AI Conference, Free Premium account** - What could go wrong?
- **RSI is near** - Anthropic has a warning

- 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.

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Forward this mail to others who may find this useful and invite them to subscribe using the button below.

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DarkWeb Executive Report #192

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BUI scans the DarkWeb continuously for Hacker signals and Ransomware attacks.
Click above for the report from our live dashboard that we will publish weekly (but is actually updated continuously).
This is part of the DarkWeb monitoring services included with many of BUI's managed services offerings. **This report is live, and this is a "snapshot" of the top 10 events as of Sunday Afternoon.**

Last Week's Top Stories

SignUp for the Archive

You can click the top button for last week's edition or sign up for access to the archive with AI assistance to read from #1

AvePoint & BitTitan

PowerSync Pro

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First MarketPlace can offer you the best migration deals from all three vendors click on the links above for more.

New Movies for this week

Cat In the Hat is coming up for December and looks to be a magical ride.

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Did You Know…

First Technology Group has its own mining specialists?

Picture it..... The mine is 120 kilometres from the nearest computer shop. The glitching computer is more than a kilometre down.....the user is on night shift and needs help NOW!

First Technology Groups Northern Region team in Polokwane provides IT support to mines across the region, many of them hours from the nearest support centre.

Most issues are resolved remotely, from desktops and servers to Microsoft 365, without anyone driving to site.

When work has to be done on site, the team arrives prepared. Safety files, risk assessments and method statements are completed in advance, and every technician is inducted, medically cleared and in full personal protective equipment (PPE) before reaching the gate.

Beyond IT support, the team supplies and maintains the systems that keep a site running safely and efficiently*.

Mining is where it built this expertise, and the same services work at offices, factories, depots, schools and estates.

Already working with First Technology Group in another part of your business? This team works alongside the people you already know.

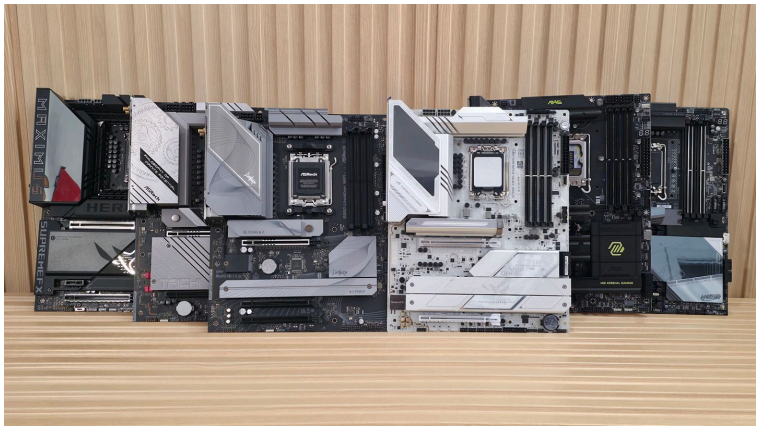
So who on your site checks who comes through the gate, who is fit to work and whether the cameras are still recording….. and how much of it is still on paper?

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Northern Region mining and site services specialist teams to bring your site access, workforce management and security onto one supported platform.

***Site services include:**

- Visitor and contractor pre-registration, with identity documents, medicals and permits approved before arrival
- Breathalyser-controlled access at the gate
- Fingerprint, card, face and mobile clocking linked directly to payroll
- Rostering that complies with labour legislation
- Placement of skilled, site-ready staff
- Closed-circuit television (CCTV) maintenance, with AI detection of missing hard hats and safety vests
- Structured fibre and network cabling, tested link by link with results handed over
- Turnstiles and boom gates, supplied, installed and maintained

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Intel Nova Lake... a major step forward in Q1 2027?

Nova Lake is a desktop AND notebook story!

The first Nova Lake-S desktop processors are reportedly targeting Q1 2027, with larger models later.
For notebooks, a **leaked photograph** reportedly shows a 16-core Nova Lake-H, while higher-performance Nova Lake-HX models could **reach 28 cores**. Notebook launch dates remain unconfirmed. Intel says development is ahead of schedule, with more details at CES in January.

The architectural changes are substantial. APX doubles general-purpose registers from 16 to 32, while **AVX10.2 extends the instruction set further**. Supporting software could deliver better performance and efficiency... but actual gains need independent testing so there is a lot of guessing....

For notebooks especially, that must translate into better sustained performance and battery life!

Before committing your 2027 PC budget, contact your First Technology account manager... their hardware specialists can help match Intel and AMD desktop and notebook roadmaps to your business needs.

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Intel Nova Lake Targeting Q1 2027

Microsoft News



Windows 12 - is it coming in 2027?

TOP STORIES has covered Windows 12 rumours before... and 2024's big release remained Windows 11.

Reports now point to Windows 11 27H2, with major changes under the bonnet, earlier testing and a focus on quality.
Despite the confident headlines, the name remains unconfirmed.

Reports favour Windows 11 27H2... but I wouldn't bury Windows 12 just yet.
Nova Lake's APX requires operating-system and software changes to exploit the new silicon, while **AMD's Zen 6 also brings new instructions**.

History offers a clue... Windows XP x64 accompanied the 64-bit transition, and **Windows 11 was optimised for Alder Lake's hybrid cores**.
So just maybe, 2027's hardware changes could provide the occasion for Windows 12 after all?
However, Microsoft could still deliver these improvements within Windows 11, so we may end up with 27H2 - which I think is what will happen.

Whatever the name, THIS one better work properly! Major, measurable improvements in speed, memory use and power efficiency... thoroughly tested, and fit for purpose!

Contact your First Technology account manager to connect with FTG's Windows specialists... check hardware readiness, test business applications and plan a properly validated rollout before the next major Windows upgrade arrives.

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TechRadar: Are we Getting Windows 12 in 2027?

Microsoft Ignite..... important sessions to attend

The five Ignite sessions highlighted by Redmond reinforce the direction I have been covering in TOP STORIES..... Microsoft is putting security, governance and identity at the centre of enterprise AI.



The sessions cover:

- **Microsoft's opening keynote** The direction ahead for Copilot, Azure and AI agents.
- **Governing AI** Building oversight, evaluation and protection into the technology.
- **Controlling access** Applying policies to people AND AI agents, with identities and permissions for both.
- **Securing agents** Using Zero Trust principles to address attacks that manipulate instructions, misuse tools or abuse identities.
- **Making agents reliable** Testing, measuring and improving performance before depending on them in everyday business operations.

The emphasis is moving towards controlling what AI can access, what it can do and whether its work can be trusted. Read the Redmond article here.

This also reinforces the repeated TOP STORIES message about data categorisation. Although it is not a separately named session in these five, knowing what data you hold, how sensitive it is and who should have access is fundamental to putting those controls into practice.
Microsoft's own **Purview guidance** connects classification, sensitivity labels and access protection with Copilot.

These foundations need attention BEFORE agents start working their way through your business!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect with FTG's security, identity, data governance and AI specialists to review whether your environment is fit for purpose. Many FTG representatives will be attending Ignite in November and, once back at the end of November, will be able to share their personal experiences and practical insights from attending the conference.

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Microsoft: The sessions at Ignite that matter the most

Windows Server 2016 End of Support Jan. 2027

TOP STORIES #185 reminded readers that Windows Server 2016 support ends on 12 January 2027.

That deadline is getting uncomfortably close..... especially with the December holidays in between!

Those "temporary" servers still lurking in the server room, or running as forgotten virtual machines, need attention **NOW**. They will keep running after the deadline, but regular security updates and technical support end.



Eligible systems can receive up to three years of Extended Security Updates (ESUs), covering Critical and Important security vulnerabilities.
That buys time to complete a migration..... it does not restore full support.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with their infrastructure and Microsoft specialists. They can help find those errant servers, check which applications depend on them, and plan whether to upgrade, migrate, replace or retire them, including assessing ESU eligibility and costs where more time is needed..... before January's deadline becomes January's emergency!

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Ghacks: Windows Server 2016 Reaching end of Support

Security



Microsoft Urges Faster Windows Patching

I have been warning about the need to patch quickly since at least **TOP STORIES #176**. In **#184** I tackled the uncomfortable choice between patching and the problems patches can bring..... and repeated the warning in #188 and #189.

Microsoft is now reinforcing that message..... AI has changed the stakes completely.

In its 5 November warning, Microsoft explains that AI helps defenders find vulnerabilities faster, but also helps attackers analyse published fixes and develop exploits, potentially within HOURS.
Once a patch appears, the bad guys can study what changed and work out how to attack machines still waiting for it.

For IT people like me, who have been in the game a long time, this is counterintuitive. Years of troublesome updates taught a fairly understandable habit..... wait a little, let the problems emerge, then deploy once things have settled down.

BUT..... that waiting period also gives AI-assisted attackers an opportunity!

Yes, patches can break applications, destabilise drivers and create an impressive amount of extra work. However, when a serious vulnerability leaves your business exposed, dealing with those problems may be considerably less painful than dealing with ransomware, stolen information and a business that cannot operate.

As I warned in **#184**..... sometimes installing the update that breaks things is necessary because NOT installing it could break a lot more!

Check known issues, confirm recoverable backups, test a representative group promptly and deploy in controlled waves. Complete the required restarts and verify that the protection is actually installed. Any unavoidable delay needs temporary protection, a named owner and a deadline.

The old patching habits need reviewing..... the bad guys have already upgraded theirs!

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with FTG's Windows and security specialists. Ask them to review overdue patches, shorten deployment times and prepare for the problems updates can bring..... before an unpatched vulnerability brings a MUCH bigger one!

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Microsoft urges faster patching



AvePoint..... keeping the AI workforce under control!

AvePoint is one of the vendors being highlighted by FirstMarketplace..... and their latest announcement tackles a growing problem.

AI agents are multiplying, along with their permissions, costs and opportunities to get things wrong!

The new AvePoint Trust Platform brings together four disciplines:

- **Observe:** Find approved and unapproved AI agents, and identify information shared too widely.
- **Protect**: Back up data and restore Copilot Studio agents to a known good state.
- **Govern:** Assign owners, apply policies and maintain evidence for audits.
- **Optimise:** Track AI usage, token consumption and budgets.

For Copilot Studio, recovery includes the agent's configuration, prompts, logic, topics and flows.
Agent discovery spans Microsoft Copilot Studio, Google Vertex AI, Salesforce Agentforce and Claude.
These are capabilities described in **AvePoint's announcement**.

AvePoint will also be at Microsoft Ignite 17–20 November, where First Technology representatives will also be attending..... a useful opportunity to explore the platform and discuss practical customer requirements.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with the FirstMarketplace team. Ask them about suitability for your environment, availability, licensing and a demonstration.

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Avepoint Trust Platform targets Agent Sprawl

AI Conference, complimentary subscription.....



An invitation to an OpenAI, SpaceX or Anthropic event, with free premium AI access thrown in..... just sign in with your Microsoft or Google work account..... what could go wrong????

Criminals are using convincing registration pages to turn that tempting offer into account theft.

There is some dark humour here. Researchers point out that AI makes convincing fake pages easier to create, while enthusiasm for AI supplies the bait.
These sites even ask visitors to prove they are not robots..... before finding out how easily the humans can be fooled!

BUT..... this goes beyond stealing a password. The attacks can capture account access tokens or authenticated sessions, defeating some MFA protections.
A victim can even reach Microsoft's GENUINE sign-in page and be persuaded to authorise the attacker's session.
Familiar surroundings..... entirely the wrong outcome!

Once again, the human remains the weakest link. A familiar logo and an attractive freebie can cloud otherwise sensible judgement.
Verify events through the organiser's official website, never enter device codes supplied by an unverified invitation, and report suspicious requests immediately.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect with FTG's security specialists and arrange regular, relevant and continuously updated security-awareness TRAINING. Ask about realistic phishing simulations and follow-up training where users struggle. The criminals keep updating their tricks..... last year's awareness presentation will NOT prepare staff for all of this year's attacks! First Technology

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Fake AI event invitations Steal Microsoft and Google accounts

Cloud & AI

Does your order book need AGI?



In TOP STORIES #189, I covered Google co-founder Sergey Brin's "RSI treadmill"..... researchers and AI working together to build the next generation of models. Brin expects that [pace to continue accelerating](#).

Now Anthropic has added a warning. Its latest filing says future models may soon meet its threshold for dramatically accelerated AI development..... and that capabilities could advance faster than the corresponding safety and security measures.

BUT..... Anthropic has NOT designated any current model as crossing that threshold. This remains an assessment of what could happen with future models.

RSI means **Recursive Self-Improvement** where AI helps develop more capable AI, which becomes better at developing the generation after that.
If that loop gathers momentum, progress could move far beyond the pace human researchers could sustain unaided.

My view..... I do not see humans collectively pulling up the handbrake. The commercial and strategic incentives are too strong. This will remain a race (hopefully not to Zero).

BUT..... take a step back and consider what YOUR business actually needs.
Do you really need AGI, (Artificial General Intelligence), to process orders against specified products, agreed prices, stock availability and credit limits?

For a clearly defined process, conventional automation may handle much of the work. A suitable AI model could interpret the customer's email and extract the order details, while the business system enforces the rules and refers exceptions for human review.

Start with the requirement. Test accuracy, reliability and cost. Choose capability that is fit for purpose.

And security MUST be part of the design..... control what the AI can read and change, protect customer information, record its actions and require approval for sensitive transactions. Enforce those permissions in the connected systems.

A cleverer AI still needs somebody deciding what it is allowed to do!
Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with **First Digital's specialists**. Their teams can help establish the real business requirements, identify appropriate AI and automation, and build security into the solution from the start.

TechCrunch: We are very close to reaching RSI

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