

TOP STORIES #132

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.

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](#).

If you have not tried TSAI yet, I recommend that you do, as it is getting cleverer and faster! **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 independent source in South Africa where you can find a comprehensive list of all the upcoming movies**.

Last week's [TOP STORIES #131 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](#).

There is big news this week with us announcing a refined version of our Universal Support Agreements. See under "Did you Know"

Every week, new vendors are being added to First Marketplace - see below for updates.

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.

IFA Expo Berlin - 5-9 September

Now that the show has wrapped, there is always a review of some of the [crazy gadgets that appeared at the show](#), which again features the stair-climbing robot but also includes an AI ironing machine and a self-flushing cat toilet!

AWS re:Invent 2025 - 1-5 December Las Vegas

This is a "MUST ATTEND" for any organisation that uses or competes with AWS. [Register here](#). **It is the single most important event for understanding the future of the world's recognised cloud platform.**

The product announcements made during the keynote addresses can have immediate and far-reaching implications for technology stacks, budgets, and competitive positioning. The event's structure is notably dual-focused: it provides deep, practical technical training for practitioners who need to implement AWS services, while simultaneously offering high-level strategic sessions and executive networking for leaders making long-term technology decisions. This makes re:Invent a multi-layered and highly efficient event for entire technology teams. **Of course, First Technology Group will have representatives attending and will report back on how AWS's announcements will impact business and opportunities in particular for South Africa.**

CES 2026 6-9 Jan 2026 Las Vegas

CES is the event that sets the **consumer technology agenda for the entire year**. Its primary value is not in enterprise strategy but in product launches, generating media buzz, and forming

partnerships within the consumer product ecosystem.

If you want to attend, you need to plan now! [Sign up here](#). A more hidden and serious part of the show is that it is also a major destination for startups, with a dedicated area called **Eureka Park** that hosted 1,400 in 2025 - this is actually the most exciting part of CES - what is announced in the main halls, is usually leaked to the internet weeks in advance so attending physically unless you have a specific reason is actually pointless - TOP STORIES gets quite busy for December with all the news leaks!

NAMM 20-24 Jan 2026 Anaheim

The first big ProAV show of 2026 kicks off with new products, performances and new ideas freshly baked for 2026. You can already [register here to attend](#).

Account Manager?

In many cases, the stories below recommend that you contact your First Technology Group account manager. If you are not sure who your account manager is, [click here for us to connect you](#).

Don't Forget

Legacy MFA and SSPR to Authentication must migrate NOW!

September has arrived, and you may soon be experiencing authentication issues. This may be the reason. [You can read more here](#).

SSPR = Self-Service Password Reset

Microsoft starts Phase 2 Mandatory Azure MFA

This is a reminder that Microsoft has started with enforcement at the Azure resource manager layer, and if you are an Admin, you need to prepare for this, [which you can read more about here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to assist with this process.

We all know about the end of Windows 10, which has been documented repeatedly in TOP STORIES over the past year, but there are also changes that have been missed along with new updates, all summarised in the "Don't Forget changes August 2025-2026 complete" document, [which you can download here](#).

Here are a few changes you should pay attention to:

- **The end of trust-based licensing for Dynamics is explained on [Page 11](#)**
- Note the retirement of the Azure AD Graph API 31 August on **Page 7**
- CoPilot Feature enhancements for August 2025 **Page 4**
- Azure Services being retired are updated on **Page 7**
- Windows Server 2022 ends mainstream support in October 2026 **Page 16**
- The end of Windows 10 has implications for Office, summarised on **Page 10**

Did You Know?

You can have Microsoft-certified Consultants supporting your company 24/7/365?

Universal Support gives you always-on, human support. Real consultants across Azure, Modern Work, Dynamics, Purview and more, using support credits to resolve issues end-to-end, with seamless escalation when required.

Add our Concierge service to enhance any Microsoft Unified Support agreement you may already have.....

We drive escalations, eliminate the follow-the-sun handoff pain, prevent downgrades, and extract more value from what you're paying.

We then help you consider alternatives when you are ready. We are **ISO-certified**, CSM-led, and extend beyond Microsoft (yes, AWS too), with no chatbots at the front door, just real certified consultants speaking your language who pick up the phone, day or night.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our dedicated Universal Support consultants to craft a support agreement tailored to your specific

Hardware

Intel confirms release schedule to 2027

Intel has confirmed that Arrow Lake refresh will be released in 2026, with Nova Lake towards the beginning of 2027 which [you can read more about here](#), We also know for sure that we will see Panther Lake based notebooks by the end of this year, confirmed with new news leaking that Samsung has [already received CPU's for it's Galaxy notebooks](#). As already covered in [TOP STORIES #131](#), Panther Lake is a big deal as the CPUs exceed the minimum TOPS rating for CoPilot+ Windows machines.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our hardware specialists to help update you on when you can expect notebooks with Panther Lake processors in them.

AMD promises to outperform NVIDIA

The AI processor wars are promising to heat up in a big way in 2026, as AMD claims it will outclass the best NVIDIA can produce.

What this means is that the speed at which AI is improving and in the process getting closer to AGI will not stop. You can [read more about AMD's announcement here](#).

Microsoft

Microsoft commits to a groundbreaking agreement with the EU

Microsoft has committed to the EU to allow customers to purchase O365 without Teams and promised to open more API's to improve the ability for competitors to integrate more easily with the O365 stack. These concessions will remain in force for 7 years and will allow competitors to regain a foothold within the Microsoft M365 fortress, [which you can read more about here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect with our licensing specialists to help understand how you will be impacted with the pricing changes through this announcement and on renewal of your agreement, and most importantly, new options to explore to get more value from your agreement.

Microsoft tries to unconfuse CoPilot

Directions on Microsoft has published an update on how Microsoft is renaming its Sales, Services and Finance CoPilots and going further to include this as part of M365 CoPilot for no additional charge from October. [You can read more about these changes here](#).

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Licensing and CoPilot specialists to help understand these implications and how to take more advantage of the slowly expanding CoPilot ecosystem.

Teams Introduces Automatic Alerts for Malicious Links from Attackers

Microsoft is enhancing its security in Teams to automatically warn users of malicious links in chats. This feature will be part of Microsoft Defender for Office 365 and will be rolling out globally in November 2025, [which you can read more about here](#). An interesting feature will be the ability to retroactively apply warning banners to messages 48 hours after delivery. The features will be managed from the Teams Admin centre.

This is a very important feature as Teams now has over 320 million active users, making it a very lucrative target for sophisticated Phishing campaigns.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our Teams and security specialists to look at activating this very important feature to further protect your users from accidentally clicking on a dodgy link!

Windows 11 25H2 ISO's Released

After a delay, the 25H2 update is just a download away, ahead of general availability later this year - probably in October. This is an enablement package, meaning that it switches on features already embedded in the operating system rather than being a full re-install. Support will only be available when it is officially released. Additionally, Microsoft has finally [removed all installation blocks](#), allowing everyone to install 24H2.

It is handy that the ISO's have been released as it allows IT departments to start testing the new features of 25H2, one of them being the ability to remove certain Microsoft Apps. You [can read](#)

[more about 25H2 here](#). The blog that [directs you to the ISO's is here](#). Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our specialists to assist in testing this new release and getting ready for full deployment which should not be as challenging as what 24H2 was!

Security

FBI issues notice for Cyber Attacks Targeting Salesforce Instances

This is again a reminder that attacks frequently use social engineering, especially vishing, to gain access by tricking users into sharing their credentials and proceed to facilitating access by persuading them to confirm access through MFA, and through creating a sense of urgency, a user's hesitation can be overcome quite easily.

This is yet again a reminder that the user is the weakest link in the chain, and if the user is tricked, all security becomes pointless.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss how you can implement regular training for your users (including yourself) to help reduce the chances of being tricked.

Hackers are abusing hotel booking notifications to steal credentials

Mimecast has identified a sophisticated campaign to trick hotel managers and staff into allowing hackers to harvest credentials and even MFA tokens. This highly sophisticated campaign, which demonstrates a deep understanding of how the industry works, ultimately uses this knowledge to trick users into acting in ways that they should not. Of course, the industry is time-driven, so creating urgency is quite easy. You can [read more about this campaign here](#). It is important to use what is happening here to consider how you may be vulnerable in YOUR industry!

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to discuss the available training courses that can help keep your users (and IT department) up to date with the latest security threats and best practices.

MFA bypass attacks available as a service!

A new online fraud service called VoidProxy is now available as PhaaS service for MFA bypass attacks. This is a platform that provides attackers with all the tools needed to execute an attack! The service uses a technique called Adversary-in-the-Middle (AitM) to intercept passwords, MFA codes, and other information in real-time. [You can read more about this PhaaS service here](#). MFA bypass attacks have been around for approximately two years, but now they have reached a new level of sophistication, making it urgent to ensure your environment is hardened against these attacks.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to help implement ways that are best suited for your company to protect against these attacks that are becoming so common, they are now available as a service!

Washing Machines are usually left alone

A hacker sympathetic to students having to pay for a laundry service in Amsterdam hacked the appliances to allow the students to use them for free. As this was a pretty obvious hack, it got shut down pretty smartly - [which you can read about here](#). Unfortunately, most of these types of hacks go undetected, with devastating consequences, and worse, most companies do not even know they are vulnerable. Even air conditioners have WiFi!

This is a reminder that you need engineers with a highly specialised skill set and specialised tools to find these holes in your network - much like the story about a fish, a tank, and a casino, as I published in [TOP STORIES #114](#).

First Technology Group has the ONLY team available 24/7/365 that can actually help expose the vulnerabilities, deal with them and monitor your network thereafter.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with these specialists to see how they can help you with your network. EVERY SINGLE COMPANY has IoT devices, if you think you don't have any, you have just not found them!

Cloud & AI

Albania appoints world's first AI minister

This is the 1st country in the world to have an AI minister responsible for all public procurement. The AI by the name of Della is already familiar to Albanian citizens as "she" already powers the

country's e-Albania platform for access to all government services.

You can [read about the announcement here](#). Whether this will actually address the alleged endemic corruption that the Government is keen to eliminate to ascend to the EU remains to be seen, the important point here, from a technical perspective, is to recognise that this is being achieved through a partnership with Microsoft and OpenAI as a Sovereign AI implementation, and something that FTG is very advanced in being able to deliver as [the first company in South Africa to receive Microsoft's advanced Specialisation for building AI Apps on Azure \(announced in TOP STORIES #118\)](#).

This team is ahead of most other companies Africa in implementing AI-powered solutions. It is highly recommended that you schedule a session with them to see how they can utilise AI to make a difference in your business.

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our AI specialists to explore what they can do for you.

What's up at FTG

[FirstMarketplace.com adding Products Weekly](#)

Companies spend on average more than \$4500 per employee per year on SaaS.

You can be efficient and spend less!

[Added this week for #132: Qualys and more -read here](#) for the complete list of additions and who to contact for support.

Check with your account manager to see if you can get a better deal!

We are adding new products every day - [check with us](#) before you procure ANYTHING!

- **SIX routes to market** (Azure, AWS, Huawei, private offers, local aggregation and more) – utilising a central catalogue.
- **Procurement in any Geo**, in any currency.
- **For South Africa, Rand-based invoicing**, BEE credits.
- **Zero credit card drama** means finance signs off in minutes, not months.
- **Always-on price intelligence** auto checks your existing cloud commitments and applies the best deal – we'll even work to beat your current quote.
- **Hard to find title sourcing specialists** hunt them down to your exact requirements while you get on with what's really important in your day.

Why wrestle with the how, where and when of software procurement, when **First Marketplace does it all?**

[Book a 5-minute meeting with your First Technology Group Account Manager](#) and watch “advanced” procurement become effortless.

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 Group 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!

[The END of all free Microsoft Support](#)

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 Group 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 Group 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.

BUI blog - MFA Relay attacks - how they work

FTG's Cloud and Security Division, BUI's Video Blog, has posted a very important video explaining how an MFA relay attack works and how to protect yourself.

You can [watch Video #11 here](#) .

Please contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with our security specialists to help implement ways that are best suited for your company to protect against these attacks that are going to become increasingly common.

Need Branded Gifts?

Sometimes it is a mission for companies to find year-end gifts for their clients.

You need to find some decent and relevant gifts, have them branded with your company logo, ensure that you are not getting ripped off, place the order, and hope to receive them in time for year-end in packaging that matches your expectations, as seen in the mockups.

So, if you are looking for gifts and for people who do this all day to do the heavy lifting, you can go here: <https://impactgifts.co.za/> and look through some options, and of course, you can also call the [Gifting Hub](#) to discuss your requirements.

You can also contact your [First Technology Group account manager](#) to connect you with the "Gifting Experts" to help come up with the perfect gift for your clients!

Movies

The next big blockbuster coming up in October is TRON

Now Playing: [Demon Slayer: Infinity Castle](#)

Now Playing: [Code 3](#)

Now Playing: [Downtown Abbey: The grand Finale](#)

Now Playing: [The Long Walk](#)

19 September: [Chickenhare & the secret of the Groundhog](#)

19 September: [Threesome](#)

26 September: [The Strangers: Chapter 2](#)

26 September: [Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie](#)

26 September: [One Battle after Another](#)

26 September: [The Dead of Winter](#)

26 September: [Carissa](#)

26 September: [Loved Out](#)

3 October: [Avatar: Way of Water \(re-release\)](#)

3 October: [A big bold beautiful Journey](#)

3 October: [Him](#)
3 October: [The smashing machine](#)
10 October: [TRON:ARES](#)
10 October: [Hen](#)
10 October: [Doramon the Movie: Nobita's art world Tales](#)

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