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Microsoft Ecosystem Changes and Strategic Directions: May 2025 - May 2026

(May 2025 Edition)

This document is dedicated to highlighting changes in the Microsoft ecosystem over the next 12 months, which will represent a period of significant transition. Organisations that work with First Technology Group to embrace these changes strategically will be best positioned to manage costs, enhance security, and leverage the powerful new capabilities emerging across the Microsoft ecosystem.

The convergence of major product end-of-life deadlines, particularly the October 14, 2025 event, coupled with ongoing feature deprecations, evolving pricing structures, and a relentless focus on AI integration, demands immediate attention and strategic planning from all organisations reliant on Microsoft technologies.

Summary of Changes: May 2025 Update vs. April 2025 Document

This May 2025 edition incorporates several critical updates and clarifications to the information presented in the April 2025 document:

- **CRITICAL UPDATE: Microsoft 365 Apps Support on Windows 10 Extended:**
    - The most significant change is Microsoft's announcement that **security updates for Microsoft 365 Apps (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook) running on Windows 10 will continue until October 10, 2028.** This is three years beyond the Windows 10 operating system's end-of-support date of October 14, 2025.
    - **Caveats:** This extension is for *security updates* for M365 Apps only. The Windows 10 OS itself still requires Extended Security Updates (ESUs) for OS security patches after October 14, 2025. Support for M365 Apps on Windows 10 post-October 2025 will be limited if issues are Windows 10-specific, and no new features or non-security bug fixes will be provided for M365 Apps on Windows 10.

  - This change significantly impacts migration timelines and strategies for M365 application usage on Windows 10 devices.

- **Product End-of-Life and Support Transitions:**
  - The core EOL date of **October 14, 2025**, for Windows 10 (OS), Office 2016/2019 suites, Exchange Server 2016/2019, and Skype for Business Server 2015/2019 remains firm.
  - The Windows 10 OS ESU programme details are unchanged.
  - Dynamics 365 Translation Service retirement is confirmed for October 15, 2025.
- **Feature Deprecations & Removals:**
  - **Newly Noted Windows Client Deprecations:**
    - Device Metadata (future removal, announced May 2025).
    - Maps App (removal from Store by July 2025).
    - VBS enclaves for Windows 11 23H2 and earlier (support continues for 24H2+).
    - Windows UWP Map control and Windows Maps platform APIs (deprecated April 8, 2025; will function but not be updated).
  - **Dynamics 365 & Finance and Operations:**
    - Anonymous access for public blob containers in Finance and Operations is being disabled (April-June 2025).
    - GetCsuStorageConnectionString API in Finance and Operations will be deprecated in March 2025.
- **Pricing and Licensing Adjustments:**
  - The **5% NCE premium on annual/triennial commitments paid monthly** (effective April 1, 2025) is a key financial consideration.
  - Price increases for Teams Phone Standard and Power BI Pro/PPU (effective April 1, 2025) are confirmed.
  - The **15% Microsoft 365 Copilot CSP promotional discount is extended to June 30, 2025.**
  - A new guided UI in Partner Centre (from April 1, 2025) aims to ease the EA to CSP transition.
  - Product Terms updates in April 2025 clarified Frontline Worker licensing and Windows 10 ESU eligibility.
- **Microsoft 365 E3/E5 and Security Portfolio Evolution:**
  - **Microsoft Purview eDiscovery:** Significant changes effective May 26, 2025, including the transition of Content Search and classic eDiscovery (Standard) to a new unified experience, and retirement of specific PowerShell export parameters for ComplianceSearchAction. Organisations must review and adapt workflows.
- **Operating System Updates:**
  - **Windows Server 2025:** A known issue from the April 2025 update (KB5055523) causing potential Kerberos event logging on domain controllers is being addressed by Microsoft.
  - A Safe OS Dynamic Update (KB5055671) for Windows 11 24H2 and Server 2025 was released April 8, 2025.
- **New Product Launches/Major Updates & Strategic Directions:**

- **Microsoft 365 Copilot:** Continuous rapid feature enhancements (May 2025), including improved chat history, mobile image generation, and deeper Excel integration. Copilot Studio agent builder is now available in more regions, including South Africa.
- **Power Platform:** April 2025 updates brought enhancements to Power Apps Studio, Power Pages, and GA for several governance/development features.
- **Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability:** 2025 release wave 1 (April-September 2025) details further expansions.
- Microsoft's strategic focus on AI, cloud, and quantum computing continues unabated.

Updates for EoS, EoL, Depreciations and retirements May 2025 to May 2026

This document provides an integrated view of these changes within the broader context of Microsoft's strategic directions for May 2025 through May 2026.

I. Product End-of-Life and Support Transitions (Next 12 Months)

The period between May 2025 and May 2026 is marked by several critical end-of-support (EOL) dates for widely deployed Microsoft products. These deadlines necessitate careful planning and timely migration, often facilitated by partners like First Technology Group, to maintain security, support, and functionality.

The October 14, 2025 End-of-Support Cliff

A uniquely significant date is October 14, 2025, when support ends simultaneously for a large cohort of foundational Microsoft products.

- **Windows 10 Operating System:** All retail editions (Home, Pro) and commercial editions (Enterprise, Education, IoT Enterprise) will reach end of support. Version 22H2 is confirmed as the final feature update for Windows 10. *(Source: Microsoft Lifecycle Policy, Windows 10 Home and Pro - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - **CRITICAL UPDATE regarding Microsoft 365 Apps on Windows 10:** While the Windows 10 *operating system* itself reaches end of support on October 14, 2025 (unless ESUs are purchased for the OS), Microsoft has announced a significant extension for Microsoft 365 Apps. **Microsoft 365 Apps (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook) running on Windows 10 will continue to receive security updates until October 10, 2028.** This provides a crucial three-year extension for application-level security on devices that may not immediately upgrade to Windows 11.
        - **Important Considerations:**
            - This extension applies *only* to security updates for Microsoft 365 Apps. It does *not* extend the support lifecycle of the Windows 10 operating system itself.
            - If a support issue with Microsoft 365 Apps occurs exclusively on a Windows 10 device (and not on Windows 11) after October 14, 2025, Microsoft support will advise the customer to move to Windows 11. Troubleshooting assistance may be limited.
            - No new feature updates or non-security bug fixes will be provided for Microsoft 365 Apps on Windows 10 after the OS end-of-support date.
            - The use of Microsoft 365 Apps on an unsupported operating system (i.e., Windows 10 without ESUs after Oct 2025) may still lead to performance and reliability issues over time, despite the app security updates.
- **Microsoft Office 2016 and 2019 Suites:** Support ends for the entire perpetual Office 2016 and 2019 suites, including standalone applications like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Project, Visio, Publisher, and Access. *(Source: Microsoft Lifecycle Policy, Office versions and connectivity to Microsoft 365 services)*
- **Exchange Server 2016 and 2019:** Mainstream and extended support conclude for these widely used on-premises mail servers. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
- **Skype for Business Server 2015 and 2019:** Support ends for these on-premises communication servers. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

- **Other Products:** Also reaching EOL on this date are Windows 10 Team (for Surface Hub), Windows 10 LTSC 2015, Visual Studio 2015, Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2015, and certain Windows Defender components tied specifically to Windows 10. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

The implications of this mass OS and server EOL event are substantial. Continued use of these products (OS, Office 2016/19, Servers) after October 14, 2025, without appropriate measures (like OS ESUs where available) exposes organisations to significant security risks, as Microsoft will no longer provide security updates, non-security updates, bug fixes, or technical support for them. For organisations using Office 2016 or 2019 to connect to Microsoft 365 services (like Exchange Online), while connectivity might not be immediately blocked, it will no longer be supported, potentially leading to performance and reliability issues.

The sheer volume and centrality of the products retiring on this single date strongly suggest a deliberate strategic move by Microsoft. It serves to accelerate the transition away from older perpetual licence models and on-premises infrastructure towards the Windows 11 operating system and subscription-based Microsoft 365 cloud services. By establishing a common, hard deadline for such critical components, Microsoft intensifies the pressure on organisations to modernise their IT estate. While this simplifies Microsoft's long-term support burden, it concurrently creates a major planning and execution challenge for customers, potentially leading to resource constraints and budget pressures as many organisations attempt large-scale migrations simultaneously. Partners like First Technology Group can assist in navigating these challenges.

Other Notable Retirements & End-of-Servicing (May 2025 - May 2026)

Beyond the dominant October 2025 deadline, numerous other Microsoft products, services, and specific versions will reach end-of-support or end-of-servicing. Organisations must track these dates based on their specific deployments:

- **Azure Services:** The Azure platform sees continuous evolution, leading to retirements.
    - Azure Database for MariaDB (September 19, 2025). *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - Azure Basic Load Balancer, Azure HPC Cache, Azure Remote Rendering, Azure Service Map, Azure SQL Edge, Azure Unmanaged Disks, Azure vFXT (all retiring September 30, 2025). *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - Various specific VM sizes and APIs/SDKs (e.g., Azure AD Graph API phases, older Storage Track 1 SDKs, older Data Factory connectors) have retirement dates within this window. Monitoring Azure Updates is crucial.
- **Dynamics 365:**
    - End of support for 2015 versions (CRM, NAV, SL, GP) occurs in early 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - Dynamics 365 Business Central on-premises (Modern Policy) versions reach end of servicing: v23.x on April 2, 2025, and v24.x on October 7, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - **Dynamics 365 Translation Service retires October 15, 2025.** *(Source: Removed or deprecated platform features - Finance & Operations | Dynamics 365)*
- **Windows Client/Server Versions:**
    - Windows 11 Enterprise, Education, and IoT Enterprise, Version 22H2, reach end of servicing on October 14, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
    - Windows 11 Home and Pro, Version 23H2, reach end of servicing on November 11, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

  - Windows Server Annual Channel, Version 23H2, reaches end of servicing on October 24, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

- **Developer Tools:**
  - Visual Studio 2022 LTSC channel versions reach end of support: v17.6 on January 14, 2025, and v17.8 on July 8, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
  - Visual Studio App Centre retires March 31, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
- **Configuration Manager (Current Branch):**
  - Version 2309 reaches end of servicing on April 9, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
  - Version 2403 reaches end of servicing on October 22, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
- **SQL Server:**
  - Extended Security Updates (ESU) Year 3 for SQL Server 2012 ends July 8, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
  - ESU Year 1 for SQL Server 2014 ends July 8, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
  - SQL Server 2019 moves from Mainstream to Extended Support on February 28, 2025. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
- **Contextual EOL (Just Beyond Window):** Office LTSC 2021 and Office 2021 (perpetual) reach end of support on October 13, 2026. Mainstream support for Windows Server 2022 ends October 13, 2026. *(Source: Ending Support in 2026 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

These varied EOL dates underscore the need for organisations to maintain a detailed inventory of their Microsoft software and services and track their specific lifecycles using official resources like the Microsoft Lifecycle Policy pages. The end of servicing for specific Windows 11 versions reinforces the requirement to adopt the annual feature update cadence to remain supported. The continuous churn in Azure services and APIs necessitates that development and infrastructure teams remain vigilant, monitoring Azure updates and adapting applications and configurations accordingly. This reflects the inherent nature of cloud platforms governed by the Modern Lifecycle Policy, which emphasises continuous updates and servicing over the long, fixed support timelines typical of traditional on-premises software under the Fixed Lifecycle Policy. Organisations must embrace this agility and incorporate ongoing monitoring and adaptation into their cloud management practices, potentially with support from partners like First Technology Group.

Extended Security Update (ESU) Options

For organisations unable to complete migrations before key EOL dates, Microsoft offers Extended Security Updates (ESUs) for certain products, providing security patches beyond the official end-of-support date, typically at an additional cost.

- **Windows 10 OS ESU:** Microsoft has confirmed a paid ESU programme for the Windows 10 *operating system*, extending security updates for up to three years past the October 14, 2025 deadline. *(Source: End of support for Windows 10, Windows 8.1, and Windows 7 - Microsoft)*
  - **Commercial Pricing:** Starts at $61 USD per device for the first year, with the price doubling to $122 for the second year, and doubling again to $244 for the third year. *(Source: ZDNet, April 2025)*

- **Consumer Pricing:** An ESU option will be available for individual consumers at $30 USD for the first year (potentially limited to one year). *(Source: End of support for Windows 10, Windows 8.1, and Windows 7 - Microsoft)*
- **Availability:** Enrolment for the Windows 10 OS ESU programme is expected during 2025.
- **Windows 365 Inclusion:** Customers using Windows 365 Cloud PCs will receive ESUs for their local Windows 10 OS devices connecting to the service at no additional charge for up to three years. *(Source: ZDNet, April 2025)*

- **Server ESUs:** ESU programmes also exist for older server products.
  - Windows Server 2012 and 2012 R2 ESU Year 2 concludes on October 14, 2025, but the ESU programme continues, offering updates until October 13, 2026. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*
  - SQL Server 2014 has an ESU programme, with Year 1 ending July 8, 2025, and Year 2 ending July 14, 2026. *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle)*

ESUs for the OS serve as a critical, albeit temporary, solution for maintaining security compliance on systems that cannot be immediately upgraded or replaced. The introduction of a consumer OS ESU option acknowledges the vast Windows 10 user base and hardware compatibility challenges with Windows 11. However, the escalating annual cost for commercial OS ESUs clearly signals Microsoft's intent for this to be a short-term bridge, not a long-term strategy. The cost of OS ESUs, particularly in the second and third years, can quickly exceed the cost of new hardware or migration projects, strongly incentivising organisations to move to supported platforms like Windows 11 or cloud-based solutions such as Windows 365. It is crucial to remember that OS ESUs provide only critical and/or important security updates; they do not include new features, non-security updates, or standard technical support. First Technology Group can help organisations evaluate the cost-effectiveness of OS ESUs versus migration.

(The following table summarises key products reaching end of support and should be consulted for specific planning. Note the distinction between Windows 10 OS EOL and the M365 Apps security update extension.)

Table: Key Microsoft Products Reaching End of Support (May 2025 - May 2026) *(This table would be similar to the one in the April document but updated to reflect the May 2025 perspective and explicitly note the M365 Apps on Windows 10 support extension in the "ESU Availability/Notes" or "Recommended Action" column for Windows 10.)*

Product/Version	Edition(s)	End of Support/Servicing Date	Key Impact	Recommended Action	ESU Availability/Notes
Windows 10 (v22H2) OS	Home, Pro, Enterprise, Education, IoT Ent.	**October 14, 2025**	No OS security/non-security updates, no OS support; Significant security risk.	Upgrade OS to Windows 11 (check hardware compatibility) or replace device.	Paid OS ESU available for up to 3 years (commercial), 1 year (consumer). Win365 includes OS ESU. **M365 Apps on Win10 get security updates until Oct 10, 2028 (separate from OS ESU).**
Microsoft Office 2016 / 2019	All (Suites & Standalone)	October 14, 2025	No security/non-security updates, no support;	Migrate to Microsoft 365 Apps (subscription) or	No ESU available.

			Unsupported M365 connectivity.	Office LTSC 2024 (perpetual).	
Exchange Server 2016 / 2019	Standard, Enterprise	October 14, 2025	No security/non-security updates, no support; Significant security risk.	Migrate to Exchange Online (M365) or upgrade to Exchange Server SE.	No ESU available.
Skype for Business Server 2015 / 2019	Standard, Enterprise	October 14, 2025	No security/non-security updates, no support; Significant security risk.	Migrate to Microsoft Teams or upgrade to Skype for Business Server SE.	No ESU available.
Windows 11 (v22H2)	Enterprise, Education, IoT Enterprise	October 14, 2025	No further updates/support for this version.	Update to a supported Windows 11 version (e.g., 23H2, 24H2).	N/A (Update required).
Windows 11 (v23H2)	Home, Pro	November 11, 2025	No further updates/support for this version.	Update to a supported Windows 11 version (e.g., 24H2).	N/A (Update required).
Azure Database for MariaDB	N/A	September 19, 2025	Service retirement; No new deployments or support.	Migrate to Azure Database for MySQL or PostgreSQL.	N/A (Service retirement).
Azure Basic Load Balancer	Basic SKU	September 30, 2025	Service retirement; No new deployments or support.	Migrate to Azure Standard Load Balancer.	N/A (Service retirement).
Azure Unmanaged Disks	N/A	September 30, 2025	Service retirement; No new deployments or support.	Migrate to Azure Managed Disks.	N/A (Service retirement).
Dynamics 365 Business Central (Modern, OnPrem)	v24.x	October 7, 2025	No further updates/support for this version.	Update to a supported version.	N/A (Update required).
SQL Server 2012	All	July 8, 2025	End of ESU Year 3.	Migrate to supported SQL Server version or Azure SQL.	ESU programme ends.

SQL Server 2014	All	July 8, 2025	End of ESU Year 1.	Migrate to supported SQL Server version or Azure SQL.	ESU programme continues (Year 2 ends July 2026).
Visual Studio 2015	All	October 14, 2025	End of Extended Support.	Migrate to a supported Visual Studio version (e.g., VS 2022).	No ESU available.
Visual Studio App Centre	N/A	March 31, 2025	Service retirement.	Migrate to alternative services.	N/A (Service retirement).

II. Feature Deprecation and Removals (Next 12 Months)

Microsoft continuously refines its products by deprecating features that are outdated, insecure, superseded by newer technology, or have low usage. Deprecation signifies that a feature is no longer under active development and is planned for removal in a future update, while removal means the feature is no longer available. Organisations should monitor these announcements to plan for necessary transitions, often requiring technical expertise from partners like First Technology Group.

Windows Client & Server Feature Changes

Several features are being removed or deprecated in Windows 11 and Windows Server within the next 12 months:

- **Features Removed (or becoming optional) around Win 11 24H2 / Server 2025 (confirming information from April and adding new items):**
    - WordPad: Removed from all editions starting with Windows 11 v24H2 and Windows Server 2025. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - NTLMv1: Legacy authentication protocol removed. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - Data Encryption Standard (DES): Outdated encryption cipher removed in Kerberos. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - Windows Information Protection (WIP): Removed; migrate to Microsoft Purview Information Protection/DLP. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - Microsoft Defender Application Guard for Edge: Removed. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - Alljoyn: Microsoft's implementation retired. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - XDDM-based remote display driver: Support removed. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
    - Windows Mixed Reality (WMR): WMR, Mixed Reality Portal, WMR for SteamVR deprecated and removed in Windows 11 v24H2. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client)*
    - WMIC: No longer installed by default, available as an optional feature. *(Source: List of features removed in Windows 11)*

- Legacy Console Mode: Becomes an optional Feature on Demand. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client)*
- **NEW (May 2025 Update): Device Metadata:** Deprecated and will be removed in a future Windows release. Replacement functionality under "Driver Package Container Metadata". *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client - Learn Microsoft, May 2025)*
- **NEW (May 2025 Update): Maps App (Windows Client):** Deprecated and will be removed from the Microsoft Store by July 2025. No longer supported. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client - Learn Microsoft, April 2025)*

- **Features Deprecated (Removal Planned Later) (confirming information from April and adding new items):**
  - Computer Browser Service: Legacy network discovery protocol/service deprecated. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - SMB 2+ over NetBT: Deprecated in favour of SMB over TCP or RDMA. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - Remote Mailslots: Legacy IPC mechanism deprecated. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - TLS 1.0 / 1.1: Disabled by default in Windows Server 2025 and deprecated. *(Source: Microsoft Lifecycle Policy)*
  - WebDAV Redirector Service: Deprecated and not installed by default in Server 2025. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - Windows Internal Database (WID): Recommended to migrate roles (AD FS, WSUS) to SQL Server Express/full SQL Server. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - VBScript: Will become a Feature on Demand before eventual removal. PowerShell is recommended. *(Source: Features removed or no longer developed in Windows Server)*
  - DirectAccess: Deprecated; Always On VPN recommended. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client)*
  - Steps Recorder (psr.exe): No longer updated, planned for removal. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client)*
  - Windows Speech Recognition: Deprecated in favour of newer voice access features. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client)*
  - Legacy Location History API: Deprecated and being removed. *(Source: Features and functionality removed in Windows client)*
  - **NEW (May 2025 Update): VBS enclaves for Windows 11, version 23H2 and earlier:** Deprecated. Support continues for Windows 11 24H2 and later. Existing specific enclaves remain supported on 23H2. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client - Learn Microsoft, April/May 2025)*
  - **NEW (May 2025 Update): Windows UWP Map control and Windows Maps platform APIs:** Deprecated as of April 8, 2025. Will continue to function but will not be updated. *(Source: Deprecated features in the Windows client - Learn Microsoft, April 2025)*

The consistent removal of older components, particularly those with security weaknesses, reflects Microsoft's ongoing commitment to bolstering security. This necessitates proactive administration, configuration changes, application

compatibility testing, and migration away from dependent legacy systems. The deprecation of tools like VBScript and DirectAccess signals a clear direction towards modern alternatives (PowerShell, Always On VPN), requiring organisations to plan for skill updates and infrastructure changes. First Technology Group can assist organisations in assessing the impact of these deprecations and planning migrations.

Microsoft 365 & Office App Feature Deprecations

The Microsoft 365 suite is also seeing numerous feature deprecations and retirements, often pushing users towards modern integration methods and newer application versions:

- **Integration & Development:**
    - Office 365 Connectors in Teams: Webhook URLs require updating by January 31, 2025; entire connector service for retirement by end of 2025. Power Automate recommended. *(Source: GitHub - Microsoft365-Upcoming-Deprecations-and-Changes)*
    - Legacy Exchange APIs/Authentication: Basic Authentication for SMTP AUTH permanently removed September 2025. Legacy Exchange Online tokens (Outlook add-ins) phased out through 2025; migrate to Microsoft Graph and modern auth. Search-MailboxAuditLog / New-MailboxAuditLogSearch cmdlets retire March 1, 2025, replaced by Search-UnifiedAuditLog. *(Source: GitHub - Microsoft365-Upcoming-Deprecations-and-Changes, AdminDroid Blog)*
    - Legacy SharePoint Customisations: SharePoint 2013 Workflows retire for existing tenants April 2, 2026. SharePoint Add-ins retire for existing tenants April 2, 2026. Azure Access Control Service (ACS) for SharePoint Online authentication retires April 2, 2026. Domain Isolated Web Parts retire April 2, 2026. These necessitate migration to Power Automate, SharePoint Framework (SPFx), and Microsoft Graph with Entra ID. *(Source: AdminDroid Blog)*
- **Application Sunsetting:**
    - Classic Teams Desktop App: Reaches end of availability July 1, 2025. Switch to new Teams client. *(Source: Leadership Through Data)*
    - Mail and Calendar Apps (Windows): Being replaced by new Outlook for Windows. Auto-migration ongoing; forced toggle for enterprise April 2026. *(Source: Big Changes to Microsoft 365 in 2025)*
- **Viva Module Retirements:**
    - Viva Topics: Retires February 2025. *(Source: Leadership Through Data)*
    - Viva Goals: Retires December 2025. Functionality expected to integrate into Copilot/M365. *(Source: Leadership Through Data)*
- **Other Feature Removals:** As listed in the April document (e.g., Tags Feature, PowerPoint QuickStarter, Filmbox/SketchUp support, Legacy Search Usage Reports, Sway from M365 Copilot App Create Tab, Defender for Identity "Alerts notifications," Exchange Relationship Intelligence Integration).

The pattern clearly favours modern, secure, and integrated approaches, mandating a shift towards Microsoft Graph and modern authentication. The comprehensive retirement of older SharePoint customisation models demands migration to SPFx and Microsoft Graph, a potentially complex undertaking.

Azure & Dynamics 365 Feature Sunsetting

Deprecations also continue within Azure cloud services and Dynamics 365 business applications:

- **Azure:** As mentioned in EOL (MariaDB, Basic LB, Unmanaged Disks). Various older API versions (Azure AD Graph, older Container Registry APIs, Data Factory V1 connectors) and specific VM SKUs are phasing out. Azure Automation State Configuration management links in portal removed March 31, 2025 (use PowerShell/CLI). *(Source: Ending Support in 2025 - Microsoft Lifecycle, Azure Automation State Configuration deprecation - Microsoft Q&A)*
- **Dynamics 365 (New/Updated May 2025):**
    - **Dynamics 365 Translation Service (DTS): End-of-support is October 15, 2025.** No longer available after this date. *(Source: Removed or deprecated platform features - Finance & Operations | Dynamics 365)*
    - **Anonymous access for public blob containers (Finance and Operations):** Disabling for sandbox environments from April 15-30, 2025, followed by production environments from May 1 - June 30, 2025. *(Source: Removed or deprecated platform features - Finance & Operations | Dynamics 365)*
    - **Legacy Storage APIs (Finance and Operations):** GetCsuStorageConnectionString public API will be deprecated in version 10.0.43 (PU67) (March 2025). Migrate to SharedServiceUnitStorage class methods. *(Source: Removed or deprecated platform features - Finance & Operations | Dynamics 365)*
- **Dynamics 365 (Previously noted, still relevant):**
    - Finance: Specific legacy country-specific tax reports deprecated. Making Tax Digital (MTD) VAT submission for UK on-prem D365 Finance deprecated by June 6, 2025. *(Source: Removed or deprecated features in Dynamics 365 Finance)*
    - Sales: Native Exchange integration for relationship intelligence (Apr 2025), Copilot email composition in side pane (Jan 2025), Playbooks, Talking Points deprecated. *(Source: Removed or deprecated features in Dynamics 365 Sales)*
    - Customer Service: Classic rich text editor (Apr 2025), case/knowledge suggestions via smart assist (June 2025 - replaced by Copilot), Unified Service Desk client (Apr 2026 - replaced by Customer Service workspace) deprecated. *(Source: Deprecations in Dynamics 365 Customer Service)*
    - Commerce: Legacy Job Card Terminal, certain pricing engine settings, older SDK packaging deprecated. *(Source: Removed or deprecated features in Dynamics 365 Commerce)*
    - Platform: Classic hierarchy visualisation control deprecated. *(Source: community.dynamics.com)*

These deprecations reinforce the move towards cloud-native services, modern APIs, and AI-driven features, strongly incentivising migration to Dynamics 365 cloud services. First Technology Group can help plan and execute these Dynamics 365 migrations.

Table: Notable Feature Deprecations/Removals (May 2025 - May 2026) *(This table would be updated from the April version to include the new items like Device Metadata, Maps App, VBS enclaves, UWP Map controls, DTS, anonymous blob access, and legacy storage APIs for D365, along with their specific dates and recommended actions.)*

Feature/Component	Affected Product(s)	Status	Date/Version (Approx. Removal/Change)	Impact Summary	Recommended Action/Alternative
Device Metadata	Windows Client	Deprecated	Future Release (Announced May 2025)	Device metadata functionality being replaced.	Use Driver Package Container Metadata.

Maps App	Windows Client	Deprecated	Removed from Store by July 2025	Built-in Maps app will be removed.	Use web-based map services or alternative apps.
VBS enclaves (Win11 23H2 & earlier)	Windows 11	Deprecated	Ongoing (Support for 24H2+)	Reduced support for VBS enclaves on older Win11 versions.	Migrate to Win11 24H2+ for full VBS enclave support if needed.
Windows UWP Map control & APIs	Windows Client (UWP Dev)	Deprecated	April 8, 2025	Controls/APIs will function but not be updated.	Consider alternative mapping solutions for new UWP development.
WordPad	Windows Client/Server	Removed	Win 11 24H2 / Server 2025	Basic text editor removed.	Use Microsoft Word (rich text) or Notepad (plain text).
NTLMv1	Windows Client/Server	Removed	Win 11 24H2 / Server 2025	Legacy insecure authentication protocol removed.	Ensure no dependencies; use NTLMv2 or Kerberos.
Windows Mixed Reality (WMR)	Windows 11	Removed	Win 11 24H2	WMR Portal, WMR for SteamVR removed.	Use alternative VR platforms.
TLS 1.0 / 1.1	Windows Server, M365 Services	Deprecated	Disabled by default Server 2025	Use of older TLS versions discouraged/blocked due to security.	Ensure all clients/servers use TLS 1.2+.
DirectAccess	Windows Client/Server	Deprecated	Future Removal	Legacy VPN-like remote access solution no longer developed.	Migrate to Always On VPN
VBScript	Windows Client/Server	Deprecated	Future Removal (becomes FoD first)	Legacy scripting language being phased out.	Migrate scripts to PowerShell.
Classic Teams Desktop App	Microsoft Teams	Retired	July 1, 2025	Older Teams client will cease to function.	Migrate all users to the New Teams client.
Office 365 Connectors	Microsoft Teams	Retiring	End of 2025	Webhook-based integrations will stop working.	Migrate integrations to Power Automate or other supported methods.
Basic Authentication (SMTP AUTH)	Exchange Online	Retiring	September 2025	Legacy authentication method for SMTP submission will be blocked.	Migrate applications/devices to use OAuth 2.0 client credential flow.
Azure AD Graph API	Microsoft Entra ID / Azure	Retiring	July 1, 2025 (Full Retirement)	Legacy API for Entra ID interaction will stop working.	Migrate all applications and scripts to use Microsoft Graph API.
MSOnline / AzureAD PowerShell Modules	Microsoft Entra ID / Azure	Retiring	Apr-May 2025 (MSOnline), Post-	Legacy PowerShell modules will stop working / become unsupported.	Migrate all administrative scripts to Microsoft Graph PowerShell SDK.

			July 2025 (AzureAD)		
SharePoint 2013 Workflows	SharePoint Online	Retiring	April 2, 2026 (Existing Tenants)	Legacy workflow engine will stop functioning.	Migrate workflows to Power Automate.
SharePoint Add-ins	SharePoint Online	Retiring	April 2, 2026 (Existing Tenants)	Older model for SharePoint customisation/apps will stop functioning.	Migrate solutions to SharePoint Framework (SPFx).
Azure ACS Authentication	SharePoint Online	Retiring	April 2, 2026 (Existing Tenants)	Legacy auth for custom apps accessing SPO will stop.	Migrate apps to use Microsoft Entra ID (Microsoft Graph) authentication.
Viva Topics	Microsoft Viva	Retired	February 2025	Knowledge management feature retired.	Leverage integrated knowledge features in Microsoft Copilot.
Viva Goals	Microsoft Viva	Retiring	December 2025	Goal-setting module retiring.	Explore alternative goal management tools or integrated M365 features.
Dynamics 365 Translation Service	Dynamics 365	Retiring	**October 15, 2025**	Service for translating D365 content retiring.	Download existing translations; explore alternative translation solutions.
Making Tax Digital (MTD) VAT (On-Prem)	Dynamics 365 Finance (On-Prem)	Deprecated	June 6, 2025	Direct submission for UK VAT from on-prem D365 Finance deprecated.	Migrate to D365 Finance cloud or use manual/alternative submission methods.
Entra Permissions Management (Standalone CIEM)	Microsoft Entra	Retiring	October 1, 2025	Standalone multi-cloud permissions management product retires.	Migrate to partner solutio (Delinea) or integrated Defender for Cloud features.
Anonymous Blob Access (D365 F&O)	Dynamics 365 F&O	Disabling	Sandbox: Apr 15-30, 2025; Prod: May 1-Jun 30, 2025	Anonymous access to public blob containers being disabled.	Review and update workflows relying on public blob access.
Legacy Storage APIs (D365 F&O)	Dynamics 365 F&O	Deprecated	March 2025 (v10.0.43)	GetCsuStorageConnectionString API deprecated.	Use SharedServiceUnitStorag class methods.

III. Pricing and Licensing Adjustments (Next 12 Months)

Microsoft is implementing several notable changes to its pricing and licensing structures between May 2025 and May 2026. These adjustments impact various products and programmes, requiring organisations to review their current agreements and budget accordingly. Partners like First Technology Group can help organisations navigate these licensing complexities.

Announced Price Increases

Several specific price increases are scheduled or have recently taken effect:

- **New Commerce Experience (NCE) Annual Commit/Monthly Pay Premium: Effective April 1, 2025, a 5% price premium** is applied to all new and renewing annual or triennial term subscriptions that are billed monthly. This impacts popular licence-based services like Microsoft 365, Office 365, Dynamics 365, Windows 365, and Power Platform acquired through CSP or potentially MCA-E. *(Source: Intelogy, Universal.cloud, - April 2025 announcements)*
    - Subscriptions renewing before April 1, 2025, retained their current pricing until their next renewal in 2026. Annual commit/annual pay and monthly commit/monthly pay options are not directly affected by this 5% premium (though the latter already carries a ~20% higher price point).
- **Microsoft Teams Phone Standalone Licences: Effective April 1, 2025,** pricing for standalone Teams Phone plans increased. For example, Teams Phone Standard increased from $8 USD to $10 USD per user per month. Teams Phone Standard for Frontline Workers increased from $4 USD to $5 USD per user per month. This increase does not affect customers who receive Teams Phone capabilities as part of broader suites like Microsoft 365 E5. *(Source: Universal.cloud, - April 2025 announcements)*
- **Microsoft Power BI Standalone Licences: Effective April 1, 2025,** pricing for standalone Power BI Pro and Power BI Premium Per User (PPU) licences increased globally. Indicative USD pricing suggests Power BI Pro increased to approximately $14 USD per user per month, and PPU to $24 USD per user per month. These licences are also subject to the 5% NCE premium if billed monthly on an annual term. Customers receiving Power BI Pro via Microsoft 365 E5 are not impacted by this standalone price change. *(Source: Universal.cloud, - April 2025 announcements)*
- **On-Premises Server Products: Effective July 1, 2025,** prices for standalone on-premises server products (SharePoint Server, Exchange Server, Skype for Business Server) will increase by 10%. Client Access Licence (CAL) suites will also see increases: Core CAL Suite by 15% and Enterprise CAL Suite by 20%. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - Licensing and pricing updates for on-premises server products)*
- **System Centre 2025:** Pricing for the 2025 version (and affecting the 2022 version) increased by 10% compared to the previous 2022 pricing. This became effective for CSP partners on April 1, 2025. *(Source: February 2025 announcements - Partner Center)*
- **Government Pricing:** The final 5% increment of a previously announced phased price increase for Office 365 G1 took effect on March 1, 2025. *(Source: Upcoming Changes: Office 365 G1 Price Increase - Microsoft Tech Community)*
- **Consumer Pricing:** Microsoft 365 Personal and Family subscriptions saw price increases around January/February 2025, attributed to Copilot capabilities. *(Source: Microsoft Answers - MicroSoft 365 Home increasing)*
- **Regional Currency Adjustments:** Microsoft performs periodic price harmonisation. In February 2025, this resulted in a ~5-6% price decrease for many licences in the UK (GBP) and a ~12% price increase in Brazil (BRL). *(Source: Intelogy)*

These adjustments reflect several trends: the NCE premium incentivises upfront annual payments; hikes for popular standalone services may steer customers to higher-tier suites; continued price increases for on-premises software reinforce the push to the cloud; and linking consumer price hikes to AI value sets a precedent. The 5% NCE premium on annual commitments paid monthly particularly penalises customers preferring monthly payments for budgetary reasons. Similarly, the substantial on-premises server and CAL price increases just months before major EOLs make cloud migration appear more financially advantageous. First Technology Group can help analyse the total cost of ownership.

Licensing Programme Shifts

- **Enterprise Agreement (EA) Transition:** Microsoft is phasing out the traditional EA for many customers (Level A, generally <2,400 users/devices) starting January 2025. Affected organisations must transition to either Microsoft Customer Agreement for Enterprise (MCA-E) or the Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) Programme. *(Source: Alchemy Tech Group, Centric Consulting)*
    - **Update (May 2025): From April 1, 2025, a new guided user interface in Partner Centre aims to streamline the renewal process for customers transitioning from EA to MCA through a CSP partner.** This supports expiring/expired EAs within a 90-day grace period and aligns CSP subscription end dates with EA end dates. *(Source: - Microsoft Licensing Update April 2025)*
- **New Commerce Experience (NCE):** This framework underpins CSP and influences MCA-E, featuring defined commitment terms and strict cancellation policies. Change indicators and end-of-sale price lists became generally available on February 1, 2025. *(Source: January 2025 announcements - Partner Center)*
- **Partner Programme Updates:** The Microsoft Partner Agreement (MPA) updates effective Oct 4, 2025. Stricter Partner of Record (POR) validation in CSP effective Apr 14, 2025. CSP Programme Guide updated Apr 27, 2025. *(Source: March 2025 announcements - Partner Center)*

The move away from traditional EAs for many customers forces a re-evaluation of procurement relationships. MCA-E maintains a direct relationship with new billing processes, while CSP introduces a partner like First Technology Group, offering potential flexibility but also reliance on the partner and NCE rules.

Promotional Offers

- **Microsoft 365 E5 Promotion:** 15% discount for net new M365 E5 CSP customers, running from January 1 to June 30, 2025 (up to 2,400 licences). *(Source: Pax8 Blog)*
- **Microsoft 365 Copilot Promotion: A 15% discount for new Copilot customers (up to 300 licences, minimum 10) via CSP has been extended through June 30, 2025.** *(Source: - Microsoft Licensing Update April 2025)*
- **Microsoft E5 Compliance Promotion:** 50% discount on M365 E5 Compliance licences for customers purchasing an equal or greater number of M365 Copilot licences. Available Feb 1, 2025, to Feb 1, 2026. *(Source: February 2025 announcements - Partner Center)*

These promotions offer time-limited opportunities to reduce adoption costs for high-tier suites, AI, and compliance capabilities.

Product Terms Updates (April 2025)

- Clarifications were made regarding Frontline Worker Licenses eligibility being moved to Universal Licensing Terms for Online Services.
- "Responsible Use of Microsoft AI Services" moved to its own section.
- Windows 10 ESU Cloud Managed (Per Device) line item added with license eligibility defined (Windows 10/11 Ent/Edu, Intune, Entra ID P1/P2, specified M365 plans).
- Windows 365 Disaster Recovery Plus Add-on added to Availability Table. Clarification on Frontline Worker license assignment eligibility. *(Source: - Microsoft Licensing Update April 2025)*

Table: Summary of Announced Price Increases & Licensing Changes (Effective May 2025 - May 2026) *(This table would be similar to the April version but reflect the May perspective and ensure all dates/details are current, including the Copilot promo extension and EA to CSP transition UI.)*

Change Type	Affected Product/Programme	Effective Date	Description/Details	Potential Impact
Billing Premium	NCE Annual/Triennial Term, Monthly Pay (M365, O365, D365, Win365, etc.)	April 1, 2025	5% price premium vs. annual upfront payment for new/renewing subscriptions.	Increased cost for organisations preferring monthly payments on committed terms. Incentivises annual upfront payment.
Price Increase	Teams Phone Standalone (Standard, Frontline)	April 1, 2025	Standard to $10/user/month; Frontline to $5/user/month (USD).	Increased cost for standalone Teams Phone users; encourages M365 E5 suite adoption.
Price Increase	Power BI Standalone (Pro, PPU)	April 1, 2025	Pro to ~$14/user/month; PPU to ~$24/user/month (USD).	Increased cost for standalone Power BI users; encourages M365 E5 suite adoption.
Price Increase	On-Premises Servers (Exchange, SharePoint, SfB)	July 1, 2025	10% price increase for standalone server licences.	Increased cost for on-premises deployments/upgrades; encourages cloud migration.
Price Increase	On-Premises CAL Suites (Core, Enterprise)	July 1, 2025	Core CAL Suite increases 15%; Enterprise CAL Suite increases 20%.	Increased cost for accessing on-premises servers; encourages cloud migration.
Licensing Programme Shift	Enterprise Agreement (EA)	Jan 2025 onwards	Phasing out renewals for customers < 2400 users. Transition to MCA-E or CSP. New guided UI for EA to CSP (Apr 2025).	Major shift in procurement; need to evaluate MCA-E vs. CSP. Loss of some traditional EA benefits.
Promotion End Date	Microsoft 365 Copilot (New Customers CSP)	**June 30, 2025**	**Extended 15% discount promo ends.**	End of opportunity for discounted Copilot adoption for new customers via CSP.

IV. Microsoft 365 E3/E5 and Security Portfolio Evolution (Next 12 Months)

Microsoft continues to enhance its flagship Microsoft 365 E3 and E5 suites and its comprehensive security portfolio (Defender, Sentinel, Entra, Purview). The next 12 months will see advancements focussed on AI integration, data management, compliance, and unified security operations. Understanding these changes is key for strategic planning, often best achieved with a partner like First Technology Group. The extension of M365 Apps security updates on Windows 10 until 2028 is a significant factor here, potentially influencing decisions around E3/E5 adoption based on other security components of the suites.

M365 E3/E5 Specific Feature Updates

While many features roll out across multiple plans, some notable updates impacting or particularly relevant to E3/E5 capabilities within the May 2025 - May 2026 timeframe include (confirming items from April document, rollout dates are estimates):

- **Data Management & Collaboration:**
    - PDF Watermarking: Add text/image watermarks to PDFs in OneDrive for Web (Rollout Start: April 2025). *(Source: Microsoft 365 Roadmap)*

  - Microsoft Loop: Multi-geo support for shared Loop workspaces (Rollout Start: November 2025). Actionable card-based Loop components in Outlook emails (Rollout Start: September 2025). Loop workspace tab in Teams standard channels (Rollout Start: Late April 2025). Loop admin usage reports (Rollout Start: Late June 2025). *(Source: Microsoft 365 Roadmap)*
  - Microsoft 365 Backup & Archive: Introduction of long-term retention periods (beyond one year) for M365 Backup (Preview: March 2026). File-level archiving capabilities for Microsoft 365 Archive (Preview: January 2026). *(Source: Microsoft 365 Roadmap)*
- **Compliance & Governance:**
  - Information Barriers (IB): Upgrade path from IB v1 to IB v2 (Preview: October 2025, GA: March 2026). *(Source: Microsoft 365 Roadmap)*
- **User Experience & Productivity:**
  - Org Explorer: Organisational visualisation tool in Outlook (completion mid-April 2025) requires a Microsoft Viva licence. *(Source: Office 365 for IT Pros)*
  - Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat: AI chat experience being added to eligible Office 365 and Microsoft 365 licence types. *(Source: M365 Maps Change Log)*

Ongoing feature development clearly targets enterprise needs around sophisticated data management and compliance. The clarification and enforcement of licensing requirements for features like Org Explorer adds a layer of complexity.

Microsoft Defender Suite Enhancements

The Microsoft Defender suite is seeing rapid innovation, heavily leveraging AI:

- **AI Integration & Automation:** Security Copilot Agents (e.g., Phishing Triage Agent), enriched incident summaries, Automatic Attack Disruption enhancements (IP address exclusion Preview Feb 2025). *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - What's new in Microsoft Defender XDR at Secure 2025)*
- **Cross-Workload Protection & Integration:** Defender for Office 365 enhanced Teams protection; Defender for Cloud Apps OAuth app risk data integration; Defender for Endpoint IP containment (Preview Apr 2025); Defender for Cloud enhanced container protection (GA Mar 2025), Kubernetes gated deployment (Preview Mar 2025), agentless VM scanning for CMK (GA Mar 2025). Defender Threat Intelligence reports integrated across Defender XDR. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - What's new in Microsoft Defender XDR at Secure 2025, Microsoft Learn - What's new in Defender for Cloud features)*
- **Licensing & Availability:** M365 E5 Security add-on available for M365 Business Premium and O365 E3 + EMS E3. Consumer Defender app VPN feature removed Feb 28, 2025. *(Source: March 2025 announcements - Partner Center, AskWoody)*

The clear trajectory is towards a more automated, AI-driven, integrated XDR platform, with Security Copilot "agents" performing autonomous tasks.

Microsoft Sentinel Developments

- **Unified SecOps Platform:** Increasing integration into the unified Microsoft Defender portal. Multi-workspace/tenant support (Public Preview April 2025). Native case management (GA April 2025) with upcoming enhancements. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - Microsoft Sentinel Ninja Training April 2025 update, Microsoft Learn - What's new in Microsoft's unified security operations platform)*
- **Threat Intelligence Overhaul:** New tables (ThreatIntelIndicators, ThreatIntelObjects - Public Preview Apr 2025, GA May 2025) replacing legacy ThreatIntelligenceIndicator table. **Dual data ingestion until July 31, 2025; legacy table**

retires May 31, 2026. Organisations must update custom content. Enhanced TI ingestion rules and API support. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - New capabilities coming to Microsoft Sentinel this Spring, GitHub - cudeso/misp2sentinel Issue #130)*

- **Data Connectors & Content:** Focus on Codeless Connector Platform (CCP). Bicep template support. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - New capabilities coming to Microsoft Sentinel this Spring)*

Sentinel's integration with Defender XDR provides a more unified SecOps experience. The TI modernisation requires analyst adaptation and custom content migration.

Microsoft Entra Updates

- **Major Retirements:**
    - Microsoft Entra Permissions Management (MEPM): Standalone multi-cloud CIEM product retires. End of sale Apr/May 2025, EOL Oct 1, 2025. Transition to Delinea or Defender for Cloud. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - Important change announcement: MEPM retirement)*
    - Legacy APIs and PowerShell Modules: Azure AD Graph API full retirement July 1, 2025. MSOnline PowerShell module retirement Apr-May 2025. AzureAD PowerShell unsupported after Mar 30, 2025, retiring after July 1, 2025. **Migration to Microsoft Graph API and SDK is mandatory.** *(Source: GitHub - Microsoft365-Upcoming-Deprecations-and-Changes, AdminDroid Blog)*
- **New Features & Enhancements (Recent/Upcoming):** New Entra ID Governance licence for guests (MAU model, Q2 2025). Lifecycle Workflows managed via Security Copilot (Preview). Authentication methods migration wizard (GA). External Authentication Methods with system-preferred MFA (Preview Mar 2025). New Microsoft-managed Conditional Access policies (GA). Bulk editing of user properties (GA). Real-time Password Spray Detection (GA). *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - What's new in Microsoft Entra – March 2025, Microsoft Learn - Microsoft Entra releases and announcements)*
- **Upcoming Deprecations:** Service-principal-less authentication behaviour ends March 2026. Azure AD External Identities P2 SKU ends sale May 1, 2025 (retirement Mar 2026). Management of auth methods via legacy MFA & SSPR policies retires Sep 30, 2025. MFA Fraud Alert feature retires March 1, 2025. *(Source: Microsoft Tech Community - What's new in Microsoft Entra – March 2025, AdminDroid Blog)*

The MEPM retirement and mandatory move to Microsoft Graph are critical transition points.

Microsoft Purview Advancements

Purview is central to governing Microsoft Copilot and generative AI usage.

- **CRITICAL UPDATE: Purview eDiscovery Changes (Effective May 26, 2025):**
    - **Content Search and classic eDiscovery (Standard) will transition to the new unified Purview eDiscovery experience.** Existing Content Searches will be accessible in a case titled "Content Search" in the new UI. Classic eDiscovery (Standard) will no longer be available in the classic portal.
    - **PowerShell Cmdlet Changes:** The -Export parameter within New-ComplianceSearchAction and Get-ComplianceSearchAction, and the -ChangeExportKey parameter for Set-ComplianceSearchAction will be **retired**.
    - Organisations must adapt eDiscovery workflows. Exports for Standard eDiscovery will primarily be through the new Purview portal UI. M365 E5 licensed users can use Microsoft Graph eDiscovery APIs for scripted exports. *(Source: Microsoft Security Blog - Upcoming changes to Microsoft Purview eDiscovery, Office 365 for IT Pros - Purview eDiscovery Changes Coming in May 2025)*

- **AI Governance & Security:** Data Security Posture Management for AI (Preview), Information Protection for Copilot interactions, DLP for AI prompts, Insider Risk Management detecting risky AI usage (June 2025), Communication Compliance analysing AI interactions, eDiscovery identifying AI-generated data, Compliance Manager for AI regulations. *(Source: Microsoft Security - Secure and Govern Microsoft 365 Copilot, Microsoft Learn - What's new in Microsoft Purview)*
- **Core Platform Enhancements:** Policy Sync Status visibility (GA May 2025). Data Observability (Preview Feb 2025). Sensitivity Labels auto-applied to Teams meetings (Preview). Endpoint DLP hyperlink in toast notifications, macOS network share coverage (Early Apr 2025). Iceberg data assets support. Glossary terms report (Preview). *(Source: Microsoft Learn - What's new in Microsoft Purview, Microsoft 365 Roadmap)*
- **Retirements:** Alerts Policy Cmdlets in Purview Audit (Get/New/Remove/Set-AuditConfigurationRule) retire March 24, 2025 (use Purview DLP). *(Source: GitHub - Microsoft365-Upcoming-Deprecations-and-Changes)*

The heavy investment in Purview for AI governance underscores its criticality. The Purview eDiscovery changes require immediate attention and planning.

Table: Key Security Feature Updates (May 2025 - May 2026) *(This table would be updated from the April version to detail the Purview eDiscovery changes and confirm other rollout dates.)*

Security Area	Key Feature/Capability/Change	Status	Target Rollout/Date (Approx.)	Significance/Impact
Defender Suite	Security Copilot Agents (e.g., Phishing Triage)	Preview/GA	Rolling out 2025	Autonomous AI for SOC tasks, improving efficiency.
Sentinel	Threat Intelligence Modernisation (New Tables, STIX support)	Preview/GA	Apr 2025 - May 2026	Richer TI context; **requires migration from legacy table by July 31, 2025.**
Entra	Permissions Management (MEPM) Retirement	Retiring	Oct 1, 2025	Standalone CIEM product retired; migrate to partner/integrated solutions.
Entra	Azure AD Graph API & Legacy PowerShell Module Retirement	Retiring	Mar-July 2025	**Mandatory migration to Microsoft Graph API and PowerShell SDK.**
Purview	**eDiscovery: Classic Content Search & eDiscovery (Std) to New UI**	Transitioning	**Effective May 26, 2025**	**Unified experience; requires workflow adaptation.**
Purview	**eDiscovery: Retirement of specific PowerShell Export Parameters**	Retiring	**Effective May 26, 2025**	**Impacts scripted exports for Standard eDiscovery; use UI or Graph APIs (E5).**
Purview	Data Security Posture Management for AI	Preview	Ongoing	Tools to identify risks and apply policies for Copilot/AI interactions.
Purview	AI Governance Features (DLP, IRM, Comm Compliance for AI)	Preview/GA	Rolling out 2025	Extending core Purview capabilities to monitor and control AI usage.

V. Other Significant Microsoft Changes and Strategic Directions (Next 12 Months)

Beyond specific product EOLs, feature changes, pricing, and security updates, several broader developments and strategic directions will shape the Microsoft landscape in the coming year.

Operating System Updates

The operating system landscape is dominated by the Windows 10 transition and the continued evolution of Windows 11.

- **Windows 10 End-of-Life:** As detailed in Section I, the **October 14, 2025, EOL date for the Windows 10 OS** is the most significant OS event, mandating migration or OS ESU adoption for security and support.
    - **Crucial M365 Apps Update:** Microsoft 365 Apps on Windows 10 will receive **security updates until October 10, 2028**. This decouples the application security timeline from the OS EOL for M365 Apps users.
- **Windows 11 Cadence:** Windows 11 continues its annual feature update cycle. Version 24H2 began rolling out in late 2024. Organisations must plan to deploy these annual updates to remain in a supported state.
    - **Recent Updates:** Regular cumulative updates like KB5058411 (OS Build 26100.4061) for Windows 11 24H2 (May 13, 2025) continue. A Safe OS Dynamic Update (KB5055671) for Windows 11 24H2 and Server 2025 was released on April 8, 2025, improving WinRE. *(Source: Microsoft Support)*
- **Windows 12 Speculation:** A major numbered "Windows 12" release within the May 2025 - May 2026 timeframe appears unlikely. Focus is on evolving Windows 11.
- **Windows Server 2025:** Generally available late 2024 (CSP from April 1, 2025). Introduces Azure Arc integration, Hotpatching, security enhancements.
    - **Known Issue (May 2025):** The April 2025 update (KB5055523) may cause Kerberos event IDs 45 and 21 to be logged on domain controllers regarding certificate validation for Key Trust. Microsoft confirmed this (May 13, 2025) and is working on a solution. *(Source: Microsoft Learn - Windows Server 2025 known issues)*

New Product Launches/Major Updates

- **Microsoft 365 Copilot:** Rapid feature iteration continues.
    - **May 2025 Updates:** Improved conversation history (daily/weekly views), web-aware agent creation in Agent Builder, mobile image generation (Android, iOS), unified prompt box. **Excel:** Insights from inserted images, formula explanations, paste images into chat. *(Source: Microsoft Learn - Microsoft 365 Copilot release notes)*
    - **Copilot Studio:** Agent builder now in Norway, Sweden, South Korea, and **South Africa**. API key auth for actions. Grounding with metered consumption. *(Source: Microsoft Learn - Microsoft 365 Copilot release notes)*
- **Power Platform (April 2025 Feature Update for Power Apps):**
    - Enhanced Undo/Redo in Power Apps Studio. Actions Pane for Power Pages in VS Code. GA for enabling Audit settings via Security Compliance, Git Integration, and securing app access via Security hub. New Power Platform admin centre. *(Source: Microsoft Power Platform Blog - What's new in Power Apps: April 2025)*
- **Surface Hardware:** New Surface Copilot+ PCs for Business (Intel Core Ultra Series 2) launched Feb 2025. Surface Laptop 5G planned for later in 2025. *(Source: Microsoft News)*
- **Server Software:** System Centre 2025 (CSP Apr 1, 2025). SQL Server 2025 (GA expected 2025). Exchange Server SE & Skype for Business Server SE (GA July 2025). *(Source: February 2025 announcements - Partner Center, Microsoft Tech Community - Licensing and pricing updates)*

- **Cloud Services & Features:** Microsoft Places launched. Azure integrating Nvidia Blackwell GPUs; Azure AI Foundry integrating Nvidia NIMs. Dynamics 365 2025 Release Wave 1 (Apr-Sep 2025) brings AI features. *(Source: Microsoft News, CRN, ERP Today)*

Strategic Focus Areas

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Preeminent focus. Massive investment (~$80B planned FY25 for AI datacentres). CoreAI engineering group. Copilot integration across all products. AI business surpassing $13B annual run rate (Q2 FY25). *(Source: Microsoft On the Issues, Microsoft Investor Relations)*
- **Quantum Computing:** "Quantum Ready" programme launched early 2025 to help businesses prepare for hybrid applications, skilling, and quantum-safe cryptography. *(Source: Microsoft Azure Blog)*
- **Sustainability:** 2030 goals (carbon negative, water positive, zero waste) ongoing. **Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability 2025 release wave 1 (April 2025 - September 2025)** includes expanded capabilities for calculating insurance emissions, importing energy data, and connecting ESG analytics in Microsoft Fabric. *(Source: Microsoft On the Issues, Microsoft Learn - Overview of Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability 2025 release wave 1)*
- **Cloud Transition:** Strong Microsoft Cloud revenue growth ($40.9B Q2 FY25, up 21% YoY). Licensing changes reinforce this. Azure Arc central to hybrid strategy. *(Source: Microsoft Investor Relations)*

Microsoft's overwhelming commitment to AI suggests accelerating AI feature integration. The "Quantum Ready" initiative signals preparation for future cryptographic impacts. First Technology Group can help organisations develop strategies to leverage AI and prepare for future technological shifts.

VI. Organisational Impact Analysis and Recommendations

The convergence of product EOLs, feature deprecations, pricing shifts, and strategic re-alignments by Microsoft necessitates a proactive and multi-faceted response. Failure to address these changes can lead to increased costs, security vulnerabilities, operational disruptions, and misalignment with future technological capabilities. Engaging with a partner like First Technology Group can provide the necessary expertise and resources.

The extension of Microsoft 365 Apps security updates on Windows 10 until October 2028 is a major factor in this analysis, offering new flexibility but not removing underlying OS EOL pressures.

Budgetary Considerations

- **Impact:** Significant budget pressure over the next 12-24 months.
    - The 5% NCE premium on annual licences paid monthly directly increases costs. Price hikes for standalone Teams Phone/Power BI add pressure. 10-20% increases for new on-prem server software/CALs make staying on-prem costlier.
    - Windows 10 OS EOL requires budgeting for hardware refreshes/upgrades or escalating OS ESU costs. The M365 Apps support extension may allow some deferral of M365-specific migration costs but not OS security costs.
    - Migration projects for EOL products/deprecated features incur software, hardware, labour, and training costs. New licensing needs (Viva for Org Explorer, Entra ID Governance guest licence) add line items. Copilot adoption also introduces new costs.
- **Recommendations:**
    - **Licence Optimisation:** Conduct thorough reviews. Analyse bundled suites vs. standalone licences.
    - **NCE Strategy:** Model the 5% premium impact; consider upfront annual payments.

- **EOL Budgeting:** Explicitly budget for Windows 10 OS transition (hardware, licences, labour, OS ESUs if needed). The M365 Apps extension provides breathing room for the app layer but not the OS layer. Budget for Office 2016/19, Exchange 2016/19 migrations.
- **Leverage Promotions:** Utilise M365 E5, Copilot (extended to June 30, 2025), and E5 Compliance promos if aligned with plans.
- **Cloud Cost Management:** Implement robust FinOps for Azure.

Migration Planning

- **Impact:** The October 14, 2025 OS EOL demands immediate prioritised migration planning for Windows 10. Dependencies on deprecated features (Azure AD Graph, Teams Connectors, legacy SharePoint customisations, Entra Permissions Management) require code changes or workflow redesigns. EA renewal (<2400 users) requires transition to CSP/MCA-E.
  - **M365 Apps on Windows 10 Impact:** The extension to 2028 means M365 Apps will remain secure on Windows 10 for longer, potentially allowing a more phased hardware rollout if M365 compatibility was the primary driver for immediate device replacement alongside OS EOL. However, the Windows 10 OS itself will be unsupported without ESUs after Oct 2025.
- **Recommendations:**
  - **Prioritise Oct 2025 OS EOL:** Focus immediate efforts on migrating Windows 10 OS or securing OS ESUs.
  - **Hardware Assessment:** Assess existing hardware for Windows 11 compatibility.
  - **Develop Specific Migration Plans:** Create detailed plans for Office 2016/19 (to M365 Apps), Exchange/SfB (to M365/Teams online or new Server SE).
  - **Audit Dependencies:** Actively scan for dependencies on deprecated APIs, protocols, and features.
  - **Adapt to Purview eDiscovery Changes:** Review and update eDiscovery workflows and scripts before the May 26, 2025, changes take effect, especially concerning PowerShell export capabilities.
  - **Evaluate Alternatives:** For deprecated features without direct replacements, evaluate partner solutions or alternative Microsoft capabilities.
  - **EA Transition Strategy:** Engage early with Microsoft/CSP partners if affected by EA phase-out.

Administrative Actions

- **Impact:** Increased workload managing transitions, updating configurations, implementing new security measures, and supporting users. Key tasks include updating security policies, managing new features (Purview AI governance, Sentinel TI tables, Purview eDiscovery changes), migrating administrative scripts (to Microsoft Graph), managing NCE billing, and user training (New Outlook/Teams, Copilot).
- **Recommendations:**
  - **Security Configuration Review:** Regularly review and update security configurations.
  - **AI Governance:** Develop clear organisational policies for AI tools like Copilot, leveraging Purview.
  - **User Communication & Training:** Plan for UI changes, EOL migrations, and new tools. Clearly communicate the distinction between Windows 10 OS EOL and the M365 Apps support extension.
  - **Script Migration:** Allocate resources for migrating admin scripts to Microsoft Graph PowerShell SDK.

- **NCE Management:** Establish clear processes for NCE subscription renewals and payment options.
- **Stay Informed:** Actively monitor Microsoft 365 Message Centre, Roadmaps, and blogs.

Strategic Alignment

- **Impact:** Microsoft's strategy heavily favours its cloud platform and AI. Organisations need to align their IT strategy accordingly. The shift from traditional EAs and increasing integration of features into higher-tier licences influence value propositions.
- **Recommendations:**
  - **Embrace Cloud & AI:** Develop strategies for leveraging cloud services and AI (including Copilot).
  - **Consider M365 Apps Extension:** Factor the extended M365 Apps support on Windows 10 into the tactical execution of your Windows 11 migration strategy. It offers flexibility but shouldn't derail the strategic move to a modern OS.
  - **Evaluate High-Tier Licences:** Assess M365 E5 (and add-ons) against organisational needs, especially for AI governance and advanced security.
  - **Optimise Licensing Model:** Choose the best post-EA model (CSP vs. MCA-E).
  - **Invest in Skills:** Prioritise training for IT staff and end-users.
  - **Long-Term View:** Engage with partners like First Technology Group to understand longer-term roadmaps.

VII. Conclusion

The next 12 months represent a period of significant transition within the Microsoft ecosystem. The convergence of major product end-of-life deadlines, particularly the **October 14, 2025 event for the Windows 10 Operating System**, coupled with ongoing feature deprecations, evolving pricing structures, and a relentless focus on AI integration, demands immediate attention and strategic planning.

A critical update in May 2025 is that **Microsoft 365 Apps running on Windows 10 will continue to receive security updates until October 10, 2028.** While this provides significant flexibility for application usage, it does *not* change the Windows 10 OS end-of-support date. Proactive migration of the OS or adoption of OS ESUs remains paramount for continued OS security beyond October 2025.

The deprecation of legacy APIs and development models necessitates timely adaptation to modern standards like Microsoft Graph. Budgeting requires careful consideration of new pricing realities, including the NCE monthly payment premium. The shift away from traditional Enterprise Agreements for many customers necessitates a thorough evaluation of MCA-E and CSP alternatives. Recent changes to Purview eDiscovery also require prompt attention.

Microsoft's strategic direction is unambiguously centred on its cloud platform and the pervasive integration of AI, particularly through Copilot. The security portfolio is rapidly advancing to support this, with Purview becoming crucial for governing AI use.

Successfully navigating this period requires organisations to move beyond reactive problem-solving. It demands a proactive approach encompassing thorough licence and dependency audits, robust migration planning for the Windows 10 OS and other EOL products, diligent budget forecasting, continuous monitoring of Microsoft communications (including critical updates like the M365 Apps support extension), investment in user and IT skilling, and strategic alignment with Microsoft's cloud-first, AI-driven future.

Partnering with an experienced IT provider like First Technology Group is crucial for organisations seeking expert guidance and support through these complex changes. Organisations that embrace these changes strategically, with the right

support, will be best positioned to manage costs, enhance security, and leverage the powerful new capabilities emerging across the Microsoft ecosystem.

(Disclaimer: All information regarding product EOLs, feature deprecations, pricing, and roadmaps is based on publicly available Microsoft information as of May 2025 and is subject to change. Organisations should always consult official Microsoft documentation and their Microsoft account teams or partners for the most current and specific guidance.)