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Microsoft Ignite 2025: Key highlights and what they mean for IT leaders

If anyone was in any doubt about the AI hype – San Francisco has you covered. The advertising billboards you see in most cities are usually selling consumer goods like clothes and perfume. San Francisco? It's all AI.



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And so, it's fitting that this is now the home of Microsoft's flagship tech conference. We were there last month to hear the latest updates on the products that underpin millions of businesses worldwide, amongst 20,000 in-person attendees and more than 400 sessions.

Here are the key takeaways from our week at Ignite.

Copilot for everyone – smarter and more accessible

AI was front and centre, and Copilot continues to evolve at pace.

Probably the biggest announcement was Microsoft IQ, which is what really sets Copilot apart from more generic AI platforms. It's part marketing, part technology, built around a cornerstone called Work IQ. Work IQ connects data and signals from across your Microsoft 365 estate (email, files, meetings, chats, and more) with user preferences such as tone and workflows. The result is more accurate, context-aware responses. It's the shift from a generic assistant to one that genuinely 'knows' your environment. For example:

- It can reference a specific document or conversation when answering a question.
- It adapts its suggestions to match your organisation's processes.
- It learns patterns over time to improve relevance and efficiency.

Agents are how you can use AI to automate repeatable processes. The introduction of Copilot App Builder means anyone can create tailored agents, while Copilot Studio remains the go-to for advanced scenarios. This supports the idea that processes can be optimised and automated by those who understand them best. For the most complex needs, Microsoft Foundry is the platform for bespoke development scenarios.

For smaller organisations, the new Copilot Business edition offers a lower entry point (around 30% cheaper) and launched on 1st December.

And behind the scenes, Microsoft is doubling down on AI investment, not only in Azure (where the newest developments are there to support some serious scale for newer AI models!) but also through partnerships with leaders like Anthropic, bringing Claude models into the mix.

Enterprise security – raising the bar

Microsoft are aware that introducing AI introduces major concerns for governance, risk, and compliance. Agent 365 will help enterprises manage AI rollouts with full visibility and enhanced controls. There are also developments in Purview to prevent data loss via AI.

Whilst technically 'released' before Ignite, it was also a good opportunity to look at their new Zero Trust Assessment and Workshop. We've seen plenty of talk of Zero Trust that veers between marketing-speak, and overly product-focussed – but this workshop is a down-to-earth and practical way of considering how best to embed critical security best practises. We're well positioned to help organisations on this journey, and we're already looking at these workshops with several customers.

Another notable update was support for synchronised passkeys in M365. This means that end users have easier access to more secure methods of authentication – which are, by definition, resistant to phishing.

Deepening partnerships

Ignite wasn't just about announcements – it was about connections. We had the chance to engage with partners across the Microsoft ecosystem. It was great catching up with those we already work with, and with several hundred exhibitors there were many others to meet and learn from.

On the whole, Ignite 2025 showcased Microsoft's drive to support and improve businesses.

Want to learn more?

We're running briefing sessions that take a deeper look at the topics covered at Ignite, as well as sessions on how best to leverage AI within your organisation. Email George at george.hewitt@waterstons.com.