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Vendor Spotlight: This is Carma

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Change isn't always consistent. It comes in waves, rapidly accelerating after intervals of stasis.

Harken back to the birth of the interstate highway system. In the US, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 had its origins a half-century earlier, born from the idea of providing national infrastructure to get farmers out of the mud and their produce into the market faster. At the time it was passed, it seemed like an even better idea to support the transport of troops, equipment, and landing of planes in war time. But, regardless of its origin, we have become critically dependent on the interstate highway system and it has transformed the way we live, where we work and how we explore the world. Albeit sometimes messy, congested, and riddled with potholes – we disregard the infrastructure to focus on what we can achieve on top of it.



Today we can hardly imagine a world without roads, but they are taken for granted. Roads underpin and connect us. Without them, there would be no Tesla. No road trips. No Amazon Prime delivery. But we don't particularly care about how they are made, and get fairly frustrated when they are being constructed, modified, and improved. We just want to get from here to there.

This is similar to what we have seen across the telecom industry. We've become dependent upon the antiquated infrastructure put in place for particular functions, but nobody really likes it. At the same time, the world is changing rapidly. The advent of 5G, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud acceleration is creating unprecedented pressure on telecoms to keep up with network

changes. With this acceleration comes the imperative to integrate and automate seamlessly, and to enable smarter, more efficient ways of working, greater agility, and better customer experience. To up the ante further, businesses must meet these demands as efficiently as possible, driving down costs while accelerating and increasing revenues.

But no one cares about the ol' infrastructure, how it's made, or even how it works. They just want it to work. Nobody *wants* to use an operational support system (OSS), business support system (BSS), or element management system (EMS) – although many people still do. What we want is the ability to focus on innovation. To use the tools we are familiar with, like the road, to achieve a great many things. To get from here to there.

Pipeline recently had an opportunity to talk with the [leadership](#) of [Carma](#), a company on a mission to change the game when it comes to accelerating telecom innovation. Carma has taken all the rich, traditional business and operational support systems (B/OSS) technology infrastructure and baked it in and throughout an enterprise platform that everyone is already using: Microsoft. And, Carma goes well beyond the droves of companies that are clamoring to partner with Microsoft for simple CRM integration. Carma is providing actual, integrated telecom and operational functionality across the entire suite of Microsoft products. Think sales workflows, rules and business process all in an email within Outlook. Think [CAD floorplans in CRM](#). It's cool stuff.

This is Carma

Carma has been helping service providers across different verticals overcome complex challenges for the last five years. But over the last nine months, co-founders CEO Frank McDermott and COO Joe McDermott have led the team through warp-speed advances in technology to create a comprehensive operations and communication platform built on a foundational network inventory. Carma consolidates and simplifies enterprise business functions like sales, ordering, cost, and revenues; with foundational telecom inventory encompassing logical, physical and business rules and processes. Then in 2020, Carma became a Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider partner, and that changed almost everything.

“We’re all in on Microsoft, and the Microsoft Cloud,” says Frank. “It eliminated the need to reinvent the wheel, and enabled us to accelerate the construction of a complete telecom platform for many use cases while collapsing silos and consolidating applications.”

As a commercial-grade platform, Carma serves every vertical including data centers, edge data centers, cable landing stations, mobile service providers, network operators and more. The Carma platform is also uniquely and intentionally built to be used by every function and role within these verticals, from sales and operations, to field and customer-support personnel, with the data presented in relevant views related to the users' particular functions. “We were able to quickly integrate a whole host of traditional, foundational telecom functions into the Microsoft platform and then quickly ‘lift and shift’ it for any customer,” Frank added. “It also allowed us to expand our functionality by leveraging Microsoft prebuilt technologies such as security, but also

things such as native mobile app integration." Frank went on to explain that a typical deployment can take as little as weeks, and being able to leverage the power of the mobile app integration gives customers access to new features to better streamline operational processes out of the box. For example, it gives them access to the phone's camera for OCR, data input, and even QR or barcodes. Imagine you can be on a tour with a customer, take a picture of a business card, automatically add it as a lead in CRM, open an opportunity and start adding available products in real-time, and send them the order by the time you leave. This is something Carma calls 'shortening the data distance.'

"It's ridiculous to think it takes days or weeks to interact with customers, when it can all be centralized and automated into one place," Frank commented.

So—why did Carma do it? In short, with extensive telecom and Silicon Valley technology experience, the brothers McDermott know that to realize the full potential of future use cases, service providers must have better visibility, seamless automation, and an intuitive toolkit that can be used across an entire organization. Even more, they have felt the industry's pain to meet the demands for ever-greater connectivity in exploding complexity; they've seen firsthand how technical problems become obstacles to innovation.

"The geek problem becomes an operational problem, which becomes a sales problem, which becomes a 'survival of the company' problem," Joe explained.

Frank expanded on this, explaining how telecoms are encumbered by legacy Y2K-era tools and systems. He has seen this throughout his career, including as an industry consultant before founding Carma.

"At heart, we're network engineers. We saw how much manual work was done to move data and join data and asked ourselves, 'Why are Notepad and Excel mission-critical applications?' Why are TIRKS or Metasolv still around when they needed a bullet 10 years ago?"

Carma brings Microsoft's entire cloud and applications platforms, tailored for telecommunications, to drive better asset management, superior customer experience and increased profitability. Simply put, it has achieved a way for service providers to do business better.

Joe added, "Coming from Silicon Valley, it was amazing to me to see people running these massive, complex, profitable and expensive networks with tools that were built in the late 1990s. It's not that people in telecom were intentionally trying to make things more difficult. They just didn't have the tools to make business easier, until now."

Carma has accomplished this by building a wealth of knowledge and culture of innovation that permeates the entire organization, starting at the top and working down to every member of their on-shore development team. The team knows—and understands at a visceral level—the specific and unique demands of the telecom market.

Burying the infrastructure

B/OSS is like roads, or plumbing. Nobody gets excited about them, but we certainly need them. Furthermore, lack of integration and automation is an obstacle to innovation. Traditional B/OSS's lack of integration has meant that it takes hundreds of clicks to perform simple functions, manage inventory, or access data. Carma is on a mission to kill the clicks and consolidate apps to make innovation easier.

"We're focusing on ensuring that humans are in the loop, that they can see information as fast as they can think about it," Frank explained.

To enable this, Carma has taken an underlying rich set of B/OSS functionalities into Microsoft enterprise software that everyone is already using. Although you can, you don't have to use Carma. Instead, you use the Microsoft product you use daily with the Carma functionality built in. Through this SaaS transformation, Carma has made carrier-grade functionality accessible for all service providers and organizations, large and small, that are acquiring and managing networks for business operations.

Accelerating innovation

In our rapidly changing world, CRM has quickly become the heart of the enterprise. To meet today's demands, handle complexity, and innovate, organizations must be able to instantly understand at a granular level the operations and engineering functions. It's what drives day-to-day business: what's going on with the outside plant, inside plant, logical services, power and more.

Carma's innovation in B/OSS creates a marriage between the foundational network inventory—such as power, circuits, cards, ports and more—and the foundational enterprise operations to give telecoms the ability to operate with agility and efficiency to drive growth. Through its Microsoft integration, Carma leverages these functionalities and extends them to Dynamics CRM, Azure, Outlook, Oracle, SharePoint, ServiceNow, Snowflake, IBM, SAP and beyond – to the [entire Microsoft ecosystem](#) – including connectors to marketing automation applications to make management easier and break down siloes throughout the enterprise.

This enables telecom businesses to meet today's challenges more easily at lower cost as well as prepare for advancements in IoT and augmented reality. Here, too, Carma is preparing to take users to new frontiers. Carma is currently developing Remote Eyes[®], which is in beta with a customer now, to provide insights using augmented reality (AR) and live video that builds bridges between operations and customers. Remote Eyes[®] can, for instance, provide an explanation for why exactly it took three hours to change a power supply or insight into where equipment is best placed. This provides better customer experience while enabling technician insight remotely, cutting truck rolls and lowering costs while boosting efficiency.

Another transformative capability of Carma is the ability to manage network inventory in a way that straddles engineering, operations, and sales. Last August, Carma added [floorplans](#), [rack elevations](#), [mapping](#), and panel views. These can be joined with all inventory and the CRM within Carma. Engineering can do the floor plan, create a drawing in Adobe AutoCAD, and link it with the data in Carma, which means sales can start selling before it's even built. This enables sales, operations, and engineering to work from the same data—a level of integrated functionality that hasn't been previously possible.

Unlocking transformation

All this begs the question: why reinvent the wheel? Think of Carma's platform as the fancy red sports car that's built on top of the wheels. Simply put, Carma's leadership sees telecom as integral to nearly every other technical industry driving innovation forward.

Frank explained, "The Internet has had a greater impact on productivity than electricity. With this, there's going to be no data divide, no fights over whose data is better. This is about fewer 'fingers in the wind' and better decision-making."

By holistically aggregating data into the Microsoft suite, Carma unlocks telecom transformation, whether for mergers and acquisitions, customer experience, or new use cases.

"Carma is the ultimate data aggregator," Frank said, pointing out how the platform makes data available to every role in the business in a clean system to enable further innovation on that data, even in different apps or connectors.

Carma has buried but harnessed the power of the underlying infrastructure to streamline virtually every facet of operations in and throughout Microsoft's platform and applications, so that you can focus on your business. Moreover, Carma gives you the ability to focus on running your businesses better, instead of fighting with antiquated systems.

Carma has painstakingly innovated to help you accelerate and take the pain out of your innovation. If you think this approach may be right for you, we invite you to [contact Carma](#) today.