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## **ADC Rounds Out OSS Family With CommTech**

With its \$185.5 million all-stock purchase of CommTech Corp., broadband hardware/software vendor ADC adds another arrow to its OSS quiver, perhaps marking another step forward in its move toward profitability on the heels of ADC's recent decision to cut 650 professional services jobs. (At press time, several unnamed sources said a senior executive in the Integrated Solutions Group will be added to the list.) While this brings ADC closer to a full suite of OSS software, there still is one business process left unfulfilled.

Last month, Minnetonka, MN-based ADC announced the inclusion of Cranbury, NJ-based CommTech in its family of offerings. CommTech's Fast Flow Suite promises to handle order entry and management, provisioning, inventory management and service activation for broadband communications service providers (CSPs). CommTech becomes the FastFlow Division of ADC.

This is ADC's fifth purchase in the OSS software space in as many years. Other add-ons include Metrica (1996), providing network performance and service assurance, NewNet (1997) with SS7-based enhanced services, Saville (1999) lending billing and customer care to its capabilities, and Centrigram (2000) with call management and messaging. Not content with just software in its portfolio, ADC has added more than 24 companies to its universe of hardware, software and professional services since 1995.

### **Is the Suite Complete?**

Using the TeleManagement Forum's FAB (fulfillment, assurance, billing) business process model as a backdrop of required OSS functionality, Jennifer Fellows, ADC's director of product marketing and Jeff Cotrupe, CommTech's director of strategic marketing, explain that virtually all of the business functions to be delivered by a service provider will be handled by the newly-created product suite. This suite is made possible by the integration of CommTech's FastFlow offer with ADC's Singularit.e offer. Singularit.e offers customer management, billing and service assurance capability, and FastFlow brings order management, provisioning, network inventory management and service activation to the table. The only functionality still missing is fault management, which is temporarily covered by ADC's partnership with Micromuse.

Fellows also describes a small overlap in order management between the two suites, but adds that the software development teams of the two companies are actively pursuing a plan eliminate the overlap and integrate the two suites in its next version of the product. The companies have not yet committed to a release date.

### **A Synergistic Fit**

While it is no secret that vendor mergers and acquisitions are increasing in number, not all of these trips to the altar will result in happy marriages. As for the ADC/CommTech alignment, Scott Donahue, program manager for Frost & Sullivan's Stratecast Partners, Menlo Park, CA, is bullish on the acquisition. "We believe this is a positive move for ADC. We think that it allows them to extend their offerings to the telecom vendors and make their platform more attractive."

Peter Jacobson, senior research analyst of communications software at New York-based Kaufman Bros., says, "I think it is a very favorable acquisition from an ADC perspective. It is very complementary to their acquisition of Saville Systems."

As to the strength and usefulness of the merged product line, Donahue relates, "The jury's still out right now on best-of-breed, or best-of-suite or single-vendor solutions. However, we think that now that ADC has a more complete suite, they're able to offer faster time-to-market and a more integrated platform to their potential customers. We think that will be a very attractive value proposition."

In spite of the service-line integration difficulties experienced recently by equipment vendors such as Lucent Technologies (see TelOSSource, November/December, 2000) Donahue insists that acquisition of software firms by hardware vendors will continue unabated.

He cautions, however, that corporate suitors need to carefully consider their mates. "If the equipment vendors purchase software, and then use the software as a device to sell more of their own boxes, we don't believe that strategy has a lot of merit. In fact we've seen that play out poorly in the past. However, if the hardware vendors can offer both a vendor-neutral

software platform and hardware as well, we feel that it would be an attractive value proposition to service provider customers."

"Donahue explains that Stratecast was aware of ADC's desire to make such a purchase. "CommTech is a very good company for ADC because of its focus on broadband customers, and that's where ADC's strength is, both in their hardware and software."