Carmelo Santana

Technical Lead • Platform Engineering & Developer Productivity
Newburgh, NY

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About

Hands-on technical lead with 20 years building web platforms and the tools teams use to ship them. I've led PHP, WordPress, and Laravel architecture for national campaigns and multi-tenant products. At Updater, I built AI-assisted workflows that turn design specifications into components with automated review checks.

Experience

Software Engineer (Contract), Updater, Inc remote August 2026 - Present
New York, NY
Built Project Frontdoor, the design-to-code workflow behind the new updater.com. It gives engineers shared components, design rules, and reusable AI skills for implementation and review.

Design Systems · AI Workflows · Developer Tooling · WordPress

- Helped engineers cut a design-to-component workflow from about a week to 1.5 hours.
- Designed and shipped a static delivery framework. In paired homepage benchmarks, Largest Contentful Paint fell from 172 ms to 108 ms and time to first byte fell from 82 ms to 3 ms.
- Built automated checks for component schemas, rendered output, accessibility, and performance. Preserved consent, analytics, and lead capture for partner launches including Starlink.
- Advise engineering and DevOps on AI tool selection and where to apply it in the delivery workflow.

Lead Platform Engineer, VCTRS remote March 2026 - November 2026
Sprakers, NY
Brought inventory, staff, documents, and vendor integrations into one Laravel workspace for automotive dealership groups as lead engineer on VCTRbase.

PHP · Laravel · Multi-Tenant SaaS · REST APIs · Docker

- Designed a plugin runtime that executes third-party code outside the platform core, with signed packages and API-only access.
- Scoped access across three tenant levels, 14 roles, and 60+ capabilities, with audit logs to make changes traceable.
- Delivered 19 plugins and a shared SDK for further development, alongside vendor APIs, Stripe billing, and encrypted storage for AI credentials.

Partner, Budson Valley hybrid August 2025 - May 2026
Newburgh, NY
Connected Hudson Valley dispensaries with local customers through a directory with live inventory and advertising tools. Founded and ran the platform, then sold it and handed it over in May 2026.

WordPress & AI Consultant, OneGuide remote September 2024 - October 2025
Denver, CO
Improved reliability for a WordPress platform serving 9,000+ users through load balancing and server redundancy. Made thousands of posts and custom records easier to search through an AI chatbot, alongside improvements to the support team's tools.

Consultant, Kalamata Capital Group remote December 2024 - March 2025
Bethesda, MD
Gave HR a central place for employee documents through an internal WordPress site, with Okta integration for employee access.

Migration Consultant, Antique Associates at West Townsend remote November 2023 - March 2024
West Townsend, MA
Migrated a legacy PHP e-commerce application and thousands of products to WordPress for a long established antiques business, preserving familiar features while making the site easier to manage.

Lead WordPress Engineer, Updater, Inc remote January 2022 - July 2023
New York, NY
Led PHP and WordPress engineering for national telecom campaigns, cutting delivery time by 50% and giving marketing control over A/B testing. Mentored two engineers through code review and pairing, and led the response to a plugin vulnerability that threatened data loss.

Product Developer, T R I M Agency remote June 2021 - January 2022
Fort Lauderdale, FL
Made thousands of products from several brands searchable in one WordPress experience through a React interface.

Lead Software Engineer, DealerX hybrid August 2010 - November 2020
Edgewater, NJ
Built and maintained PHP, WordPress, and MySQL systems that handled 20+ million inventory items annually. Connected inventory from 200+ dealerships to Volkswagen of America's national certified preowned vehicle portal through APIs and geographic search.

Selected Open Source

Coqui + php-agents, https://agentcoqui.com MIT February 2026
Built an open-source agent runtime with reusable skills, scheduled workflows, and approval checks. Its Packagist library, php-agents, powers Alpaca Bot and Kanboard integrations, with MCP tool discovery, structured outputs, and credential redaction.

PHP MCP Agent Runtime

wp-journeys, https://github.com/carmelosantana/wp-journeys MIT
Built a Playwright and TypeScript runner that discovers WordPress plugin surfaces, exercises them as six user roles, and checks for leftover data after uninstall. Reports missing PHP, browser, and network signals as failures.

TypeScript Playwright End-to-End Testing

MetaModels, https://github.com/carmelosantana/metamodels AGPL-3.0
Built a TypeScript gateway for self-hosted AI services with scoped API keys, per-model access controls, usage limits, and audit logs. Added encrypted upstream credentials and regression-tested recovery from interrupted database migrations.

TypeScript AI Infrastructure Access Control Docker Ollama ComfyUI

Technical Skills

- **Developer Productivity** - AI-assisted development, Reusable agent skills, Model Context Protocol (MCP), Design systems, Automated code review
- **Testing & Delivery** - Playwright, Schema validation, Accessibility testing, Performance profiling, GitHub Actions, Docker
- **Backend & Platforms** - PHP, Laravel, WordPress, TypeScript, Python, REST APIs, Multi-tenant SaaS, RBAC, Audit logging
- **Web & Data** - React, Next.js, ACF, WordPress Multisite, WP-CLI, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Redis, Elasticsearch

Education

Digital Art & Interactive Design, Dutchess Community College, October 2003 - June 2005