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HP Enterprise Gains on IBM with 'Mission Critical' Move Into Blockchain

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Just weeks after its entrance into the blockchain industry, Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) customers are already said to be testing the company's custom-created distributed ledger software.

Built in partnership with [R3](#), the implementation combines the consortium startup's signature Corda technology with HP's own NonStop infrastructure. In short, whereas a paid version of Corda [revealed](#) in May is designed for companies conducting high volumes of transactions, HPE's work leverages its own distributed database and messaging systems, upgrading them with Corda's capabilities.

But the proof-of-concept, [revealed formally last month](#), is perhaps best viewed as part of a bigger push within HP that, if successful, could see HPE make up ground it has lost to IBM and other competitors.

Not only is the current proof-of-concept being tested by customers using a "[mission critical](#)" platform for financial services, but there's more going on behind the scenes to bring this work to its clients and partners.

In a new interview, Markus Ogurek, HPE's financial services and insurance business lead, went so far as to say that once the tests are complete, [distributed ledger](#) technology could come to play a role in any enterprise application the company deems too important to fail.

He told CoinDesk:

"We will be using R3 and Corda through our partnership to address use cases in payments, identity management and possibly other use cases that banks are currently looking at."

Sparking interest

Key to advancement of this initiative, though, is buy-in from strategic partners, and according to Ogurek, progress is being made.

Specifically, since HPE spun out of HP as a separate entity last year, Ogurek said HPE's own blockchain work has begun attracting the attention of the firm's revamped strategic partners program.

"We have currently many requests from customers who are eager to discuss ... an end-to-end solution together with R3 Corda, and how they could consume or benefit from it as part of their exploration of the blockchain

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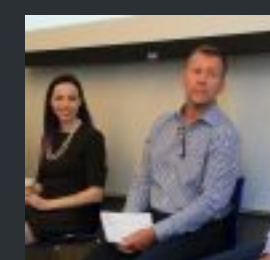
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programs," Ogurek said.

Going forward, Ogurek expects to keep up this momentum, aiming to formally announce the company's membership in the Enterprise Ethereum Alliance as soon as September.

HPE has been building up to this moment since at least February of this year, and the company has been working both in person and remotely with members of R3's global engineering team to customize the open-source version of Corda.

And that's in line with R3's own recommendations. The consortium's managing director Ricardo Correia compared the free version of Corda to "a fully functioning heartbeat," one without "all of the necessary vital organs attached to it."

To give it the "fully redundant" and scalable "organs" demanded by enterprises, users must either implement R3's enterprise services or build it themselves; it's the latter route that HPE is demonstrating with its project.

In this case, the firm hired R3 to help integrate the software with its distributed systems, the result of which was [revealed](#) at HPE Discover event in June.

"You either need Corda Enterprise, or you need to build your own," said Correia. "Which is what HP was trying to demonstrate."

Making up lost ground

Though Ogurek's statements hint at the ambitions behind the project, it's still early days for HPE's blockchain work. And even if customer tests go well, the firm arguably has a long way to go to make up ground it has lost.

Of the tech giants that have been most [disrupted](#) by the age of the internet and cloud computing, IBM has been the quickest to adopt blockchain, becoming a founding member of the Hyperledger blockchain consortium in 2015, and earlier this year, becoming the first member to have its own open-source platform go live with some hundreds of proofs-of-concept [estimated](#) to be in development.

By comparison, the Corda integration unveiled in June is Hewlett Packard's first major blockchain initiative to be publicized, and it only recently joined the R3 consortium.

Nevertheless, Ogurek said there are already "many" proofs-of concept in the works with HPE's customers, which he declined to name, with a few more being created internally using software developed with the Enterprise Ethereum Alliance.

At stake, though, is more than just bragging rights for the two companies which have have both [struggled](#) to to meet [revenue](#) goals in recent years.

Core to HPE's struggles are difficulties executing on its go-to-market strategy for hardware products, especially in the business critical systems unit that houses the NonStop hardware, according to a 2016 proxy report.

The [report](#) warned:

"If we cannot successfully execute our go-to-market strategy and continue to develop, manufacture and market innovative products, services and solutions, our business and financial performance may suffer."

[HP enterprise logo](#) image via Shutterstock

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