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Microsoft To Embrace Decentralized Identity Systems Built On Bitcoin And Other Blockchains

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Signage is displayed outside the Microsoft Corp. main campus in Redmond, Washington, U.S., on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2017 [+]

In a new post today, Microsoft announced their embrace of public blockchains, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, for use in decentralized identity systems. Initially, the longtime tech giant will support blockchain-based decentralized IDs (DIDs)

through the Microsoft Authenticator app.

Unlike the forms of identification used in the world today, a decentralized identity system is not controlled by any single, centralized institution such as a government or large tech company. The idea is that a decentralized identity system removes the possibility of censorship and gives an individual full control over their identity and reputation.

After looking at various types decentralized identity systems, Microsoft turned to public blockchains due to their ability to enable privacy, self-ownership, and permissionless access.

“After examining decentralized storage systems, consensus protocols, blockchains, and a variety of emerging standards we believe blockchain technology and protocols are well suited for enabling Decentralized IDs,” today’s announcement post from Microsoft says.

Identity is one of the long-touted use cases of blockchain technology that does not have anything to do with payments or currency. In today’s post, Microsoft points to Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Litecoin as three specific platforms that are suitable foundations for DIDs.

Dozens of blockchain projects related to identity have popped up over the years, with Blockstack ID and uPort being two of the most well-known examples.

Microsoft plans to work with DID method implementations, which follow a specific standard outlined by a W3C working group. However, the tech giant has not disclosed specific DID method integrations at this time.