NEWS ANALYSIS

The top blockchain jobs you need to know about

Blockchain development is the hottest IT job skill today; knowing what companies want is key to landing a high-paying and challenging job working with the still-emerging distributed ledger technology.

By Lucas Mearian

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Blockchain development already tops some lists of the hottest skills in the IT job market, and thousands of blockchain jobs in the U.S. are now up for grabs.
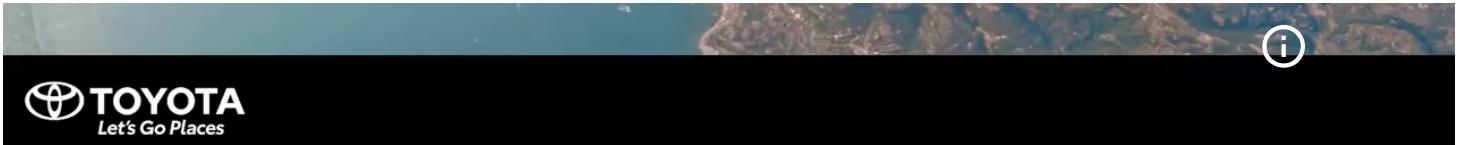
But what kind of blockchain jobs are companies posting, and how good is the pay?

About 23% of larger enterprises are now actively working on Blockchain apps and they will typically hire a project manager, one or two application designers, and two to four developers – all with prior blockchain experience, according to Janco Associates, a management consulting firm that conducts regular salary surveys.

[Further reading: Why finding blockchain talent is hard, and what to do about it]

Not surprisingly, salaries for blockchain positions are typically higher than in other areas of expertise since there are few qualified candidates, according to Janco CEO Victor Janulaitis.

"It is not unusual for this group of professionals to form as a team and even go to a new position in a new organization as a unit. We have even found some 'contracting groups' that get hired as a unit for a blockchain application – especially if they are dealing with the same industry/application sets," Janulaitis said via email.

How hot is the market in 2018? The job of developing blockchain distributed ledgers for businesses was recently ranked first among the top 20 fastest-growing job skills – and postings for workers with those skills grew more than 200% last year.

The most promising jobs include more than just developers and engineers, according to research by BusinessStudent.com — a site that reviews business schools and their courses.

[Learn Java from beginning concepts to advanced design patterns in this

comprehensive 12-part course!]

Last month, BusinessStudent.com ranked the top future blockchain positions. And the list begins with blockchain intern, a seemingly low-level position that shouldn't be scoffed at.

For programmers and developers who want to get their foot in the door in a blockchain technical career, getting that kind of internship with a startup or established company can easily be the ticket to success, according to Henry Steele, managing editor of BusinessStudent.com.

Here's a look at the top jobs in the field at the moment.

1. Entry level and internship positions

These jobs can range in pay from $15 to $30 per hour, especially on the West Coast, Steele noted. The duties for interns can vary, but might include designing and developing blockchain distributed ledgers based on both proprietary blockchain and open-source platforms, such as Linux. Private or "permissioned" blockchains will be a key focus as most companies today are seeking to centrally manage distributed ledger technology (DLT) to create transactional networks for supply chain management and other business applications that are either internal or kept among business partners.

Entry-level positions will also likely include developing blockchain pilots and proofs of concept, as most companies are only in the test phases for DLT solutions.

Technical skills most coveted include: NodeJS, Go RESTful, APIs, React, Java, C++, Solidity, Truffle, CSS and HTML.

2. Blockchain project managers

Project managers will have to convert a company's needs in common English into technical language, and then from the blockchain developers' language back into regular English.

"The project manager is usually the first person in an organization who is contacted when a company wants to bring blockchain in house and adapt it to their technology platforms," Steele wrote. "The blockchain project manager is tasked with planning and supervising the execution of the blockchain project."

3. Blockchain developers.

Developers will likely have the greatest career opportunities in the nascent blockchain field; financial services, governments and tech companies are all seeking to find ways blockchain can better serve their clients.

Technology skills needed as a developer include: Microsoft SQL Server, Visual Studio, .NET, MVC, AJAX, SQL, C, C++, C#, Javascript, Node.js, JQuery, SOAP, REST, FTP, HTML, XML, XSLT, XCOD, Neural-networks, Regression, Agile Scrum, MYSQL.

4. Blockchain quality engineer

This position is responsible for ensuring quality in all areas of blockchain development, such as automation frameworks and tests, manual testing and dashboards, "all of which works to support mobile, web and platform engineering."

A quality engineer will need to research and advise on blockchain tools and develop quality assurance (QA) automated test standards, as well as define, write and implement test automation strategies for load performance tests. Applicants may also need an engineering management MBA degree, Steele said.

5. Blockchain legal consultant or attorney

This position is responsible for advising companies on how to structure and govern initial coin offerings, some of which are now coming under greater regulatory scrutiny. Attornies will also be tasked with developing legal partnerships and contracts as blockchain technology offers a business automation tool known as "smart contracts," which are self-executing based on previously agreed terms.

"For example, a recent blockchain attorney job posting was searching for an attorney who could design legal partnerships that would connect the crypto ecosystem with the existing financial structure, and would support various merger-and-acquisition activities, such as negotiating and drafting legal agreements and performing due diligence," Steele wrote.

6. Blockchain web designer

Startups and even established companies often include the use of cryptocurrencies when launching blockchains, and there will be a greater need for websites to inform customers what a company is offering. A blockchain web designer will need to come up with original concepts and "mind blowing" user interfaces.

A recent job posting for a User Interface (UI) designer, for example, wanted a professional who could create a UI design with Sketch, PS and Figma that would work in both mobile and Web applications.

"It required [that] the applicant possess excellent communications skills and be able to interface effectively with content, operations, and marketing teams," Steele wrote.

7. Blockchain engineer

This job envisions understanding a company's tech needs and create the blockchain apps that address those needs.

"You may work on implementing assets and accelerators; set up company infrastructure to use Ethereum and bitcoin, and may analyze code and organizer blockchain programming training for new employees," Steele wrote.

Blockchain engineers should have a high level of skill in: Java, Hyperledger Fabric, Ripple, Solidity, Python, bitcoin, Oracle Identity, as well as access management solutions.

WHAT IS BLOCKCHAIN?
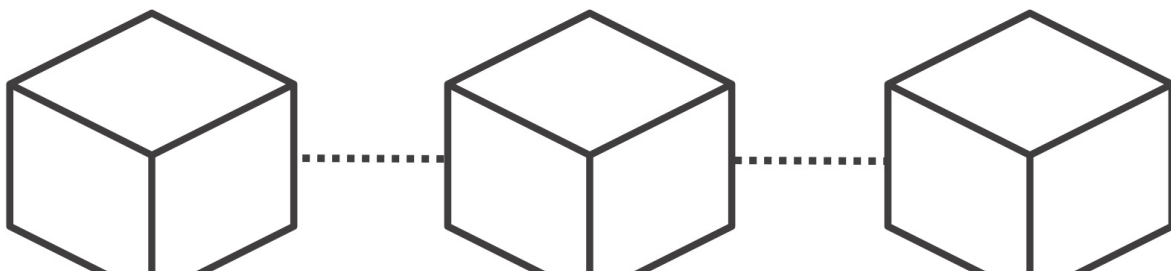
IT INSIGHTS

What is blockchain technology?

Middle management and freelance jobs on the rise

Large organizations are also planning to beef up their middle management as they focus on Big Data, blockchain and smartphone and tablet connectivity, according to Janco. Positions in the highest demand are associated with e-commerce, app development security, big data, distributed/mobile system project management and quality control.

Blockchain development is the hottest skill in the freelance job market today, growing more than 6000% since this time last year and putting it on pace to be the new "cloud" of the 21st Century, according to a report published by UpWork, a freelance job website. The average rate of pay for a blockchain freelancer is $65 an hour but rates can be as high as $250 per hour, according to UpWork.

According to the latest numbers, there were 5,743 mostly full-time job openings for blockchain skills posted over a year's time span, according to job data analytics firm Burning Glass Technologies; that represented a growth of 320% growth over the previous year.

Blockchain Job Postings by Year


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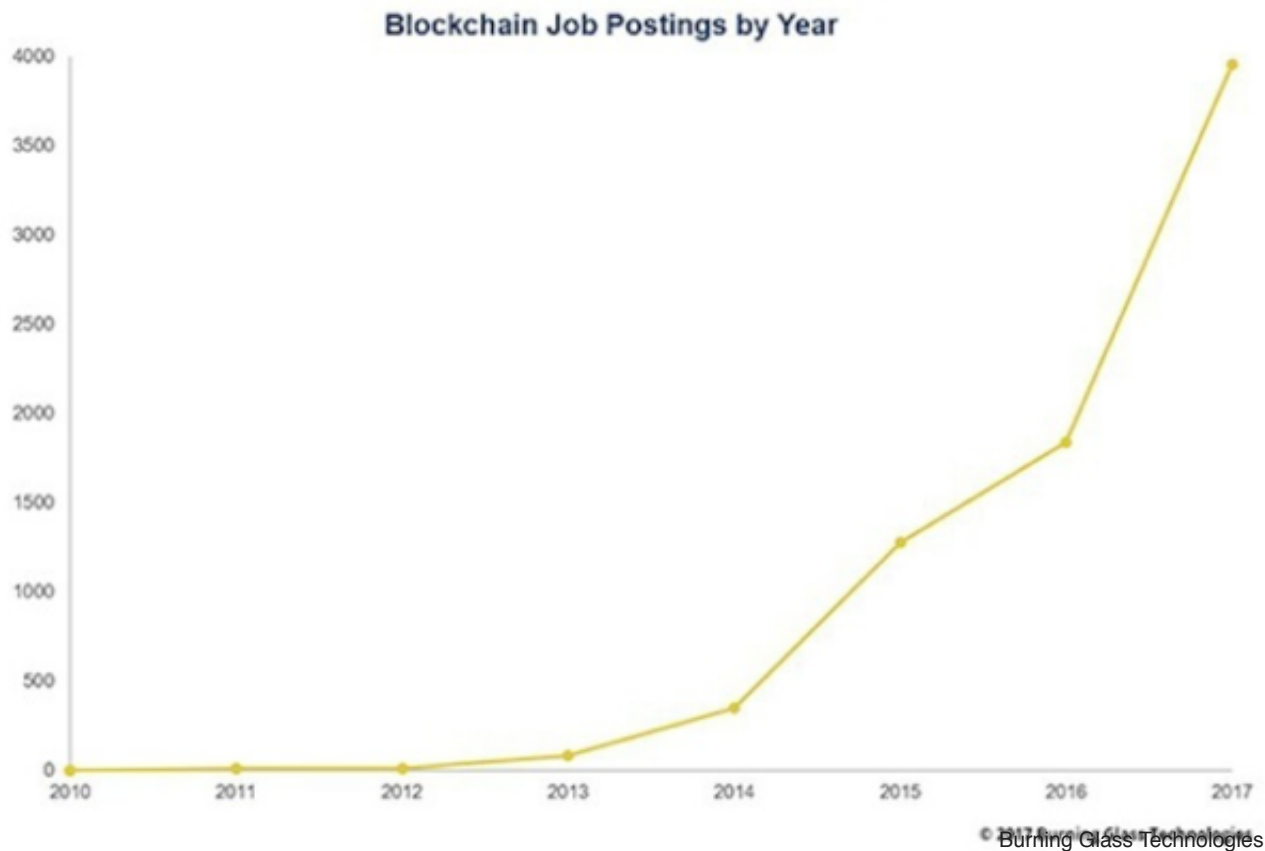
The skills gap translates into higher pay

People with experience using specific blockchain iterations such as Solidity and Hyperledger Composer are in even higher demand – and that demand is increasing steadily, said Eric Piscini, a principal in the technology and banking practices at Deloitte Consulting LLP.

"This is the number one thing I have in mind when I wake up in the morning: 'Where will I find more engineers to join the team,'" he said via email.

In addition to established companies such as Deloitte, 2,359 blockchain startups have posted 1,749 jobs, according to AngelList, a website for investors and job-seekers looking for work at startups.

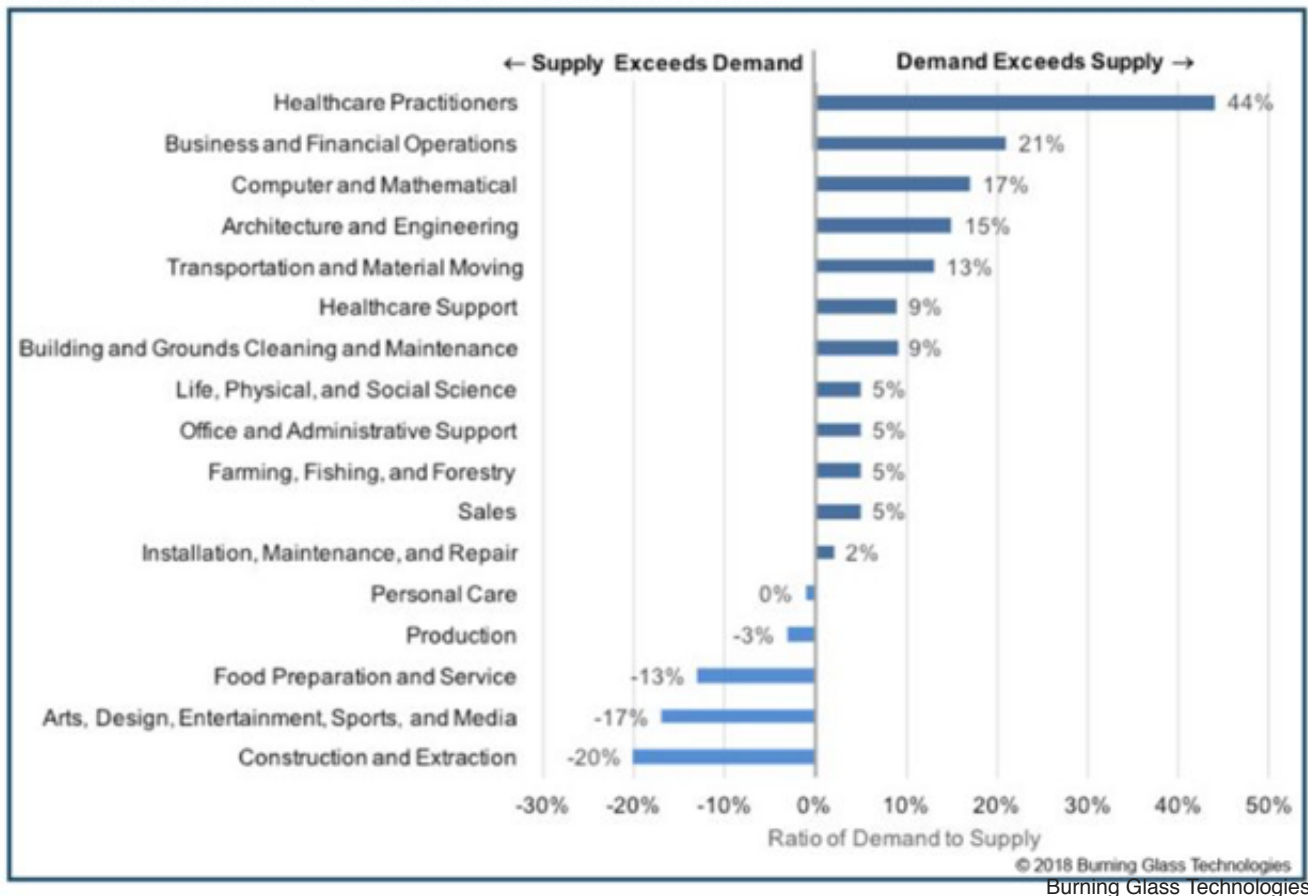Even as companies are posting a plethora of blockchain jobs, there is a dearth of talent to fill them.
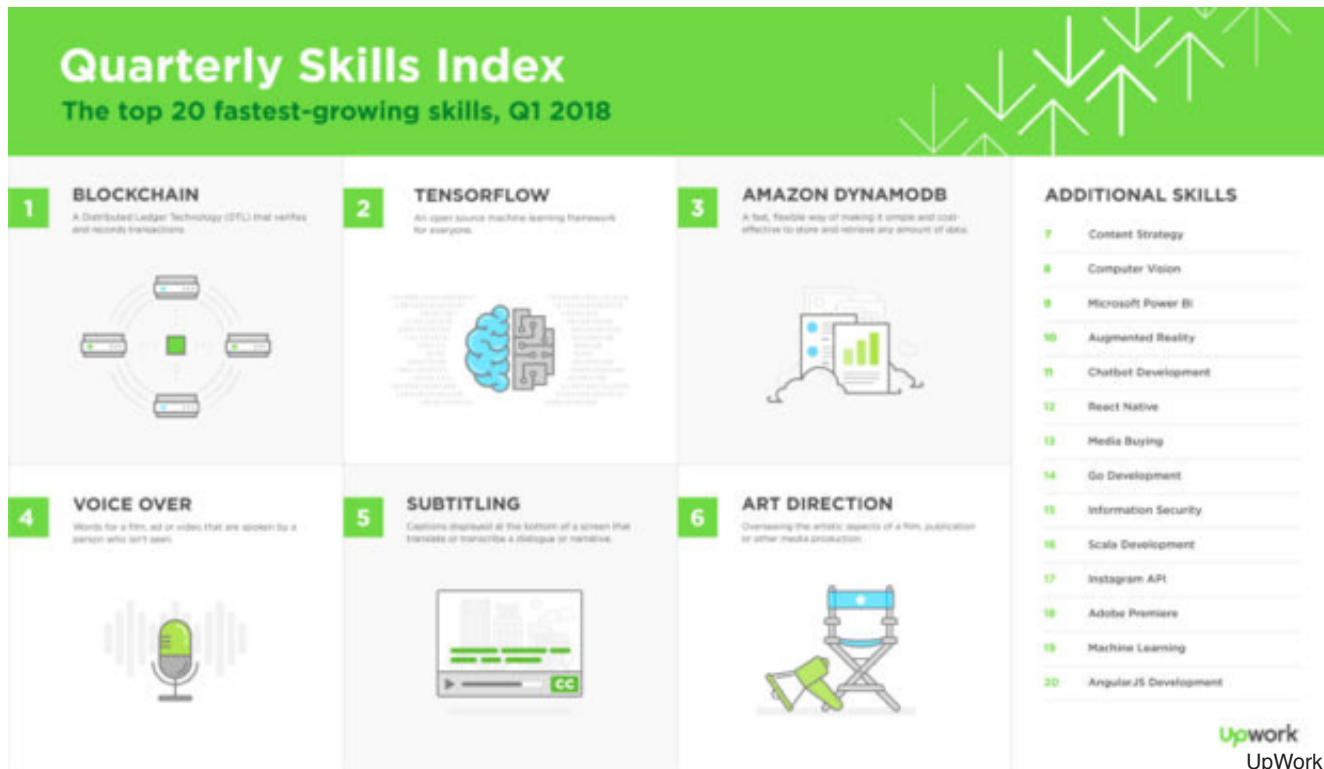
According to Upwork, 53% of hiring managers surveyed cite access to skills as their biggest hiring challenge, and the majority (59%) are already utilizing flexible talent.

In general, demand for workers with computer/mathematical skills exceeded supply by 17% this year, according to Burning Glass Technologies.

DEMAND/SUPPLY RATIO BY OCCUPATION

← Supply Exceeds Demand

Demand Exceeds Supply →

Occupation	Ratio
Healthcare Practitioners	44%
Business and Financial Operations	21%
Computer and Mathematical	17%
Architecture and Engineering	15%
Transportation and Material Moving	13%
Healthcare Support	9%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	9%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	5%
Office and Administrative Support	5%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	5%
Sales	5%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	2%
Personal Care	0%
Production	-3%
Food Preparation and Service	-13%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	-17%
Construction and Extraction	-20%

Ratio of Demand to Supply

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Burning Glass Technologies

As a result of the imbalance between needs and skills, the salaries for blockchain developer or engineer positions are accordingly high; median salaries in the U.S. hover around $170,000 a year. That compares to general software developers, whose annual median pay is $105,000, according to Matt Sigelman, CEO of Burning Glass Technologies.

Blockchain job growth exceeded 2000% for three quarters in a row on Upwork.com, and in the first quarter of the year it saw more than 6000% year-over-year growth, making it the fastest-growing skill out of more than 5,000 skills on the site.

"In just a few years, more than 30% of the workforce's essential skills will be new. We're seeing that shift take place on Upwork, where new and emerging skills like blockchain surface on a monthly basis," said Stephane Kasriel, CEO of Upwork.

"If growth continues to accelerate at that pace and more companies unveil their own offerings like IBM has and Salesforce plans to, blockchain is shaping up to be the next major disruptive technology," he added.

Senior Reporter Lucas Mearian covers financial services IT (including blockchain), healthcare IT and enterprise mobile issues (including mobility management, security, hardware and apps).

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