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Hyperledger Director Draws Dividing Line With 'Umbrella' Statement

Michael del Castillo (@DelRayMan) | Published on September 19, 2016 at 14:10 BST

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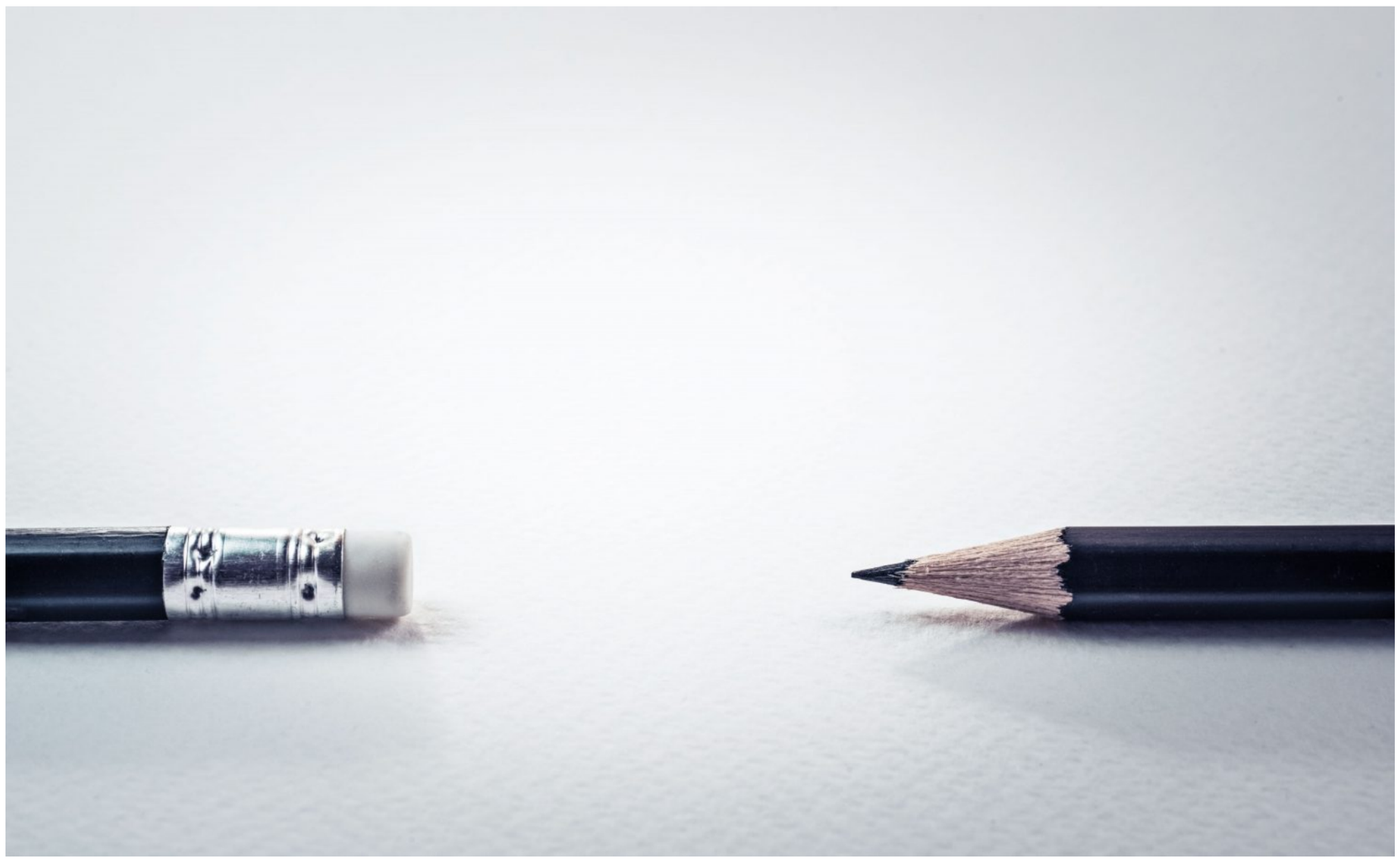

Brian Behlendorf has made a living out of helping others play well together — and his work with blockchain group Hyperledger builds on this expertise.

But before that can happen with this latest open-source project, the founder of the Apache Software Foundation set out to make sure that the more than 80 existing members of Hyperledger know what they've signed up for.

In a blog post he published last week entitled "Meet Hyperledger: An 'Umbrella,' for Open Source Blockchain & Smart Contract Technologies," Behlendorf laid out in explicit terms Hyperledger's mission and the services it intends to provide.

In conversation, Behlendorf explained that he intended the post to be more than just a recruiting tool for new members, but a line in the sand to clearly delineate where Hyperledger is going.

Behlendorf told CoinDesk:

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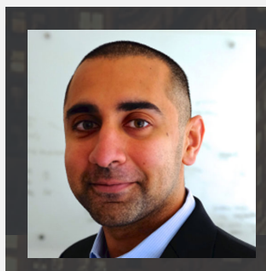

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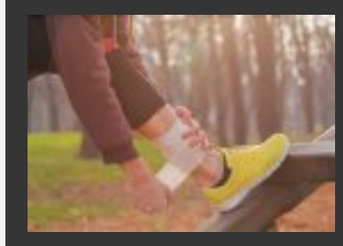
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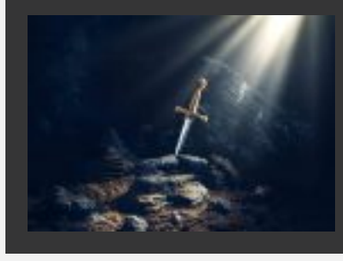
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> *"It becomes a Litmus test for those who can see that they like the vision, or those who want to peel away."*

First announced in December 2015, Hyperledger is a consortium-style working group committed to building better blockchain solutions for businesses.

A collection of industry veterans like the DTCC and startups like Digital Asset Holdings, Hyperledger is a pact that finds them laying down their differences to help build an ecosystem with the potential to streamline services and save money for members and customers.

In the post, Behlendorf described how Hyperledger might "forge common ground" and accelerate adoption by reducing "needlessly duplicated" processes.

But he added:

> *"Perhaps most importantly, we can directly address what many have observed as a major challenge with the existing open source blockchain efforts – tremendous levels of tribalism amongst developers."*

Under my umbrella

What Behlendorf set out to do was create a new way for Hyperledger to envision itself. Instead of an interwoven fabric of codebases and companies, he foresees an overarching, but separate group of collaborators.

In preparation for the "Umbrella" article, Behledorf said he interviewed developers and other employees of member companies that might otherwise form tribal connections.

What he learned was that even with companies that were heavily committed to the IBM-led fabric project within Hyperledger or the Intel-led Sawtooth Lake, the participants were eager to onboard new partners.

"Once I started asking questions I found there was much convergence," he said.

To help codify that convergence, Hyperledger last month elected a new technical steering committee that will oversee member contributions, and manage the group's trajectory. One of the group's first lines of business was to agree on three defining characteristics of Hyperledger.

According to Behlendorf's post, the technical steering committee now defines Hyperledger as a group of developers who are responsible for a set of "artifacts" (including one or more Git repositories); a bug tracking database and a wiki; and a dedicated space within Hyperledger to describe how each individual project within the organization relates to the community at large.

Staying dry

When Behlendorf was hired in May, he set out to bring clarity to who would contribute to the underlying codebase and make it easier to onboard new members. Since then, the membership has more than doubled, and now he's focused on applying lessons he's learned managing ostensible competitors at the Apache Foundation.

With more than 300 "top-level" software projects, the foundation's members balance having a distinct charter, developer community, roadmap and development processes, with using the same collaboration tools, the intellectual property framework and process for reporting to the board of directors.

In August, Hyperledger added 17 new members to its consortium, including Samsung SDS, Quickbooks developer Intuit and heavy machinery manufacturer Sany, bringing the total to 81 members. Plans for Hyperledger's first block explorer were also revealed last month, an effort co-created by the DTCC, IBM and Intel.

Going forward, Behlendorf made clear the path to collaboration between Hyperledger members:

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> *"They either merge together or they find a way to usefully differentiate. Sometimes that's a hard message to get across when they see it as a horse race."*

Umbrella image via Shutterstock

Hyperledger

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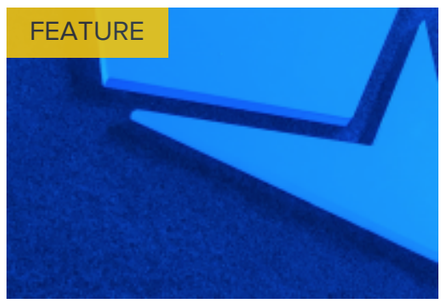

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