

East Africa: IBM Declares Call to Arms to Build Blockchain Ecosystem With Hyperledger Fabric V1

By Tamlin Magee

IBM is dedicating significant resources to the creation of what it terms a 'blockchain ecosystem' and is calling on companies across all industries to join forces in the development of this 'business network'.

Put simply, the blockchain is a kind of ledger that tracks the provenance of data and objects digitally. It is most well known outside of the business world as the backbone for cryptocurrency bitcoin, and banks in particular are paying a lot of attention to the technology.

IBM has been involved since day one in the Linux Foundation's Hyperledger project, with the backing of other big business interests including Hitachi, Intel, and Fujitsu. Hyperledger seeks to promote and unify blockchain through a network of businesses that agree on using one decentralised public ledger. The companies involved are knocking their heads together to decide on open standards.

Today's announcement, IBM hopes, will be a step forward in creating such a network. In a statement, SVP for IBM Industry Platforms Bridget Van Kralingen said: "The future growth and adoption of blockchain is reliant upon building a strong ecosystem. Business networks will only reach critical mass when innovators, industry experts and infrastructure providers come together in new ways, to reinvent how business transactions happen."

It is, then, a call to arms - and an array of businesses whose central premise is based on blockchain technology have already signed up to the project. These include EY, Everledger, Gliding Eagle, HACERA, The Hive, IntellectEU, Loyyal, Mooti Blockchain Digital Identity, Netki, Sensify Security, and Skuchain. All of these companies have pledged to use the Hyperledger Fabric v1.0, and IBM's blockchain experts will provide office-hour troubleshooting to iron out any teething problems.

Speaking at a roundtable event held in Paddington, London this week, Rob Smith, Worldwide 'Blockchain Garage leader at IBM, detailed his department's one-year history in bringing the project to life. IBM Bluemix garages for blockchain aims to help accelerate the design and development of blockchain applications, and to make blockchain a reality for businesses, in IBM's words.

This latest effort by the Hyperledger project, and including IBM, involved changing the language itself - there's now a new language around a network of peer nodes, so that every participant in a business network needs a peer node to connect in. These nodes can then form what IBM is calling a "network of networks".

"You can join your company to other companies, and several other companies, in the same Hyperledger network," Smith said, something which was not possible before.

This video from John Wolpert, global blockchain products director at IBM, goes into detail to explain the Hyperledger Fabric V1.

There are membership services - the people in the chain that verify the other participant is part of the business network - and then 'committers', which say that they have received information from the blockchain and put that order onto the ledger. Finally, 'consenting' machines agree on the order of that blockchain ledger.

"So you've still got a useful ledger, it still has the provenance, it still has quality, but it now means that you and I can share a private chain or a public chain," Smith said. "We can have one piece of a smart contract between us, which I initiated on my node with a membership service. It will go into the consenter network, to say order this, put it in the right order of transactions, and then it will appear on your node, in your ledger."

IBM's hopes for a blockchain ecosystem, the company says, will be an open environment where businesses can collaborate "on shared or complementary technical and business visions using the Hyperledger Fabric, and access education and development support." According to IBM, Hyperledger Fabric V1 will "provide a modular approach, much like the network-of-networks model of the internet".

Copyright © 2016 CIO East Africa. All rights reserved. Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com). To contact the copyright holder directly for corrections — or for permission to republish or make other authorized use of this material, click [here](#).

AllAfrica publishes around 1,000 reports a day from more than 140 news organizations and over 500 other institutions and individuals, representing a diversity of positions on every topic. We publish news and views ranging from vigorous opponents of governments to government publications and spokespersons. Publishers named above each report are responsible for their own content, which AllAfrica does not have the legal right to edit or correct.

Articles and commentaries that identify allAfrica.com as the publisher are produced or commissioned by AllAfrica. To address comments or complaints, please [Contact us](#).



AllAfrica is a voice of, by and about Africa - aggregating, producing and distributing 1,000 news and information items daily from over 140 African news organizations and our own reporters to an African and global public. We operate from Cape Town, Dakar, Lagos, Monrovia, Nairobi and Washington DC.

© 2016 AllAfrica

AllAfrica - All the Time