DIGITAL IDEAS

Wait for New Crypto Offerings as SC lifts Ban

Sanghamitra.P
@timesinternet.in

Cryptocurrency companies such as Bank of Hodlers and WazirX have started working on new offerings following a Supreme Court order that overturned a RBI notification restricting banking access for virtual currency trading.

Darshan Bathija, cofounder of Bengaluru-based Bank of Hodlers, said the company was building multiple offerings for consumers.

"To start with, we are integrating with RazorPay and Cashfree this week, which will be our payment gateway. After that, we will start focusing and enabling peer-to-peer transactions," he said.

The company will also enable UPI transactions for cryptocurrency in the next few months, Bathija added.

"With the banking ban lifted, we can now innovate around these offerings and also work with banks who were ready to integrate with our products two years back," he said. A number of startups are working on various innovative products, said Akshay Aggarwal, CEO of Blocumen Studios, an enabler of the cryptocurrency ecosystem.

A few have raised concerns about driving mass fin deals through crypto

"One is working on a wallet-based system which will enable users to transact on crypto in e-commerce sites. Another one is looking at enabling people to use the idle processing power of their mobile phones in exchange for earning crypto," he said.

Mumbai-based cryptocurrency exchange WazirX is also talking to fintech players to see how the wallet can be integrated with other platforms to drive transactions. It has now enabled users to deposit and withdraw in fiat currency to buy or sell crypto through the platform.

Code, Share and Even Hire

Tech community events are not only becoming platforms to solve challenges, but are also turning into hunting grounds to recruit people with niche skills, write **Priyanka Sangani** and **Anandi Chandrasekhar**

At a recent Amazon Web Services (AWS) community event in Pune, about 600 participants lined up to learn how developers solved critical challenges, such as reducing storage costs on the cloud and faster ways to shift applications from an on-premise server to the cloud.

Events like these are rapidly gaining in popularity across the tech community, as people become more active in sharing knowledge.

There is, however, more than just knowledge sharing taking place at these large scale gatherings.

In the last few years, tech communities have turned into a hunting ground for companies looking to recruit people with niche skills, as well as an opportunity for job seekers.

While offers are rarely made at the event itself, both sides find it easier to scope out available options.

Companies have a better chance of finding the right talent at these events since they are often targeted at a particular tech community, says Prashanth HN, chief technology officer of WheelsBox, an upcoming startup in the automobiles space.

Prashanth, an AWS Community Hero, has been actively involved in participating and organising AWS community events, where companies typically set up booths with games or problems for people to solve and start a conversation.

"One of the reasons sponsors come on board is their hiring drives. People will go to the booth and they start the conversation with the right set of people. Finding the right talent is hard and this is a good platform targeted at the right audience…," he says.

AWS has over 30,000 members in its user groups across 15 cities. It also runs a Heroes program where influential people within the community are given additional access to amplify their reach and build their personal brand. All its community events are organised and run by volunteers, but the funding comes mostly through sponsorships, with ticket sales also contributing.

Last year, AWS held four community day events, and is targeting over a dozen in 2020. Apart from an annual community day in different cities, there are also regular smaller-scale meetups.

"In the last three years, AWS communities have grown into something substantially large with about 15 user groups across India," says Madhusudan Shekar, Head – Solutions Architecture, Startups, Amazon Internet Services. "We have users and developers who champion the need to come together, and most run a meetup every month. This is also a great talent hunting ground, so a lot of sponsors come in."

> If you're active and contributing to open source code and working collaboratively on projects with people across the globe, you are enriching yourself and are making yourself visible in the community
>
> **MANEESH SHARMA**
> Country Manager, GitHub

About 80% of participants at such events are professionals, while the rest comprise entrepreneurs, freelancers and students.

For them, looking for work opportunities is as important as staying abreast of evolving technology.

"When you think about meetups, there are many that happen for different interest groups. There could be meetups on Kubernetes, Docker or Python itself, so definitely, you have a VP Engineering or CTOs who are key participants in most of these meetups and people get a chance to meet them. It is definitely a good route to recruit," says Maneesh Sharma - Country Manager – GitHub, the world's largest online open source developer community now owned by Microsoft.

The way companies hire technical talent is changing. There is now greater emphasis on actual skills than qualifications.

Participating in hackathons and being active members of a tech community offer people an opportunity to build their personal brand and convey a clear message to potential recruiters that they are on top of what is happening in the industry. For students, events like these are a good way to understand companies that are working within a specific technology area.

And, sponsoring such events has a signalling effect - that you are serious about the technology, says Zainab Bawa, CEO, HasGeek, which runs several technology events in India.

Aawaz.com, a platform that hosts podcasts and spoken-word audio on-demand, has recruited candidates from such community events, says co-founder Sreeraman Thiagarajan, adding that the talent at such events is usually entry-level and not senior executives.

Hiring tends to be high on the agenda for a lot of participants during tech community events, says Gautam Rege, cofounder of Josh Software, which actively promotes programming languages Go and Ruby. Josh has been closely associated with organising and sponsoring events on Ruby for almost a decade.

"As a company sponsoring the event, you send out a clear signal that you are supporter of the community and a thought driver, which helps in building your brand," Rege says.

It also helps companies stay in tune with specific technology and market requirements and hire accordingly, he adds.

As part of its recruitment process, Josh also looks at a potential employee's GitHub profile to see how active she is within the open source community.

"If you look at the open source community — if you're active and contributing to open source code and working collaboratively on projects with people across the globe, you are enriching yourself and are making yourself visible in the community," Sharma of GitHub says

Many specialised technology events end up attracting senior talent, who often tend to stay away from the more regular meetups, providing them a platform to network and look around for opportunities.

These events are a great conduit for people, especially women, who have taken a break from work to return, says Bhuvaneswari Subramani, Director Engineering Operations at Infor and an AWS Community Hero who often participates in tech community gatherings.

"This gives them a chance to see what's happening and discuss the certification and learning curve. I have a lot of people pinging me independently to ask for suggestions," she says.

Beyond hiring, community events also play an important role in peer reviews, according to Bawa of HasGeek. While the medical fraternity can publish its work in peer reviewed journals and be validated for new work, there is no such platform for peer review and validation of technology.

"This creates a space for practitioners to talk about how they did something — like how an ecommerce business is building its recommendation engine," she says.

Priyanka.Sangani@timesgroup.com

> In the last three years, the AWS communities have grown into something substantially large with about 15 user groups across India
>
> **MADHUSUDAN SHEKAR,**
> Head - Solutions Architecture, Startups, Amazon Internet Services

> As a company sponsoring the event, you send out a clear signal that you are supporter of the community and a thought driver, which helps in building your brand
>
> **GAUTAM REGE,** Cofounder, Josh Software

> The talent at such events is usually entry-level resources who have just graduated from college and not senior executives
>
> **SREERAMAN THIAGARAJAN,**
> Cofounder, Aawaz.com

ILLUSTRATIONS: ANIRBAN BORA

India Manufacturing Inc Charts Digital Priorities

An EY study titled **Will the Next Transformation in Manufacturing be led by Digital?** two-thirds of the manufacturing firms in India ranked big data and predictive analytics as the top investment priority in technology in the next 1-2 years. This was followed by sensors and Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and cloud/integrated platforms along with robotic process automation.

"Concepts such as Industry 4.0 and Smart Factory, which interconnect the shop-floor ecosystem through emerging technologies, are now a reality. Digitisation continues to transform manufacturing processes around the world leveraging technologies such as IIoT, artificial intelligence, advanced robotics, etc," said Ashish Nanda, EY India Supply Chain Leader. The key factors driving digital manufacturing in India include predictive maintenance, connected supply chain, reduced energy consumption, production optimisation, lower price of sensors and high computing needs and connected customers However, it is still early days. "Going by the success stories though, it is perhaps essential for manufacturing organisations in India to first understand and then embark on this digital transformational journey to remain competitive and attain world-class status," he said.

The study is based on interactions with about 50 leaders of large manufacturing organisations.

60% said they did not have a clear cut strategy for digital manufacturing

63% are somewhat prepared with hardware infrastructure with basic software in place for data capture and process monitoring

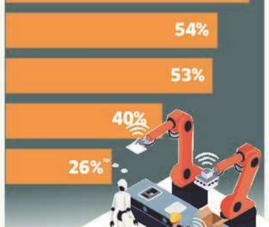
49% are in the process of enhancing their digital infrastructure (hardware and software) and workforce by providing training

IN WHAT TECHNOLOGIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO INVEST IN IN THE NEXT ONE OR TWO YEARS

Big Data and Predictive Analytics	66%
Sensors and IIoT	63%
Cloud/Integrated Platforms	33%
Robotic Process Automation	33%
Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning	31%

WHAT AREAS DO YOU THINK WOULD YOUR FIRM BENEFIT THE MOST WHILE ADOPTING DIGITAL MANUFACTURING

Overall monitoring and visualisation of KPIs	62%
Track and trace the product across the value chain	54%
Improving the quality - reduce rejection and rework	53%
Optimisation in the process using additional sensors	40%
Preventive and predictive maintenance	26%



IDENTIFY THE KEY CHALLENGES AND RISKS ASSOCIATED IN ADOPTING DIGITAL MANUFACTURING

Unclear economic benefits from digital investments	66%
Deficiency in people's skills on tech, analytics, cybersecurity, etc	46%
Lack of understanding of the impact of digital manufacturing	43%
Insufficient tech infrastructure in terms of hardware & software	31%
Risks associated with data privacy & information security	20%
Lack of a clear vision & leadership support	11%

Co is looking at more business from firms using cognitive tech for core business

Core Business Transformation Driving Services Growth at IBM

Priyanka.Sangani@timesgroup.com

Companies using cognitive technologies for core business functions rather than just peripheral ones are helping drive most new growth at IBM Global Services, a senior executive said.

"The end-to-end transformation of mission critical activities is driving a lot of our growth around the world. In banking, it would be about the core payment solutions, or the supply chain in manufacturing," said Mark Foster, senior vice-president, IBM Services and Global Business Services.

All companies were becoming technology and platform companies in their own right, as they figure out what business platforms they will compete on and the technology that will drive their businesses.

"We are helping build those new platforms and transform every process using some combination of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and enabled massively by cloud-based architectures," he said.

In India, a similar transformation is under way, with demand coming from multiple business transformation requirements.

Berger Paints in India has worked with IBM to create a virtual reality experience on its consumer apps to drive outreach and engagement. Users can look at multiple options in 3D, helping them make informed buying decisions. This helps reduce sales convergence, in addition to increasing brand engagement.

The other change, said Foster, has been towards smaller engagements.

"It's about delivering value on more mission-critical and holistic solutions in shorter timeframes rather than a big transformation journey. That's the way clients are looking to partner," he said.

In India, demand is also being driven by the shift towards automation.

"Industries are looking beyond their market to expand their portfolio and look at adjacencies and create new value streams and business models," said Kamal Singhani, Managing Partner, Global Business Services, IBM India/South Asia.

Mark Foster, Senior VP, IBM Services and Global Business Services

The company is working with Sriram Transport Finance (STF), an NBFC with a strong presence in commercial vehicle financing, on its digital transformation exercise. With the segment under stress, STF was looking to enhance fee income and increase productivity of existing relationship executives, among other things.

IBM helped it create a platform that would enable executives cross-sell and be more productive as well as target the allied needs of the client. This, in turn, would increase potential fee from customers and help disrupt the traditional financing industry.

The software major had to make employees ready for the shift in technology, in order to help clients leverage the technology. IBM's services business employs 250,000 people.