

Exclusive: Blockchain Centre CEO Says Cryptocurrency Will Render Some Bank Services

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Jordan Major March 23, 2022

In an exclusive interview with Finbold, Maurukas opined that he is pleased that regulators are actively discussing solutions that benefit all participants in the space, as opposed to

disregarding it as they did in 2017/2018. Given all the recent attention blockchain and crypto tech has received recently, he states it is no surprise that authorities are taking it 'more seriously.'

Maurukas also shared his thoughts on the banks and how they will cope with the competition of crypto in the future. According to the CEO, some of the banks' offered services will become completely irrelevant in the long term.

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What were the key goals behind launching the Blockchain Centre?

"There are a ton of companies that want to enter the Blockchain and crypto space. To evolve the technology, to harness its benefits for their existing products, or simply to build something that hasn't been built before. But a lot of companies often get discouraged upon discovering just how much they don't know about IDOs, exchange listings, tokenomic models, or finding partners. So, that's why we've created Blockchain Centre, we act as a cross-road hub directing companies to where they need to go.

We already worked a lot with Animoca Brands and their partner network. So, we've harnessed this partner network and simply expanded on it. Blockchain Centre now is like a fast-pass ticket to the Blockchain era, creating partnerships amongst existing companies and furthering Blockchain mass adoption by helping new companies enter the space."

How are you helping companies enter the Blockchain space?

“We’re like the largest database of partnerships able to connect anyone across the globe. There are a lot of projects that don’t necessarily need to build their in-house teams or technologies – they can take advantage and build on top of already existing infrastructure. We help them find those partners, we help with marketing and even connect them with the right IDO platforms to raise funds. Overall, I think of Blockchain Centre as an experienced mentor – helps companies get started and make as few mistakes as possible.”

In your experience, how has the blockchain technology sector evolved in the last few years? What’s the major development?

“User experience. I mean back in the early days it was brutal, using bare bone wallets, manually calculating gas, no safeguards or double-checks to protect your funds. The number of hoops, you had to go through just to make your first transactions, kind of made Blockchain look like a circus for most. Now, you’ve got companies building Layer 2 super localized solutions, that are easy to use and good for a specific job. User Interfaces have advanced so much that first-time users don’t feel overwhelmed and they’re able to explore the technology further. Instead of panicking every time, they interact with Blockchain tech.”

What is your relationship with regulators and how have things changed with them since the major crypto bull run in 2017/2018?

“Regulators are a welcome addition to the Blockchain ecosystem. While everything CAN be decentralized and self-governed, until every blockchain user doesn’t fully understand how all of it works – there are gaps to take advantage of those less knowledgeable. I’m happy that regulators are engaging in active dialogue and working towards finding beneficial solutions for all parties involved. Instead of just kinda ignoring the space as they did in 2017/2018. With blockchain and crypto tech getting so much attention recently, it’s no surprise that the whole space is being taken more seriously and regulators can’t ignore it anymore.”

What do you consider are the main challenges related to the cryptocurrency sector, excluding regulatory issues?

“The lack of unity. Everyone wants to stand out, everyone wants to build something new and people rarely choose to use existing technology – there are no “standards” in cryptocurrency. You have a ton of different blockchains, bridges between them are like a workaround solution if we’re not happy with how some.

Usually, instead of offering to help, we simply go and build our own solutions. And the users, pay for all of this – having to learn and use new solutions, new technologies, new interfaces every week. If we could just sit down, agree on a single problem and use the same tools to solve it – the space would evolve much faster in my opinion.”

Do you think traditional banks should be worried about the current expansion of the cryptocurrency market?

“Yes, but probably not for the same reasons most people think they should. Are cryptocurrencies going to replace banks anytime soon? No. Are cryptocurrencies going to make some of the bank’s offered services irrelevant? Absolutely yes.

Take saving accounts for example, with an average of 0.06% interest rate, fewer people choose to save their money in banks because it just devalues slowly due to inflation. They would rather invest in stocks, real estate, and precious metals.

Take a cryptocurrency equivalent of saving accounts – staking. Cryptocurrency staking can offer interest rates varying anywhere between 5 and 20%, much better than the 0.06% offered by banks. Of course, there are risks involved, by people are starting to become more financially engaged, calculating risk, learning about the process and being smarter with their money – the more people are financially smarter, the less business there is for banks.”

Should traditional banks consider offering crypto-related services to users?

“I don’t think that would be beneficial for the users. In most cases, banks try to keep their customers “blind”. The less they know, the fewer questions they ask, the easier it is for banks to make a profit.

Crypto-related services are the exact opposite – you must understand what you’re doing, how the different parts interact with each other, where the money is coming from and so on. Users are encouraged to be their own banks and make the hard decisions themselves. So, if banks offered crypto-related services, they wouldn’t encourage people to learn more – it would be a watered- down, basic experience.”

What do you think about the effect Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) could eventually have on the crypto markets?

“Humans are often flawed. So, even if the system makes perfect sense on paper, we tend to

find ways to corrupt it. That's kinda what started the whole cryptocurrency boom – it was advertised as a trustless system, impossible to corrupt since it was governed by computers, not people and it was highly decentralized. CBDCs are extremely centralized, there is nothing stopping those in charge from creating more of this currency than they should. I personally don't see CBDCs having a large impact on the crypto market as they're two very different things in the eyes of the end-user."

Bitcoin has been viewed as an alternative store of wealth just like gold. In 2021, the asset was projected to become digital gold. With the current economic uncertainty, how has Bitcoin performed based on this expectation and what's to come for Bitcoin in 2022?

"If I could predict the future, I would. But sadly, that's not in my skill-set just yet. In my opinion, as long as people see value in Bitcoin – it will continue to rise in popularity. If we perceive something as valuable and scarce, we tend to want to own it."

What are Blockchain Centre's plans for the next two years?

"Our biggest goal is to have the ability to work with more projects at the same time. At the moment Blockchain Centre is a one-stop-shop when it comes to fundraising – we're able to cover everything from marketing to development and most importantly we save a tremendous amount of time and money for our clients by only executing strategies that work, think of it as a laser- focused approach to success. This full- scale service is mainly the reason why we're only working with a handful of exclusive projects at a time – once we onboard a client we dedicate our full attention to the project.

If we're thinking 2 years from now, we would like to have enough experts at our disposal to provide a full range of services to a larger number of companies – as well as move most out of our services to operate in-house. That's why we're focusing on hiring new employees and upskilling our existing workforce. Of course, there are some bigger plans apart from sheer numbers and growth, but we'll share those once we feel they're ready."