Distributed systems and the disappearance of the intermediary

Why we should expect businesses using blockchain technologies to adopt a different approach to corporate communications

Andrés Luther and Fabien Aufrechter

1) The changing communications environment

The most decisive step in the evolution of blockchain will be the broad-based adoption of this technology by corporates and consumers. This development will be dependent on the implementation of institutional-grade approaches. However, institutional-grade corporate communications tools, methods and strategies are today still based on an organizational architecture that emphasizes centralized control and features strong gatekeeper functions.

This current organizational set-up and strategies are designed to provide and control access to the target audience, e.g. to control commercial messaging or to ensure certain regulatory requirements such as Regulation FD/ad-hoc disclosures are met. They are not designed to facilitate and manage distributed, disintermediated, dialog-based communications with multiple well-informed stakeholders in a high-speed environment with a high degree of transparency.

In systems and organizations based on distributed architecture, all participants are at the center and at the periphery at the same time. Strictly speaking, there is no longer any vantage point that offers a critical distance or a privileged position in terms of access to information. The current corporate communications architecture, which is primarily geared towards relatively low-speed intermediation coupled with a high level of control over access to information, is not really able to realize the potential of blockchain technology. To achieve broad-based adoption by corporates and consumers and to harness the potential of emerging technologies, organizations using blockchain – and organizations leveraging network effects more generally – will also need to develop institutional-grade corporate communications approaches that leverage distributed systems architecture.

2) Distributed corporate communications architecture

State-of-the-art communications organizations comprise the following elements:

- Content (structured and unstructured data, qualitative information such as master narratives and core messaging)

- Systems architecture: Protocols regarding creation, distribution, feedback/response mechanism, co-creation
- Senders / recipients (target audience)
- Channels / touchpoints
- Content repository

The key design question is how to control the core messages communicated by these organizations and ensure consistency across a distributed structure, and how to manage dialog and consolidate feedback. Some form of central control is required in this context.

3) Culture, protocol and scalable messaging

There are seven steps towards building a corporate communications organization that can realize the full potential of distributed architecture:

1. Establish a culture that can deal with a very high degree of transparency, and the resulting public debate and criticisms, and with distributed communications responsibilities.
2. Design systems architecture and protocols that enable speed, flexibility and responsiveness while ensuring consistent core messaging and full compliance with all relevant regulations.
3. Recognize that distinct internal and external communications approaches no longer exist: Technology is leading to flatter communications structures. It is therefore important to sensitize all participants in your ecosystem (from employees to service providers, from clients to public authorities, etc.) and to understand their touchpoints and dynamics.
4. Develop a narrative that is simple and can be divided into modules around a core message (core-satellite approach); it should be possible to replicate, distribute and easily scale this messaging (viral approach), ensuring that it is both powerful and meaningful.
5. In the context of decentralization, where there is a risk of information being diluted, it is essential to have a distinctive and enduring narrative and to engage with a multitude of stakeholders.
6. Know and understand your target audience and the corresponding touch points, and measure and understand how you can engage with that audience in the most effective way possible.
7. Embrace opportunities for dialogue: Don't think of communication as a project but rather as a process of asking and answering questions.

Hirzel.Neef.Schmid.Counselors

4) Blockchain Switzerland/AMO offering

Hirzel.Neef.Schmid.Counselors and Havas Blockchain have joined forces to create the first global communications offering dedicated to blockchain technologies in Switzerland as part of the AMO Network. Blockchain Switzerland/AMO's offering covers:

- Consulting and token economics
- Tech advisory and prototyping
- Tech development and project industrialization
- Development of market positioning strategies
- Analysis of target audiences and opinion leaders
- Stakeholder engagement strategies with business, political, regulatory, media and investor audiences
- Content strategies and multi-channel implementation
- Local knowhow and resources to efficiently deploy positioning strategies and campaigns globally

We can help you to build an institutional-grade communications organization to harness the power of distributed systems and network effects. If you want to discuss these topics, please reach out to us:

Andrés Luther

+41 43 344 42 42
andres.luther@konsulenten.ch
Gottfried-Keller-Strasse 7
8024 Zurich
Switzerland

Fabien Aufrechter

+33 158479371
fabien.aufrechter@havas.com
29-30 Quai de Dion Bouton
92800 Puteaux
France