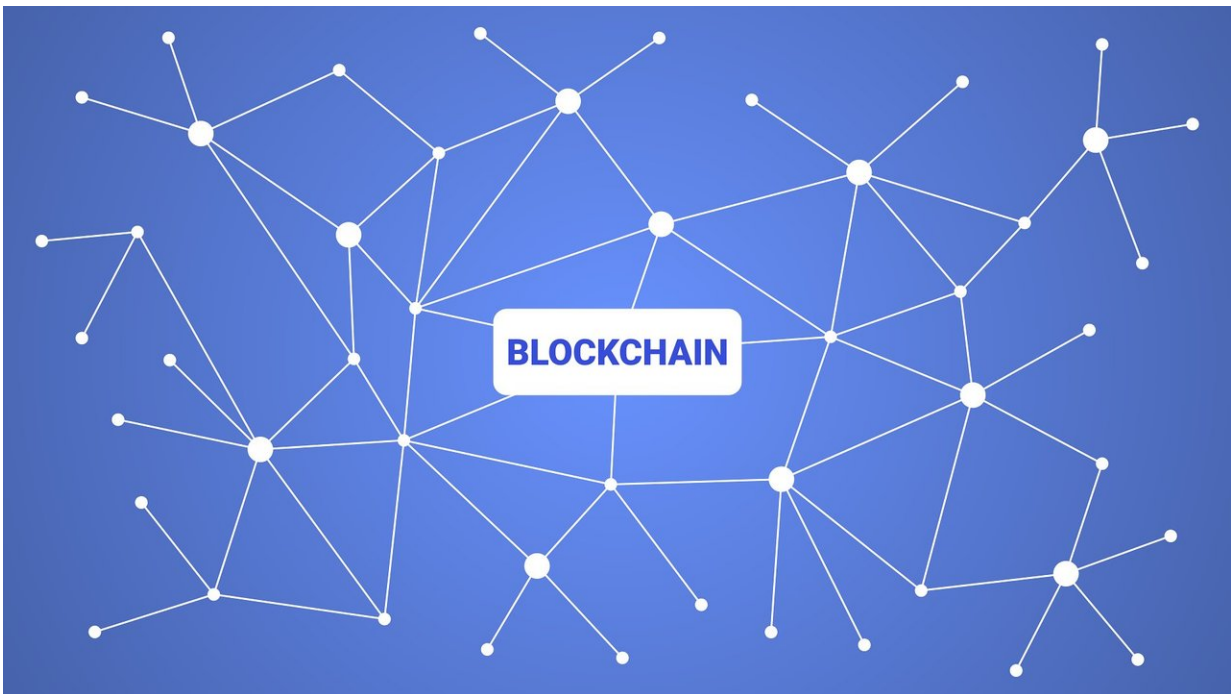# Blockchain: sharing data and breaking with traditional networks

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Blockchain as a technology is seeing tremendous innovation and is impacting almost all industries from supply chain to gaming and, perhaps the most recognizable, cryptocurrency.

There are significant differences emerging in how it's applied across different sectors, experts told FIU Business students during a lunch and

learn session presented by the Department of Information Systems and Business Analytics.

In the private sector, companies and organizations are using blockchain to identify a problem and create a solution, while on the public front, many see it as a bottom-up movement that strives toward a fair society via the sharing economy.

"Blockchain digitizes and streamlines processes in the global supply chain to deliver higher efficiency and lower cost," said Jon Sastre, senior vice president of Cloud Services at United Data Technologies.

In 2018, IBM and shipping company Maersk launched a joint venture, TradeLens, that uses blockchain technology to track the journeys of containers around the world, managing transactions among networks of shippers, freight forwarders, ocean carriers, ports and customs authorities.

In the world of cryptocurrency, blockchain offers a way of transmitting money without using traditional banking networks.

"What we have in Bitcoin for the very first time is an asset that is not controlled by the government, is very liquid, does not need institutional backing, and is fungible globally for a wide variety of fiat currencies," said Chris DeRose, founder of software development and IT consulting firm DeRose Technologies.

Andrew Barnard '08, co-founder of Miami-based Bitstop, set up the first Bitcoin ATM in a coffee shop in Wynwood in 2015. He described it as an experiment; today the company operates 100 Bitcoin ATMs.

"Bitcoin isn't a revolution, it's the evolution of money," Barnard said. "Ultimately, our goal is to derive the power of currency and the ability to

save anywhere in the world."

As it evolves, blockchain could transform the speed at which money moves from Point A to Point B and could be a secure log for items including medical records or personal identification.

Jonatan Alava, co-founder at HelloBuild, explained that blockchain's practical application is as a digital ledger, and many of the businesses currently implementing it are related to financial services and asset transfers.

"Blockchain will either create new revenue streams or streamline current processes, making you more efficient," he added. "Also, blockchain is valuable anywhere trust is an issue because multiple parties can validate the data at the same time."

Panelists agreed that the biggest hurdle for blockchain and cryptocurrency is the lack of regulation. Establishing a regulatory framework, particularly in dealing with securities issues, will be key to utilizing these technologies to their full potential.

"Right now, it's the wild west and people are taken advantage of," said Alava. "Some regulation is needed."

Blockchain offers opportunity for collaboration among different stakeholders within the industry. There are, however, several challenges that limit the adoption of blockchain-based solutions such as regulations—which are currently being investigated by faculty at FIU's department of Information Systems and Business Analytics.

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