

## From Cryptocurrencies to Fintech and Beyond:

### How blockchain technology is impacting the Greater China market

If 2017 was the year of Bitcoin, then 2018 is sure to be the year of blockchain – the underlying concepts and technology that make cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin work. This is especially relevant to China, where a unified government can set mandates, steer regulations and invest in technologies with great speed, directly impacting a huge percentage of the earth's population.

In simple terms, a blockchain is a digital ledger: an ever-growing list of records, consisting of transactions or changes to information, that is decentralized – that is, shared among multiple computers/owners with no central authority – and protected from unwanted changes via cryptography. When any addition or change is made to this ledger, the change is sent to all other computers throughout the distributed network. With added layers of security, it becomes very hard for anyone to fake a record within the system, as the other machines in the network would not be able to verify the fake against their existing records. Only verified transactions can be completed.

At Boyden Greater China, we're thinking about how this fundamental shift in technology will impact our clients' hiring needs in existing businesses as well as new business models based on blockchain. We are also considering just how candidate information might be stored and managed in the future. We need only look at certain recent developments within China to see how keen the government is on unified digital identities and blockchain technology itself.

[A pilot program currently taking place in Guangzhou](#) allows participants to use their WeChat (China's most popular messaging/social network) identity in place of a government-issued ID. In 2020, China will launch its [Social Credit System](#), a national scheme to assign each citizen a score based on how good a citizen they are. Aggregating factors such as your online behaviour, who your friends are, what you buy in shops and what bills and taxes you pay, this score could potentially make or break your career.

While these examples may not ultimately use blockchain technology themselves, China has shown great interest in the technology, and [plans to use it](#) for social taxation and issuing electronic invoices. China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has even established what it calls the ["Trusted Blockchain Open Lab"](#), focused on researching blockchain technology. It will only be a matter of time before this research sees the light of day.

It's clear that the inherent honesty that blockchains can provide appeals to China's government, which has long kept detailed records on all citizens. With the government's power to require sign-on from academic institutions and employers, candidates in China may soon find that their education, career histories and job references can be completely and easily verified within a short period of time.

The impact of blockchain technology is already being felt in China's executive talent market. [Boyden Greater China](#) is receiving an increasing number of requests from clients and candidates looking to enter the space. [William Farrell](#), Boyden Greater China's Managing Partner, had this to say: "The application of blockchain technology is spreading far beyond Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. We see applications in global financial regulatory regimes, the insurance sector and smart contracts, supply chain management in manufacturing and logistics, and healthcare. Our clients look for candidates with related experience, and talented professionals are keen to join companies looking to make good use of blockchain technology."

[Kong To](#), a Boyden Partner in Shanghai, looks to the U.S. as a bellwether for how technology trends will develop in Greater China: "Upwork, a leading freelance job platform that was developed to overcome the shortage of technical skills in Silicon Valley, now lists blockchain developers and architects as [the second fastest-growing skillset](#) listed by its members, but those with proven skills and experience in the area are few and far between. Learning from our clients in China, we're seeing a growth on the demand side that is outstripping the supply of blockchain experts and will create increased premiums on such professionals. Boyden is well experienced in helping clients identify and attract leaders with such skills."

A future with blockchain in it is a certainty. The question you should ask yourself is not if, but when your company and industry in Greater China will be embracing it. Talk to one of [Boyden's Greater China Partners](#) about identifying leaders that understand how blockchain will impact and transform your business.



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William Farrell has been with Boyden for over 20 years and leads the Greater China Practice. In addition to financial services, his substantial search experience includes extensive exposure to manufacturing, shipping and logistics. He works closely with the Greater China team to recruit for CEO and other leadership roles across functional lines.



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Kong To is a highly accomplished executive search professional with a strong track record of successful placements in China and across Asia-Pacific. Both a business partner and a world-class recruiter, Kong has worked extensively with clients in the industrial and technology sectors, placing high-performing executives in organisations seeking to capitalise on opportunities in the Chinese market.