Use cases of Blockchain: Application and Interworking
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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to analyze several important use cases based on blockchain, including: blockchain based PKI for security device connection, blockchain as a service, interworking cross blockchain (exchange data and contracts cross different chains). Through case analysis, important scenarios and specific requirements are listed. Related solutions are also provided for easy understanding.

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1. Introduction

Blockchain helps to establish cross industry mutual trust and cooperation, and provides the transmission of value and trust on top of current information network (i.e., Internet). The following industries are studying the application of block chains: government, commerce, industry, finance, insurance, medical, education, communication, culture and art etc.

Blockchain can play the following role in a company:

- Promoting internal cooperation and optimizing the existing process, thus improves the production efficiency. Take an Internet service provider for example, the internal blockchain that involves product manager, develop team, QA team and service team, shall be able to trace each service features design, development and market feedback easily, thus accelerate the internal productivity.

- Improving the cooperation of eco-system players, to enlarge the overall benefit. Take Internet service provider for example, by using blockchain, a service provide shall be able to cooperate with other other service providers to expand the overall business based on trust, such as, a social network service provider can cooperate with content (music, video, online game) providers.

- Expanding business to the whole industry, the whole society and the world, to form new business models. For example, the social
network providers shall be able to provide the capability of user
authentication to vertical service providers (such as freight,
supply chain, finance, rental).

In this document, several important use cases based on blockchain are
analyzed, including: blockchain based PKI system, blockchain as a
service, interworking cross blockchain (exchange data and contracts
cross chains). For easy understanding, related solutions are also
provided.

2. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT",
"SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this
document are to be interpreted as described in RFC 2119 [RFC2119].

3. Terminology and Abbreviations

The terminology and abbreviations used in this document are defined
in this section.

- H(e)NB: Home (e)NodeB, An eNodeB is an end device of a Radio
  Access Network, it performs the same functionality of an eNodeB,
  but is deployed for indoor premises or public hotspots, using the
  local Internet connection to access operators’ network.

- MNO: Mobile Network Operator

- SeGW: Security Gateway, an edge device that is Deployment on the
  boundary of an Operator’s network, to connect HeNB device
  remotely.

4. Use case 1: Secure connection management between devices using
blockchain based PKI

Digital certificates are widely used to negotiate secure channels
between devices and to establish secure connections as defined in RFC
5280 [RFC5280]. According to communication model, there are two
typical scenarios: multiple devices are connected to the same
centralized node (such as H(e)NBs connected to a MNO’s SeGW), peer to
peer connection (such as IoT devices).

4.1. Centralized connected model

Take the H(e)NB scenario for example, H(e)NB is a device that is
installed in the office/home where the radio signal is weak or not
covered by MNOs, to provide mobile network services (such as voice
call, messaging). H(e)NB access MNO’s network via local user’s
Internet access (LAN), thus, security solution is needed to authorize the H(e)NB device and to secure the connection between H(e)NB device and MNO network border (SeGW), as shown in Figure 1.

Because SeGWs belongs to different operation domain, it is not possible to have them use certificates issued by the same CA, H(e)NB needs to configure the certificate of the SeGW that it is connected to accordingly. Two important functions is provided by certificate, authentication of H(e)NB devices to make sure that it is not a fake one, and the establishment of secure end to end communication channels between H(e)NB and SeGW under an unsafe Internet network. For this reason, the manufacture can not preinstall any certificate for H(e)NB, the installation of certificate is needed in the deploying stage. The workers manually install the certificate into the H(e)NB. In this way, the following problems occurs: first, the manually installation is low efficiency and error-prone; second, the certificate may be leaked out by the worker. Whats more, reconfiguration are needed each time when the certificate is expired or withdrawn.

The solution is:

- Establish a consortium blockchain, which SHALL be used to verify and store certificates. H(e)NB manufacturers and operator join the chain as nodes, which are responsible for certificate verification and storage.

- A self-signed certificate for each H(e)NB device is generated by the manufacture when it is produced.
This certificate shall be sent to blockchain nodes to be verified.

The certificate is verified by the verification node.

The certificate is recorded into the blockchain if the consensus achieved.

At the time H(e)NB is installed and powered on, it’s certificate will be used to establish connection to operator’s SeGW.

The SeGW interacts with the operator’s blockchain node to verify the certification.

If success, the secured connection between SeGW and H(e)NB shall be established automatically.

The certificate is also used to identify and authenticate the H(e)NB itself.

Note: Although in this case we use the operator’s H(e)NB scenario, this solution applies to other similar connection models, such as home gateway.

4.2. Peer-to-peer connection model

Take IoT scenario for example. Currently, IoT devices always talk to each other via the network server (such as IoT application server). For privacy and security consideration, we want IoT devices that produced by different vendors to talk with each other directly in security. But we can not assume that all these devices be preinstalled with the certificates issued by the same CA. The regular solution is to introduce a centralized bridge-CA. The question is that, the bridge is lack efficiency and extensibility.

The blockchain provides a better solution:

Establish a consortium blockchain, which SHALL be used to verify and store certificates. CAs join the chain as nodes, which are responsible for certificate verification and storage.

When a CA issue certificate for a device, the certificate shall be sent to blockchain nodes to be verified.

The certificate is verified by the verification node.

The certificate is recorded into the blockchain if it achieves consensus.
o At the time devices need direct connection, they will lookup their CA’s node for certification verification.

o If success, the secured connection between devices directly and automatically.

4.3. Summary

The advantages of using blockchain-based PKI include:

o High reliability and performance: each node holds a copy of consistent certificate data, supports multiple duplicates and parallel queries, and better data consistency.

o Low cost: automatic operation of blockchain system, low maintenance cost; no payment needed for self-signed certificate.

5. Use case 2: Blockchain as a Service

The value of blockchain in building a system of trust and collaboration has been proved by the industry, enterprises and industries are applying the blockchain. However, not all enterprises are willing to establish and operate their own blockchain system because of costs. Therefore, providing blockchain-as-a-service solution contributes to the rapid popularization of blockchain.

The main requirements for blockchain-as-a-service may include:

o General proposed data format to support different applications, for storage/verification/resolution.

o Define flexible, extensible interfaces/APIs that is easy for programming.

o Enhanced performance for future proof.

6. Use case 3: Blockchain Interworking

According to the current situation of the vertical development of the blockchain infrastructures and applications, the cross-chain interworking shall be a very important demand in the future. Cross chain interoperability involves not only data, but also smart contracts, security and other aspects.

Two OPTIONAL solutions for blockchain interworking:

o API/Interface invocation based, using interworking gateway.
Build a "meta blockchain" to coordinate interworking blockchains

7. IANA Considerations

This memo includes no request to IANA.

8. Security Considerations

TBA

9. Normative References


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