



Build a Web3 Dev Team

How to Build and Expand
a High-Performing Web3 Dev Team

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The nature of Web3	4
Business assumptions	7
Team composition	10
Attracting Top-Tier Web3 Talent	16
Project execution	20
Summary	29

Introduction

Is assembling a blockchain tech team just like any other development team? I disagree, and here's why.

This ebook explores strategies for building a high-performing Web3 dev team. But before we get into the "how", let's define the qualities of a high-performing tech team:

1. Building a product that meets your requirements.
2. On-time task execution.
3. Vast understanding of the Web3 ecosystem.
4. Understanding the business concept, and communicating how technical nuances affect the business strategy.
5. Staying flexible to fulfill the business needs while being transparent about the consequences of proposed modifications.

Having these values in mind, let me guide you through the nuances of assembling a blockchain team and setting it up for success. My team and I have gained this knowledge during the eight years of ULAM LABS' existence. I'm not only sharing what works but also what doesn't, so you can take our learnings and use them to your advantage.

Marcela Rutkowska

Blockchain Project Manager

The nature of Web3

Tech nuances

When building websites, after some time you get a good grasp of existing technologies and which is better for a particular case. There's a set of good practices collectively worked out through the years, plenty of documentation, and StackOverflow, ChatGPT, and YouTube with ready answers to your questions.

Meanwhile, new blockchain technology appears all the time. That's why with every project, you find yourself yet again in the unknown, despite all your experience. You come across such specific problems, that rarely the internet's wisdom can be of any help.

Even if the project concept is similar, new technology makes you solve similar problems differently – e.g. a DeFi project on Ethereum will be different from DeFi on Algorand. Small differences can have big consequences.

Smart contracts, in particular, require careful planning and foresight. As immutable sets of rules stored on the blockchain, they must be crafted with precision, foreseeing future needs to avoid costly revisions.

Community

The strong community around blockchain projects can be both a huge advantage and a curse.

It might accelerate your business exposure. Users are interested in emerging crypto-products development and want to be involved, often providing useful insights.

It's a double-edged sword, though. Bad reviews spread quickly across the bubbly Web3 communities on Discord, Telegram, X, and YouTube. In Web3, you have to watch yourself to not earn yourself bad fame that you'll have to carry on.

Business assump- tions

Let's get this clear first: no tech team will be productive if they're not building on sound business foundations. Neither developers nor the project manager will come up with ideas for app monetization.

Before you jump on to assembling the team, you have to consider your actual business requirements. Seemingly minor decisions might have a great impact (check out the 'lesson learned' beneath).

The absolute minimum that your business brief or strategy should cover



Revenue plan

How is your business going to generate revenue?

Market and Competitive Analysis

Look at what other similar apps or services are doing. This can show you what's already out there and help you find ways to make your app stand out or do something better.

Regulatory Considerations and Compliance

Especially in the crypto world, knowing and following usage rules is vital for trust and compliance, keeping you out of trouble and gaining user trust.

Target Audience

Think about who wants or needs your app. Knowing who they are helps make the app just right for them. If your app is for people who are really into crypto, you might add features just for them.

Clear Value Proposition

Explain how your app helps people in a way that other apps don't. For example, if you're making a crypto wallet, maybe your app is super easy for beginners or has an extra security layer that others don't. The Value Proposition ensures you are NOT building a copy of another successful product.

Lesson learned

We planned a smart contract based on the client's requirements. The smart contract went through an audit and was then fully implemented on the platform. However, after a couple of months, the client decided to make major changes dictated by the revenue strategy.

This could have been easily predicted if the team had brought up the revenue strategy discussion at the early project stage. As a result, the client had to consider a second costly audit, while everything could have been delivered initially and audited in the first phase.



Initial lack of clarity for the revenue strategy translates into more expenses down the road.

Team composition

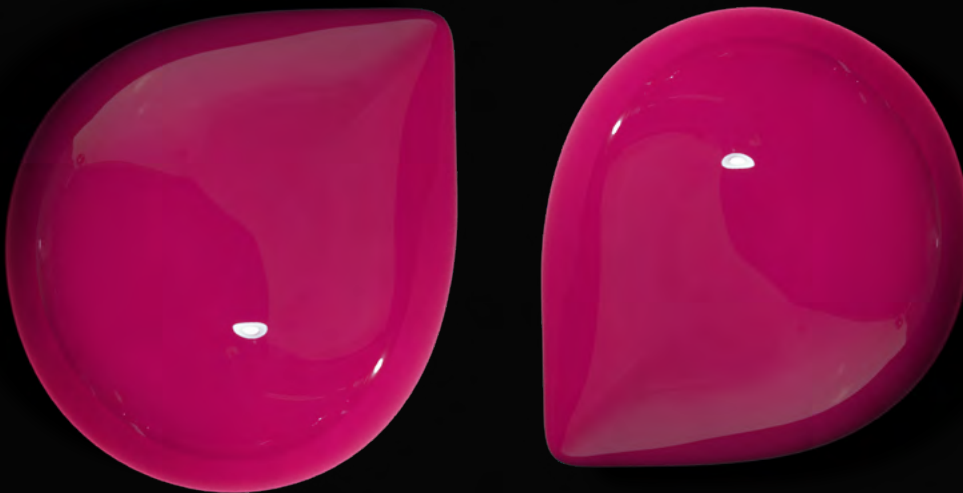
When your business strategy is clear, let's review the roles and responsibilities within the technical team who will bring it to life.

Team Composition

Project Manager

From my experience, it's highly beneficial for a PM to have some background in managing crypto projects, or at the very least, to have a Tech Lead with such expertise on their team. This familiarity with the tools and potential bottlenecks in crypto development can be invaluable in swiftly addressing challenges and guiding the client through the project's lifecycle.

A PM doesn't necessarily need to have a developer's technical background since overseeing the technical aspects is primarily the Tech Lead's responsibility. However, a good grasp of technical concepts and processes on both the front end and back end is essential for a PM. This understanding ensures that no critical requirements are overlooked and that the PM can effectively bridge the gap between the technical team and the client, facilitating a smooth and efficient project flow.



Team Composition

Tech Lead

I recommend the Web3 tech lead to be a senior full-stack developer. This role is crucial, especially during the MVP project stage. The pace is rapid, with a focus on delivering a functional product swiftly to meet investor commitments and start revenue generation.

This demands a robust technical leadership capable of foreseeing potential issues, planning scalable architecture, and ensuring seamless integration of blockchain elements like smart contracts, which are pivotal in maintaining the integrity and functionality of the system.

Blockchain Developers

Aside from the standard qualities of a good software developer, such as attention to detail, blockchain developers should have a good math understanding.

It's important, as designing a Web3 application often involves creating author formulas, e.g. for liquidity pool regulation mechanics.

Smart contract consultants

If no one on your team is experienced in smart contract creation, I recommend getting an external expert for ongoing consulting and security assurance.

You don't want to get the smart contract wrong. At ULAM LABS, we've got a team of auditors who consult smart contracts for our projects and support our team.

UX/UI Designers

Main goal is building friendly products also for users new to Web3. Designing a product that is easy to adapt to significantly increases the market for the application.

Frontend developers

Should be talented in coding intuitive and responsive interfaces that mask the complexity of blockchain operations.

Backend developers

Contrarily to frontend, should be skilled in APIs, databases, and server-side logic, ensuring smooth data flow and integration with the blockchain. They are responsible for smart contract integration, so they must understand the nuances of different blockchains, even if they don't code the Web3 logic themselves.



Team Composition

QA experts

Are critical to maintaining the integrity of the Web3 application. They need a keen eye for detail and a thorough understanding of blockchain's unique testing requirements, including specifics of transactions, smart contract inadequacies, and frontend and backend integration.

The QAs should also have a deep math understanding and logical thinking, as one of their main tasks is testing smart contract formulas in real life. They need the app's understanding to come up with edge cases and find any vulnerabilities that could cause fatal consequences if undetected.



Lesson learned

Due to a lack of the next round of funding, the client decided to downsize the team and resign from the QA role. As a result, the testing process was taken over by the developers and the project manager.

This was not optimal as from this point, the development and delivery of new features were significantly slowed down, to the point where the team was blocked by the testing work and unable to take on new tasks.



Reducing the QA role is not a saving at all; in fact, it simply stopped the development pace.

Attract- ing Top-Tier Web3 Talent

Now that you know what talent you need for the job, let's discuss ways to attract the best people.

The unique nature of blockchain technology demands not just technical expertise but a passion for decentralized solutions and a pioneering spirit. Here's where to look for it.

Best strategies for attracting Web3 talent

1. Blockchain hackathons and conferences

Participation in blockchain hackathons and conferences is a strategic move. These events are not only breeding grounds for innovative ideas but also hubs where you can meet and assess potential candidates in action.

They offer a real-time showcase of a candidate's problem-solving skills, creativity, and ability to work under pressure. Additionally, hosting workshops or speaking at these events can position your organization as a leader in this space, attracting talent organically.

2. Social media presence

Leveraging social media and professional networking sites like LinkedIn is crucial. Tailoring your messaging to highlight the exciting opportunities and challenges in your projects can spark interest among top talent.

It's important to communicate not just the technical requirements but also the vision and potential impact of your projects, resonating with professionals who are looking for more than just a job but a chance to contribute to the future of technology.

Best strategies for attracting Web3 talent

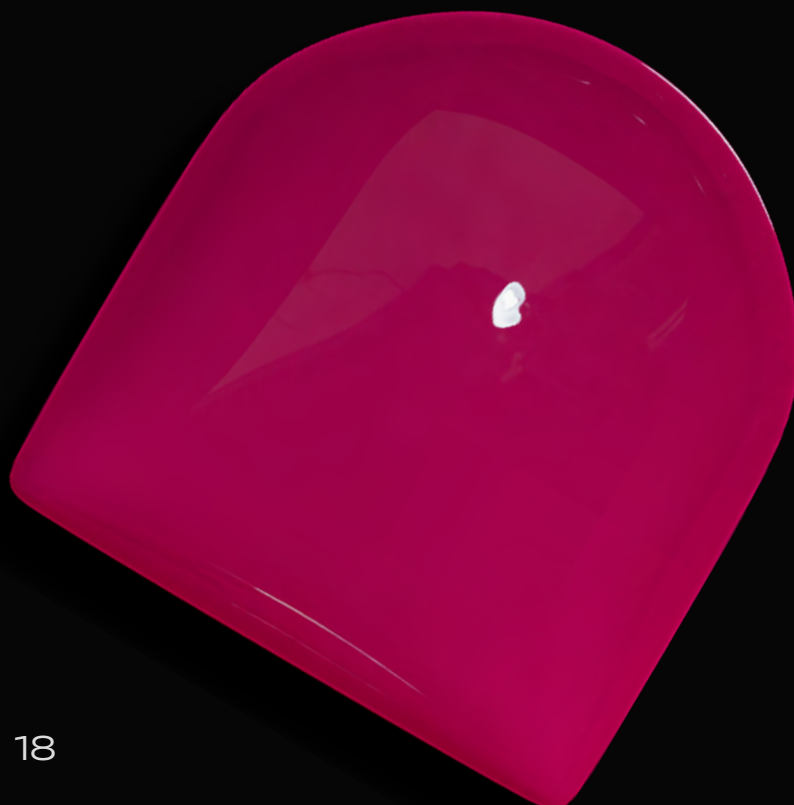
3. Collaborating with educational institutions

Engaging with educational institutions can also be worthwhile. Collaborating with universities that have strong computer science or blockchain-specific programs can provide access to fresh talent that is already grounded in the basics and eager to apply their knowledge in the real world.

4. Openness to remote talent

Lastly, considering the global and decentralized nature of blockchain, opening up to remote talent widens your search and attracts a diverse range of professionals. Embracing this can not only solve the talent scarcity in your local area but also bring in fresh perspectives and ideas, essential for innovation in the Web3 space.

In summary, sourcing Web3 talent demands a combination of community engagement, active participation in relevant events, strategic online presence, collaborations with educational institutions, and a global outlook.



Best strategies for attracting Web3 talent

5. Hiring for potential, not for experience

Having in mind how novel the Web3 branch is, consider hiring a professional who is not yet experienced in the branch, but is actively seeking the opportunity to enter the space. In this case, it's worth considering if the person is already a part of some blockchain community, follows foundations or projects, and can share their insights on the industry.

Requirements for the strategy to be successful include having a mentor on your team and having a long-term perspective for project development.



Project execution

Now that you have solid business foundations and have found the right talent, it's time to marry these two and build a productive app. Easy, right?

Here, success depends on both sides - the business and the tech team, and how they interact. The project manager's job is to connect all the moving parts. Let's walk through them.

Setting team responsibilities

In the fast-paced Web3 environment, cultivating a culture of innovation, ongoing learning, and flexibility is not simply advantageous - it's crucial.

The fast-paced nature of blockchain and decentralized applications (dApps) development requires both sides: business and tech teams to create a flexible, open-minded, and inherently collaborative environment.

Commitment on the tech team's side is to bring the business strategy to life by providing a working product, implementing security, scalability, and mitigating various risks - which in a Web3 product there's a multitude of. The team is committed to delivering milestones on time and communicating any potential risks to the business team.

Aside from building a sound strategy, the business side should be committed to setting clear priorities. Before the project kickoff, the business side should also inform the delivery team about the dynamics they forecast for the project. Are the requirements final, or are they going to change week to week?

Understanding the business assumptions will have a great effect on the team's performance. Communicating the moving parts from the tech team's side will help steer the project in the right direction.



Lesson learned

Due to changing priorities, it was difficult to complete our task and demonstrate the finished work to the client. This partly led to a decrease in the team's sense of worth, which in turn posed the risk of people not sharing their ideas, fearing they would be considered foolish.

Therefore, it was important to make the client aware of the risks associated with such a change in priorities - that we would not be delivering new features if the client kept diverting us from our work. Also crucial was clear communication from the team regarding progress.



Frequent task changes lead to a loss of focus and extend the time to deliver.

Communication

In managing remote Web3 teams, communication and coordination take center stage. Here's where collaborative tools come in.

A common Slack workspace for business and development teams boosts the communication speed and smoothes the process - the time when the development team is blocked waiting for an answer is minimal.

With Jira or Notion access - wherever the project is managed - the business team can access the written-down requirements and can always see the tasks. There's always the possibility to comment on a task, better understand it, or, if that's the case - cancel the work over some project part if it's no longer important.

Implementing agile methodologies like Scrum or Kanban based on the project dynamics provides helpful frameworks for this.

Daily stand-ups, sprint retrospectives, and planning not only keep everyone aligned on project goals but also provide opportunities for team members to voice concerns, share challenges, and collaboratively devise solutions.

Regular video calls and virtual stand-ups can help maintain a personal connection and alignment within the team. It's crucial to establish clear communication channels and regular check-ins to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Lesson learned

Near the funding period's end, the client sought savings, leading to frequent partnership engagements. This resulted in daily shifts in team priorities to meet these agreements.

For instance, fulfilling a need for historical data required pausing ongoing work for script development, disrupting several sprints within our Scrum framework due to these constant changes. Subsequently, we switched to Kanban and agreed with the client not to break the work on ongoing tasks. As a result, a new task was started only after an open one was closed.



There must be balance between accommodating business requests and maintaining a stable development direction. Constant priority changes lead to inefficiency and demotivation among team members.

Lesson learned

The client was not fully committed to participating in the development and hired a product owner without prior crypto experience. This led to a lack of a clear roadmap and constant focus changes, as the project scope and overall product vision were not set. At the end of the project timeline, the product was at the bare MVP stage and lacked a revenue strategy. The client's expectations were not communicated, and therefore, the team was unable to fully meet them.



The team should require the client's engagement in the development process and educate the client about the risks of a lack of a clear roadmap.

Resource allocation

Resource allocation in Web3 projects requires a keen understanding of the project's technical demands and the team's capabilities. Balancing the workload among team members, while allowing for research and development time, is necessary to foster innovation and prevent burnout. Also, given the exploratory nature of many Web3 projects, allocating resources for contingency planning is critical to accommodate unexpected challenges or changes in project scope.

Unfortunately, adding a new person in the middle of a project - especially a big one - won't be an immediate solution. It takes a lot of time for a new person to accommodate enough to have an active contribution to the project.

A new person also requires constant help from a Tech Lead. That's why, even in difficult cases, I don't recommend hastily adding a new team member to the project, as it doesn't accelerate the development.

Planning the roadmap and features at the outset and adapting the team accordingly is crucial for success.



Training and research

Upskilling a Web3 development team is crucial for staying competitive and innovative. For continuous growth, integrate structured learning through dedicated time for learning new technologies, experimenting with blockchain protocols, and exploring decentralized trends.

Encourage hands-on experience by assigning tasks slightly outside team members' comfort zones for valuable learning opportunities. Implement mentorship programs pairing less experienced members with seasoned professionals for knowledge transfer and guidance.

Investing in formal training is equally influential. This could involve subscribing to online courses, attending workshops, or participating in industry conferences. These platforms not only provide up-to-date knowledge but also offer networking opportunities.

Encourage a culture of knowledge-sharing with regular internal workshops, tech talks, or 'show-and-tell' sessions where team members share insights from their projects or training.

Lastly, it's crucial to support a mindset of continuous learning and curiosity. In a field as dynamic as Web3, the ability to adapt and learn on the fly can be just as important as formal training.



Lesson learned

At ULAM LABS, we often collaborate on cross-team blockchain projects. In this case, we frequently book meetings with the other delivery teams to learn from each other, for example when we work on a feature connecting two different platforms. It accelerates learning on both sides.



Whenever you have more than one delivery team working on your product, set an environment where they can easily share their knowledge to your advantage.

Summary

To sum up, your tech team should be adept at using complex and novel blockchain technology to translate your business idea into an adaptable product.

Blockchain development includes many moving parts. Whether you're a startup testing out an idea, or an established company seeking to scale we recommend working with an experienced service provider, such as ULAM LABS.

Make sure to have a clear revenue strategy and business requirements, and we'll take it from there with our tech expertise.

Marcela Rutkowska

Blockchain Project Manager

Get in touch with us to discuss your project.

contact@ulam.io

ulam.io

