
Episode 152: Simona Pop on Bettering Communities Globally with Bounties

Kelley Weaver: Welcome to Crypto Token Talk, a CRYPTO 101 podcast exploring how blockchain applications like Bitcoin, Ethereum, and other crypto assets could change the world. Learn from blockchain experts, thought leaders, and founders of some of the most innovative companies and world changing ideas of our time. I'm your host, Kelley Weaver, CEO of Melrose PR, a leading blockchain communications agency. Thanks for joining us today.

Nikki Brown: I'm Nikki Brown, Senior Content Strategist at Melrose PR, and I'll be your guest host for this episode of Crypto Token Talk. Today, I'll be speaking with Simona Pop, Head of Community and Marketing for the Bounties Network. Welcome Simona.

Simona Pop: Hey, Nikki. Thank you so much for having me.

Nikki Brown: Of course. Thank you so much for dialing in. Let's go ahead and get started with a brief introduction to who you are and what you do.

Simona Pop: Sure thing. As you mentioned, I head up Community and Marketing for the Bounties Network. Well the Bounties Network is essentially the creator of the Standard Bounties Protocol. What we do is enable you to create tasks across any vertical paned out in ETH, or any ERC20 token.

Nikki Brown: Very cool. Going back in time, how did you first discover crypto? What led you into this space and to the Bounties Network?

Simona Pop: I was actually working for a tech startup, up in London. We were looking at technology as a means of simplifying and improving the way businesses essentially interact, trade and pay each other. During these exploration phases, I was doing a lot of communicating details about these technologies to broader audiences, and certainly non-technical audiences. It just so happens that I had a talk within an event that was looking and discussing blockchain. During my research I came across the consensus medium block and started researching, started looking into what these guys were doing. And it quickly became apparent that a lot of things we're actually already in motion. Whereas for a lot of the talks that I was attending, it was still very much let's talk about it in

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theory and maybe at some point it will happen. So, that triggered my real interest in getting involved in something that is genuinely happening. Genuinely has applications that are live today. And that's how I came to join consensus, particularly focusing on the Bounties Network Project.

Nikki Brown:

Great. Now, that's so important that there are these platforms and networks that are currently functional and working. And I'd love for you to walk through some of the use cases for the Bounties Network that are currently live on the network and perhaps a hypothetical ones that haven't been posted yet but your team has been thinking about.

Simona Pop:

Absolutely. It's one of the things that I'm most excited about being part of a project that has been live on main net since October 2017, is one of those really powerful situations to be in because you are genuinely seeing blockchain in action. And so some of the use cases, and one of the main things that is very, very important for me is to really broaden the access and the involvement into blockchain and decentralized applications of people who are not necessarily of a technical background. I think that is something that a lot of people view as a barrier to interacting with blockchain applications. And I am here to tell everyone that that is absolutely not true. Anybody can biddle, anybody can get involved. And I think what we're doing with a Bounties Network and the bounties that we are creating and the use cases that we are creating, is to very much solidify that and to very much broaden that accessibility let's say.

Just to give you a few examples that I think are very, very important. Translation bounties are a very, very strong and very important aspect in getting blockchain into broader audiences, into broader markets. And so what we're seeing a lot of is literature about blockchain, about Ethereum, about what we're doing, being translated into languages like Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese far sea even. And it's really this lowering that entry barrier where you are actually putting all of this literature out there for a lot of different audiences to access. And so translation bounties, like I say, are very, very important and very popular. But what we are also doing is exploring the applications of bounties in social and environmental impact.

A case in point with this is our Bounties for the Oceans. It's a project that we created in partnership. The initial ones in partnership with MakerDAO or the creators of the Dai, the stablecoin that has a value pegged to the value of a dollar. And so the idea with that is really re-engineering the way we've been looking at social and environmental impact. And going from centralized

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organizations asking for contributions for donations from individuals and then hoping from the part of the donor that the things that those centralized organization said they're going to do.

That they're actually going to do it, but there was no transparent way of tracking whether your money is in fact used on the ground. We are saying let's flip that. Let's actually empower the individuals and reward the individuals for their positive action. The case of Bounties for the Oceans we are rewarding people with 10 Dai, which is basically the equivalent of \$10 for every verifiable individual cleanup that they perform on a beach, in a park, in their street, wherever they may be. And actually making that individual contribution matter and get rewards for it. Basically what that does is it leading changes, the dynamic of social impact from blind trust. It eliminates it as a concept and you seeing verifiable proof of action is actually now the concept and the framework that we need to work in. And so those are two of the ones that we're working on right now and are getting a lot of traction.

And future ones, Design is actually another one that's quite popular and very, very important, particularly in the blockchain space, particularly in the dark space where design has been an afterthought for a lot of the projects. But now UX and the onboarding process and how usable are the depths in the space is beginning to be a real, real focus for the industry. And so that's another one that we're seeing. Music bounties as well, creating remixes, creating pieces of music for a particular track for a particular project, for a particular movie score potentially. That's another one that's very, very interesting and also anything to do with competition. I think one of the main things that the bounty is such a good format for, is incentivizing and organizing action. What that action is, is really quite flexible. The bounty is a means to an end. It is that tool that facilitates XYZ outcome. And so if we're just discovering more and more verticals to be honest and we'd love to bounty everything.

Nikki Brown:

So fascinating. Wow. It does seem like the applications are endless for tokenizing and incentivizing your positive behaviors and I know forming and fostering community is really important to you. I'd love to hear your thoughts on community in general. Are we lacking real and genuine [inaudible 00:08:40] in today's society and how do you think watching technology and specifically the Bounties Network can help that situation?

Simona Pop:

That's a really, really interesting topic and I think it's one that is very close to my heart and very close to the way we do things at the Bounties Network. I always

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say blockchain work is community work. I think it's very important for communities to essentially work together and nurture each other's initiatives and how we collaborate with each other. And really what we're seeing at the moment is a transformation of this collaboration. Again, I like to call it collaboration 2.0. It's really the remote work and technology is really pushed us all towards a much more, let's say solitary way of doing things, but actually I think it is connecting us more than ever before. Just a case in point, the bounties team is a fully remote team. We are right now, we're seven people and we work in different areas of the world. We've got, I live in the UK, we've got a team members in Canada.

We've that people in the US, we've got somebody living in New Mexico right now. And really finding those collaboration avenues and those ways of working together to bring something new and something better into what we're doing into the space and so on. It's really driven us to get to where we are now and I'm sure it's going to drive us through to achieve even more. And looking at the Ethereum broader community for instance, all of the projects in the space are really working together and really looking at how we can interconnect, collaborate, do something more through this uniting the power, if you will. And I think that is something that I'm seeing broaden not just across projects, but across people wherever they are in the world.

And really that's the power that I feel blockchain brings to the table. It's this ability to lower or level out the playing field. Allow access from anywhere to anyone, and really redraw these lines that we have had for so long have in terms of access to resource, in terms of access to information, in terms of access to a global pool of work. And a global pool of talent. And really breaking down any kind of barriers that we have had in the past. And so I think in terms of community, you will see this sense of belonging to a world community. To a place where it doesn't really matter whether you come from a country that really didn't give you the same socio-economical opportunities that other countries have given their citizens.

And really making it something that is much more to do with who you are, what you can do, what your talents are, what your skills are, what you're interested in. Where you can collaborate in meaningful projects and get rewarded for your time, because that is what more genuinely passionate about, genuinely good at, genuinely interested in again, regardless of your location. And so I feel it is pretty much on the same lines as the Internet was. In the '80s and '90s. I think

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it's again redrawing and rechecking those access points that I think will be key in terms of local community.

Nikki Brown: Definitely. I think that that conversation about community and opportunities is so important. Especially as looking ahead, we're facing wage stagnation in a lot of countries and needs for more avenues for work and if what you're speaking about is actually empowering people to create opportunities for each other rather than relying on your centralized [crosstalk 00:13:12].

Simona Pop: Exactly.

Nikki Brown: It's very, very cool stuff. As Head of Community Marketing at Bounties Network, I'm curious to hear more about what the main challenges that you deal with day to day are. You mentioned that one of your big goals is to get the mainstream audience involved in blockchain and applications and networks like the Bounties Network. Is that the main challenge and if so, what strategies or tactics do you use to bring more people into the fold? So to speak.

Simona Pop: It is absolutely one of the key drivers for us. I think it's very, very important for adoption. I think it's very, very important for understanding and for inviting more perspectives into the space and into what can be done with the technology. I definitely know Madison Island, no single group is an island. We need to, again, broaden that interests, broaden that access, broaden the amount of people that get involved. And I think one of the key ways of doing this is by explaining things in very, very simple terms. Every single talk that I give, or every interaction that I have, or every podcast that I record or everything that I write is done in plain terms, in plain English. We've done some translations of that plain English, so it's also been in Spanish and German before. But it's this ability to explain things and give people an understanding of what we're doing and what the future holds in very relatable terms.

It's one of the main reasons why I really wanted, aside the fact that I'm extremely passionate about social impact and environmental impact, but it's one of the reasons why I wanted to have these use cases of bounties in that field. Because it is something that not only anybody can get involved in, but also it makes people understand that luxury is so much more than the Crypto currencies. Then this gold rush style craze on investing and buying all of these coins. All of these ICO noise that typically have maybe diverted people from taking a genuine interest in blockchain as a technology. Because they have seen it as a hype, as a get tweak situation or even worse as a use all your money

quick situation. Because they have had some friend who has lost money that they invested in shipcoin.

And so it's giving people this understanding of the possibilities of the opportunities. And really broadening it to the point where you can get people who have a design background, have a project management background, have a translation background, have an art background, have a musical background, anybody and everybody.

And one of the key things that we've observed since we've been doing this in terms of our community, we have a great slack community that is growing day, by day, by day, is that initially say six months ago we had probably 70 people and then 99% of those people were developers. Now we are pushing a 1,000. And we are seeing not only people coming in from pretty much about 150 countries, but really seeing people with such varied backgrounds, which is incredibly exciting for me. And incredibly empowering in terms of people understanding and being able to think creatively about the opportunities that block chain can bring. And really getting involved with what we are doing or even thinking of ways that they could build something for their own communities, their own field of interest, field of practice and so on.

And these are conversations that I'm having with our community members again, on a daily, weekly basis is people coming in with ideas and thinking, "Can this be done? Can we apply it to let's say education? Can we apply bounties to education where we actually reward people for studying a certain subject, for taking a certain test?" Which is a completely different way of looking at that education versus asking people for money to get educated. You are then saying, "I'm actually going to reward people for completing this course."

And again, let's say tonight actually I'm in San Francisco right now. And tonight we are holding a women in blockchain event focused on inclusivity and impact. And I was just having a conversation earlier this morning about what we could do potentially to use bounties for Venezuela. And how we could reward people for certain actions, certain initiatives, certain projects in Venezuela. And somebody from, again, just on twitter, they said, "Oh, I'm going to be at the meetup. Let's discuss it more because this is actually something very, very interesting." I'm definitely looking forward to that conversation. But that is exactly what I am seeing more and more of, is people getting involved in these conversations. And looking at ways that they can apply technology and of

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course bounties, fluxing bounties as a means of doing something good, of doing something positive of helping other people.

Nikki Brown:

Great, now, I think it's interesting to conceptualize almost flipping our perspective that we've had entrenched for so long about paying for education. You mentioned that example and thinking about how if we pay people or reward people for getting educated, how does that actually benefit all of us? Actually something that is worth paying people and rewarding for. And I think clearly it is. It's just fascinating to think about that culture shift that's underway. Going back to how you're getting more mainstream audience interested in Bounties Network and watching in general. I read about Honu the CryptoKitty ambassador to protect the world's oceans. I thought that was so clever. And I'd love to hear more about how that came about and how that's worked out for you.

Simona Pop:

So the Honu Kitty was actually created by Crypto group of Kitties in partnership with ACTAI Global. They are an order that basically focuses on challenges across environment and trying to solve these by applying technology and by looking at different ways and novel ways of addressing issues that, let's face it have been withstanding for a very long time. And so the Honu was something that the bounties was supporting because obviously we have Bounties for the oceans campaign and we really want to get more and more people involved in looking at technology and specifically blockchain technology, as a means of addressing the environmental crisis that we have.

And because clearly whatever we've been doing so long is for the past, a good decade or more in fact a lot more it's clearly not working. And so what we are doing as the next iteration of the Bounties for the Oceans campaign, is to organize a pilot cleanup in the Philippines and really prove out our assumption that this can actually be spun out with minimal admin cost and with minimal centralized implications or control.

And so what we're doing in the Philippines just as another way like obviously the Honu and the CryptoKitties was one way to raise funds through an option of this CryptoKitty. But what we're doing with the Bounties for the Oceans in the Philippines is organizing the cleanup with people from the slums in Manila. And we're working with a few groups to ensure that we get the people at the cleanup who are effectively from the slums or people who would get involved and would need to get involved with initiatives like this. And really seeing just how easy it will be for them to get set up with a wallet, fulfill a bounty then get

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rewarded for the cleanup and then potentially a collaboration with .PH there on the ground actually pay for things with Crypto or if they so choose convert that Crypto into [inaudible 00:22:38] into Pesos.

And so again, it's looking at different opportunities and different ways of re-engineering the social and environmental impact. And I think the Honu Kitty was one example. These pilot projects that we were doing in Manila in at the end of November, start of December is another way. And I would love for us to keep finding different angles, different ways until we actually go into something that is sustainable. Something that is very low lift for people and for communities to actually create themselves. And of course this, like I was saying these Bounties for the Ocean, we'll just keep going. And it's definitely not restricted at this pilot and we will just keep funding it. And potentially finding contributions from other projects in the space from other people who are looking at blockchain as the new way of addressing the crisis and the particularly the ocean plastics crisis. And so yeah, these, I would love to hear some suggestions from your listeners.

Nikki Brown: Definitely. That's a great idea. And if anyone does want to reach out to you with ideas or just stay up to date on what you're doing, what's the best way to stay in touch or get ahold of you?

Simona Pop: Actually I would love for your listeners to go out and complete these Bounties for the Oceans. It's literally, I can put together ... Well, there's the link, they can follow us at ethBounties on twitter or sign up to our newsletter obviously. But I don't know whether we could share with your listeners just a link to that bounty with all the instructions with what they need to do. And I would love to see some cleanups out there. So far, just to give you an example, we've had cleanups happening in Canada, in Venezuela, in Tasmania, we had the submission for recently, in the UK. And I would love for this to be happening in every corner of the world.

Nikki Brown: Definitely, yes. We can include the link in the directions in the notes of the podcast. Anyone listening can know how they can get involved and support the cleanup of the oceans. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about the Bounties Network or just your hopes for the future of blockchain applications in general?

Simona Pop: I would say the main, main takeaway that I would love your listeners to be left with and inspired by is, I would say get involved. Get involved and get involved now. Don't necessarily wait until it's all perfect and all a complete polished

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product or a complete polished experience. I think the excitement of blockchain in decentralization is on the ideas coming to the space. And the more people get involved, the better ideas we have, the more interesting applications we can find. And I would love to hear ideas. I would love to hear of projects that people have started. I would love to hear the stories of people.

I would say get in touch with me again on twitter. I'm just at Sam_Pop or find us at ethBounties and tell me what, if you could bounty anything in the world, what would it be? Think broad. Think whatever it is that moves you, whatever it is that you're passionate about. I'm pretty sure there's an application for it on the blockchain and let's find it together. We've had, whenever I asked that question, I'm always so fascinated by what people come back with. I've had answers anything and everything from bounting a decentralized 911 emergency service, almost like an uber for emergencies. I have had bounty gout software classes for five year olds or a verifiably saving human lives or verifiably saving the rain forest. Applying bounties to conservation efforts of endangered species. So really it is as broad as we want it to be. And again, I hope and I want everybody to come back and creatively state of what we can do on the blockchain to change the world.

Nikki Brown: Amazing. Well, we'll leave our listeners with that question. And I would second that by encouraging everyone to get involved and reach out on twitter. We'll have all the links that Simona mentioned in the podcast notes. Thank you Simona for taking the time to speak with us today. We really appreciate it.

Simona Pop: Awesome. Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing it. And again I look forward to everybody getting involved.

Nikki Brown: Thank you. I'm Nikki Brown, your guest host for this episode of Crypto Token Talk.

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