

“Rakuten is one of very few Japanese companies to have a Software Engineering R&D Lab in Northern Ireland. The Rakuten Blockchain Lab has attracted the highest calibre engineers to work on emerging technology solutions that are adding real value to the Rakuten ecosystem.”

Fergal Downey, VP Engineering,
Rakuten Blockchain Lab



In 1997 buying and selling online was an uncertain thing to do.

Hiroshi “Mickey” Mikitani saw the possibilities for creating an online marketplace where people could confidently buy goods from anywhere in the world direct from their home. The Rakuten Marketplace revolutionized the way Japan’s merchants and consumers interacted with each other and formed the template for a new style of business that has swept the world.

Rakuten is now one of the world’s leading internet services companies, with a transformative presence in e-commerce, digital content and FinTech. Mickey is still at the helm—hands on, approachable, and always eager to listen to new ideas.

Rakuten has offices and talent all over the globe from Tokyo to Tel Aviv and Bangalore to Belfast. In 2016 Rakuten established the Rakuten Blockchain Lab in Northern Ireland with the goal of enabling distributed ledger technology and cryptocurrencies for the many Rakuten companies.

In addition to the experienced blockchain engineers, Rakuten found Northern Ireland an attractive location because of the region’s advanced technological innovation, particularly in cyber security, at Queen’s University’s Centre for Secure IT (CSIT) and the great software engineering talent emerging from the universities each year.

The initial hiring commitment by the Rakuten Blockchain Lab was for 20 software engineers, but the team is set to grow further as the demand for blockchain technology increases inside Rakuten and with its partners.

The Rakuten Blockchain Lab has already delivered multiple projects including a cryptocurrency exchange service called Rakuten Wallet.

Rakuten key facts

- From 6 employees in 1997 to over 18,000 employees
- Over 1.4 billion Rakuten members
- More than \$174 billion global gross transaction volume in 2018
- Rakuten Loyalty program (Rakuten Super Point) has issued over 1 trillion points since its launch in 2002
- Over 1 billion Japanese Yen in donations collected by Rakuten Charity Fund

“If we combine the cyber security imperative that the city of Belfast is providing with blockchain technology something amazing can be happening.”

Yasufumi Hirai,
Group Executive Vice President

