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Crypto Salaries Surge as Stablecoins Gain Ground

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A recent report from Pantera Capital shows a dramatic shift in how crypto professionals are being compensated, with salaries in digital assets nearly tripling over the past year. As of now, 9.6% of professionals in the blockchain industry are paid in stablecoins, signaling a growing trust in blockchain-native payroll systems and dollar-backed digital assets like USD Coin (USDC) and Tether (USDT).

Based on over 1,600 responses from crypto workers across 77 countries, the report highlights a clear preference for USDC, which accounted for 63% of all crypto payrolls.

Despite Tether's USDT being the most traded stablecoin globally by volume, it lagged in direct payroll usage. Pantera Capital noted that none of the major global payroll providers, such as Deel, Rippling, or Remote, offer support for USDT, possibly due to regulatory concerns or transparency issues surrounding Tether.

Together, USDC and USDT make up more than 90% of all crypto-based salary payments. According to DeFiLlama, the total market capitalization of all stablecoins stands at \$268.6 billion, illustrating the growing financial footprint of this sector.

Beyond how salaries are paid, the report reveals a shift in how compensation is structured. Nearly 88% of token-based salaries now follow four-year vesting schedules, up sharply from 64% the previous year. This trend indicates a strong push for long-term employee retention and alignment with company growth, especially in a fast-evolving and competitive industry.

Interestingly, the report also found that hands-on experience outweighs academic credentials in terms of salary. Professionals with a bachelor's degree earned an average of \$286,039, more than those holding a master's degree (\$214,359) or even a doctorate (\$226,858). This suggests that technical know-how and industry-specific experience are more highly valued than formal education in the crypto space.

Circle, the firm behind USDC, has been expanding its footprint aggressively. In March 2024, it partnered with Intercontinental Exchange (ICE), the parent company of the New York Stock Exchange, to explore the integration of USDC and tokenized funds into the global derivatives market. Just two months later, Circle applied for a federal trust bank charter with the U.S. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, aiming to provide regulated infrastructure for stablecoin payments, custody, and settlements.

Adding to the momentum, President Donald Trump signed the **GENIUS Act** (Governmental Evaluation of National and International Use of Stablecoins) into law in July. This bipartisan legislation provides a regulatory framework for stablecoin issuers, with USDC widely praised as a model for compliance and transparency.

As stablecoins gain legitimacy and usage in everyday payroll systems, the shift from traditional banking to decentralized finance (DeFi) appears to be more than just a trend; it may soon become the new standard.