



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE REPORT

The opening month of 2026 marked a continuation of the structural shifts that emerged throughout the previous year. Across blockchain infrastructure, financial markets, cybersecurity, and private capital allocation, January's developments reflected a maturing ecosystem increasingly oriented toward sustainable value creation rather than speculative positioning. This report examines the key developments across these domains and identifies actionable implications for operators, investors, and leadership teams navigating an environment defined by selectivity and strategic discipline.

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Executive Summary

January reinforced a defining characteristic of the current market cycle: capital remains available, but tolerance for inefficiency has materially declined. Across public and private markets alike, investors demonstrated a clear preference for businesses that can articulate and evidence cash-flow visibility, operational discipline, and risk maturity. While speculative activity has not fully disappeared, it has become increasingly concentrated, with a widening performance gap between high-quality operators and undifferentiated participants.

The overarching takeaway from January is that 2026 is shaping up to be a year in which discipline, rather than optimism, is likely to determine relative success. Organisations and investors that prioritise resilience, transparency, and execution are positioned to outperform in this environment.



Macro Overview

January marked the beginning of 2026 as a period of transition rather than transformation. Global markets entered the year with tempered expectations, reflecting an environment in which growth remains achievable but increasingly dependent on execution rather than policy support. Inflationary pressures have continued to ease across several major economies, although services inflation remains persistent, limiting the pace at which monetary policy can loosen. Liquidity conditions showed modest improvement, but capital allocation remained cautious, particularly toward leveraged or speculative assets.

Meanwhile, geopolitical tensions and supply-chain risks continued to influence market sentiment, acting more as sources of episodic volatility than as triggers for systemic disruption.

Overall, the macroeconomic signal emerging from January suggests a gradual shift away from policy-driven market dynamics toward an environment where earnings quality, operational resilience, and balance-sheet strength are once again the primary drivers of performance.



Blockchain Bulletin

Cryptocurrency	Symbol	Price November	Price December	Price January	Estimate % of Change
Bitcoin	BTC	\$90,394.31	\$87,508.83	\$87,869.19	0.41%
Ethereum	ETH	\$2,865.12	\$2,967.04	\$2,870.19	-3.26%
Cardano	ADA	\$0.42	\$0.33	\$0.35	6.06%
XRP	XRP	\$2.11	\$1.84	\$1.88	2.17%
Solana	SOL	\$133.84	\$124.48	\$122.32	-1.74%
Binance	BNB	\$849.75	\$863.26	\$872.10	1.02%

Institutional Infrastructure Takes Centre Stage

January's developments within the blockchain and digital asset ecosystem were characterised by a notable shift in focus from price volatility to structural maturation. While retail attention often gravitates toward short-term market movements, institutional actors continued their methodical integration of digital assets into regulated financial infrastructure. This transition represents a fundamental evolution in how blockchain technologies are being perceived and deployed across the financial landscape.

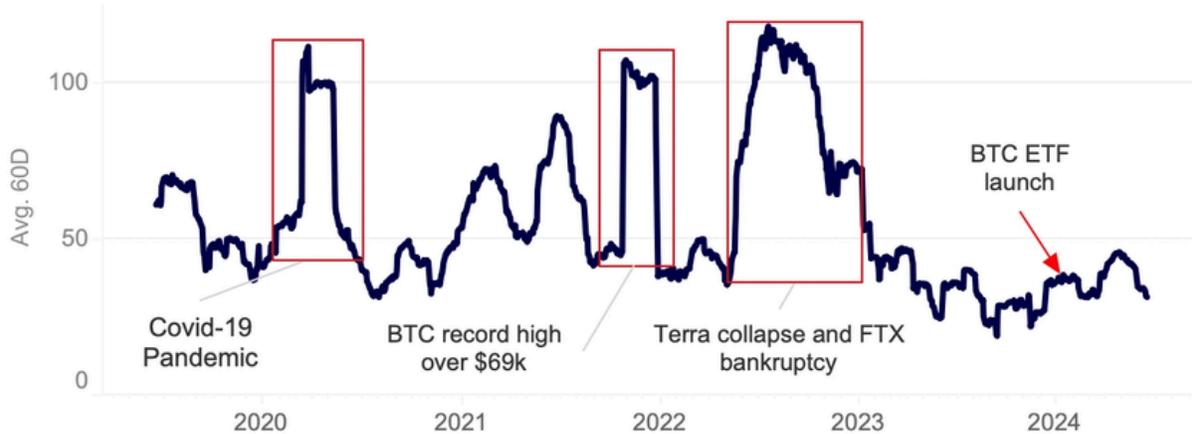
The month saw sustained momentum in several key areas. Regulated digital asset products continued to attract institutional capital, with custody solutions, compliance frameworks, and settlement infrastructure receiving heightened attention and investment. Major financial institutions expanded their blockchain-related service offerings, signalling confidence in the long-term viability of tokenised assets and distributed ledger technologies. This activity was not limited to cryptocurrency holdings but extended to tokenisation of traditional assets, including securities, real estate, and commodities.





BTC Volatility Falls Amid Institutionalisation

Large market events are having less of an impact on BTC



Source: Kaiko Data. BTC 60-day historical volatility.



The Maturation Thesis

This evolution signals a meaningful departure from the speculative cycles that previously dominated the sector. Rather than serving primarily as alternative or speculative instruments detached from traditional finance, digital assets are increasingly being integrated into the broader financial and enterprise infrastructure. Regulatory clarity in key jurisdictions has enabled this progression, allowing institutions to engage with digital assets within established risk management and compliance frameworks.

The infrastructure layer is where the most significant value creation appears to be occurring. Companies providing custody solutions, regulatory technology, institutional-grade trading platforms, and enterprise blockchain implementations reported strong operational momentum. These platforms share a common characteristic: they align closely with existing regulatory, legal, and operational frameworks rather than positioning themselves in opposition to traditional financial systems.

Strategic Implications

As this trend accelerates, value creation is likely to continue favouring platforms that demonstrate regulatory compliance, institutional-grade security, and interoperability with legacy financial systems. The speculative premium that once accrued to novel protocols and experimental applications has diminished significantly, replaced by investor preference for proven technology, sustainable business models, and clear paths to regulatory acceptance. For operators in this space, the imperative is to prioritise compliance infrastructure, institutional partnerships, and operational resilience over narrative-driven growth strategies.



THE BUZZ

5 Bear Market Signals Are Flashing for Bitcoin This January



January has been volatile so far for Bitcoin (BTC), with the asset facing renewed headwinds amid escalating geopolitical tensions between the US and the EU following President Trump's latest tariff announcements. Read more [HERE](#)

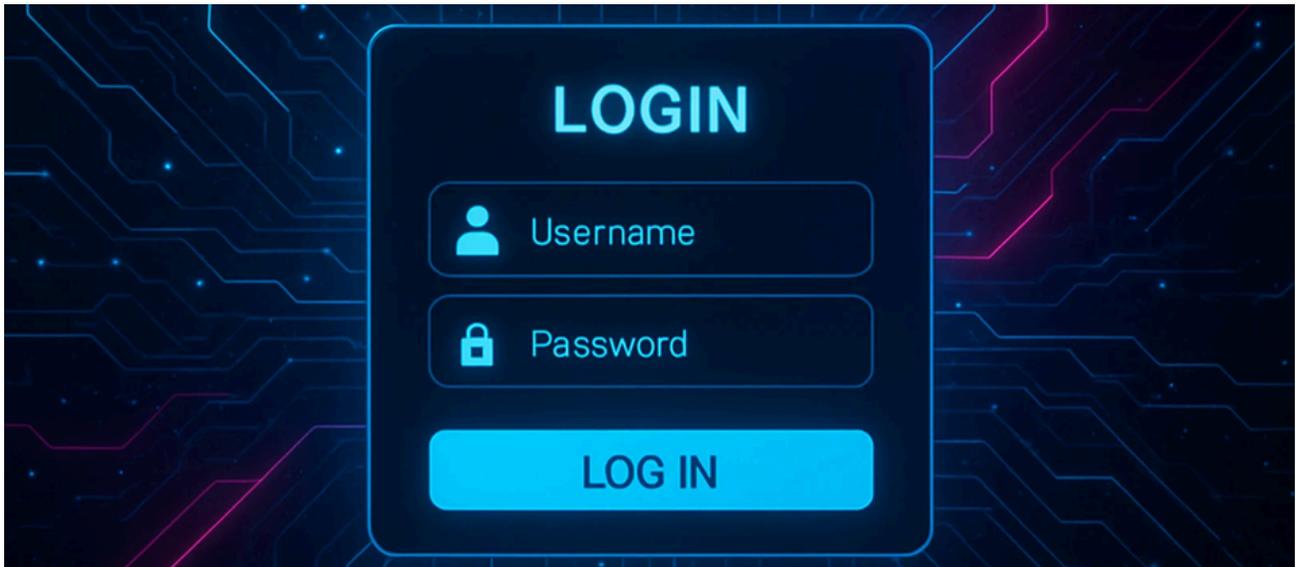
European Stocks Set to Tumble on Fresh Tariff Threats from Trump



US President Donald Trump's announcement of new tariffs on eight European countries over Greenland weighed on risk sentiment as trading kicked off Monday. Read more [HERE](#)



Credential-stealing Chrome extensions target enterprise HR platforms



Malicious Chrome extensions on the Chrome Web Store masquerading as productivity and security tools for enterprise HR and ERP platforms were discovered stealing authentication credentials or blocking management pages used to respond to security incidents. Read more [HERE](#)

Why Coinbase derailed the crypto industry's political future



The powerful exchange yanked its support of the Senate CLARITY Act at the last minute — and the rest of the crypto world, from Kraken to a16z, is infuriated. Read more [HERE](#)



FINANCIAL TRENDS

Repricing Quality and Profitability

The defining financial development of January was a broad market repricing centred on expectations for interest rate normalisation. Throughout 2024 and into early 2025, markets had anticipated a more aggressive easing cycle from central banks. January marked a recalibration of these expectations, with investors adjusting to the likelihood of a prolonged period characterised by stable but relatively elevated rates compared to the ultra-low regime of the previous decade.

This shift had immediate and noticeable impacts across asset classes. Equity markets began rewarding companies demonstrating profitability and earnings durability over those offering long-dated growth projections dependent on sustained multiple expansion. The divergence between profitable, cash-generative businesses and those still investing heavily toward future profitability widened considerably. Sectors particularly sensitive to discount rates, including high-growth technology companies without near-term profitability, experienced valuation pressure.

Credit Market Dynamics

Credit markets showed renewed sensitivity to leverage and balance-sheet risk. Corporate bond spreads widened for issuers perceived as carrying excessive debt loads or operating with business models highly dependent on external financing. Investment-grade issuers with strong balance sheets experienced relatively stable borrowing costs, while lower-rated credits faced higher risk premiums. This bifurcation reinforced the market's shift toward quality and financial discipline.

The leveraged loan market also exhibited signs of increased scrutiny. Private credit providers, who had been relatively aggressive in their underwriting standards during the low-rate environment, began tightening terms and requiring stronger financial covenants. This represented a notable shift from the borrower-friendly conditions that had prevailed in previous years.

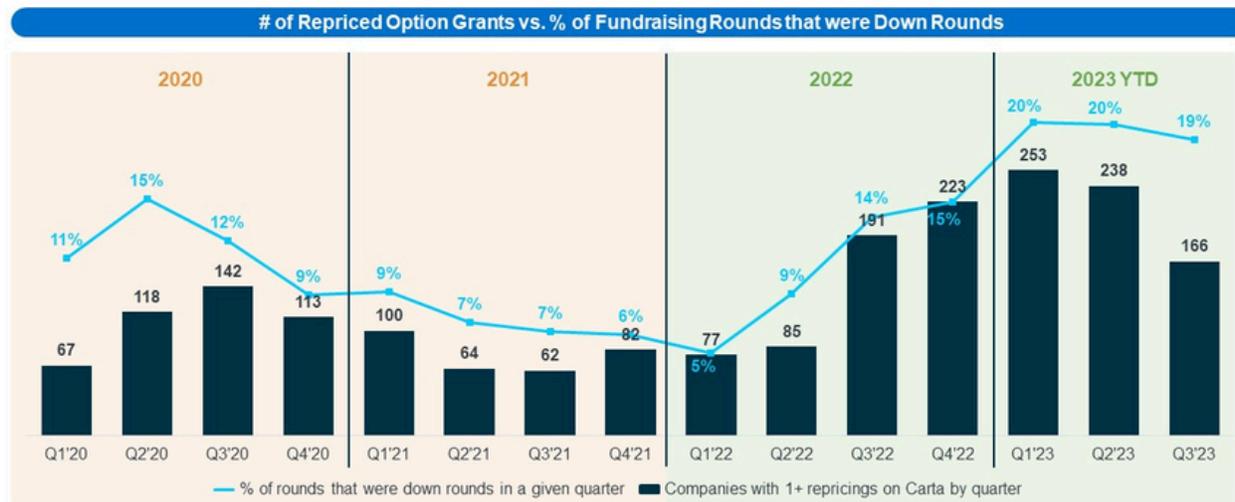


Implications for Capital Allocation

For operators, the implication is clear and consequential: while funding conditions may gradually improve over time, access to capital will increasingly depend on demonstrable financial discipline and sustainable unit economics. Companies that can articulate a clear path to profitability, maintain conservative leverage ratios, and generate positive operating cash flow are likely to find receptive capital markets. Conversely, businesses that remain dependent on continuous external financing to sustain operations face a more challenging environment.

This represents a fundamental reset in how capital markets evaluate risk and allocate resources. The "growth at any cost" mentality that characterised parts of the 2010s and early 2020s has given way to a more traditional emphasis on return on invested capital, cash generation, and balance sheet strength.

Valuation Resets are Catalyzing Stock Option Repricing



As valuations reset, private companies should not be afraid of repricing existing employee stock options to retain top talent and realign incentives.



THE CYBER PULSE

Third-Party Risk Becomes Primary Risk

Cybersecurity developments in January underscored the growing importance of supply-chain and third-party risk as a primary threat vector for modern enterprises. A significant security incident involving external vendors highlighted how vulnerabilities outside an organisation's direct control can lead to material operational and financial consequences. The incident, which affected multiple downstream clients, served as a stark reminder that modern enterprises are only as secure as the weakest link within their broader ecosystem.

The event prompted renewed scrutiny of vendor risk management programs across industries. Organisations that had invested in robust third-party security assessments, continuous monitoring, and contractual protections were better positioned to respond and recover. Those with limited visibility into their vendor ecosystems faced more severe disruptions. This disparity emphasised that supply chain security is not merely a compliance checkbox but a critical component of operational resilience.

Evolving Attack Vectors

Beyond supply chain vulnerabilities, January saw continued effectiveness and proliferation of advanced fraud and social engineering techniques. One notable and concerning trend was the increased use of AI-enabled impersonation, including realistic voice and video deepfakes designed to deceive finance teams and executives into authorising payments or disclosing sensitive information. These attacks have proven remarkably effective, bypassing traditional verification methods that rely on voice recognition or video confirmation.

Another highly effective attack method involved vendor invoice manipulation, in which threat actors compromised supplier communications to redirect legitimate payments to attacker-controlled accounts. These schemes often went undetected for extended periods because they exploited trusted relationships and established payment workflows. The financial losses from these attacks were substantial, and in several cases exceeded organisations' cyber insurance coverage limits.



Business Impact and Strategic Response

These developments further emphasise that cybersecurity is no longer a purely technical concern relegated to IT departments. It has become a core business risk with direct implications for valuation, regulatory scrutiny, and transaction outcomes. Private equity firms and strategic acquirers are increasingly incorporating cybersecurity due diligence into their evaluation processes, and significant vulnerabilities or incidents can materially impact transaction valuations or derail deals entirely.

The regulatory landscape is also evolving rapidly. Securities regulators in major jurisdictions have implemented stricter disclosure requirements for material cybersecurity incidents, and non-compliance can result in significant penalties. Board-level oversight of cybersecurity risk is no longer optional but expected, with directors facing potential liability for inadequate risk management.

For organisations, the strategic response must be comprehensive. This includes implementing zero-trust architectures, enhancing vendor risk management programs, deploying advanced authentication methods that are resistant to AI-enabled impersonation, and establishing incident response capabilities that can rapidly contain and recover from breaches. Cybersecurity investment should be viewed not as a cost centre but as a fundamental enabler of business continuity and competitive advantage.



VENTURE CAPITAL SPOTLIGHT

Selective Deployment in a Mature Environment

Despite a restrained overall funding environment, January featured several notable venture capital and private market transactions that provided valuable insight into current investor priorities. Total capital deployment remained well below the peaks of 2021-2022, but the quality and strategic focus of transactions suggested that sophisticated capital has not retreated from the market. Instead, it has become more concentrated and selective.

Capital deployment showed a clear bias toward infrastructure-oriented businesses and consolidation strategies aimed at achieving scale and operational efficiency. The most prominent transactions of the month shared several common attributes: recurring revenue models with strong visibility, strategic relevance to critical systems or workflows, experienced management teams with proven execution track records, and alignment with long-term secular trends, including cybersecurity, energy infrastructure, and enterprise data systems.

Notable Transaction Characteristics

Several large transactions in the cybersecurity sector reflected heightened demand for comprehensive security platforms capable of addressing the complex threat landscape described earlier in this report. Investors demonstrated willingness to commit substantial capital to companies offering consolidated security operations platforms, particularly those serving enterprise customers with recurring revenue contracts.

The energy infrastructure sector also attracted significant capital, with investors backing companies developing grid modernisation technologies, energy storage solutions, and systems enabling the transition to distributed energy resources. These investments reflected both policy tailwinds from government initiatives and fundamental demand driven by electrification trends across transportation and industrial applications.

Data infrastructure companies, particularly those enabling artificial intelligence workflows, continued to attract investor attention. However, the bar for investment was noticeably higher than in previous periods. Investors scrutinised unit economics, customer acquisition costs, and paths to profitability more rigorously than in the exuberant funding environment of recent years.

Market Structure and Strategy

These transaction patterns reinforce the view that venture capital has not retreated from the market but has instead become more concentrated around high-conviction opportunities. Investors are increasingly willing to commit substantial capital when conviction is high, competitive positioning is defensible, and management teams have demonstrated operational excellence.



WRAPPED UP

Taken together, January's developments point to a market environment defined by selectivity, scrutiny, and strategic patience. Macro conditions have stabilized but have not reignited broad risk appetite. Blockchain continues its progression toward institutional relevance, financial markets are repricing quality over narrative, cybersecurity failures are carrying measurable financial consequences, and venture capital activity is consolidating around fewer, higher-confidence opportunities.

For operators, the actionable priority is to strengthen balance sheets, improve security posture, and focus relentlessly on operational metrics that demonstrate resilience. For investors, the emphasis should remain on downside protection, execution credibility, and risk-adjusted returns. For boards and senior leadership teams, cyber risk management and capital efficiency should be treated as strategic imperatives rather than functional considerations.

In an environment such as this, competitive advantage in 2026 is likely to accrue to those who prepare for resilience rather than resurgence.

Prepare for Resilience, Not Resurgence.

Selective Markets Institutional Blockchain Quality Repricing Cyber Risks Impact

Strengthen Balance Sheets Focus on Security & Metrics Demand Execution & Value

Competitive Advantage in 2026
Resilience Over Resurgence