

**Enshittification**, coined by author, journalist and internet activist [Cory Doctorow](#), describes the deliberate degradation of online platforms over time as they transition from user-friendly services to profit-maximizing machines, following a three-stage cycle: first attracting users with great features, then exploiting them to benefit business customers, and finally extracting maximum value from both users and businesses, leaving a worse experience for everyone.

### **The Three Stages of Enshittification:**

1. **Attract Users (Bait-and-Switch):** Platforms offer great value, free features, and excellent experiences to build a large user base and lock them in.
2. **Exploit Users for Businesses:** Once users are trapped, platforms degrade the user experience (e.g., more ads, fewer organic posts) to entice business customers (advertisers, sellers) by giving them better visibility
3. **Exploit Businesses for Shareholders:** Finally, the platform abuses both users and businesses to extract maximum profit for executives and shareholders, leading to a highly degraded, valueless service for all.

### **Examples:**

- **Google Search:** Degraded from providing relevant links to prioritizing ads and product listings.
- **Facebook/Meta:** Shifted from friend-focused content to algorithmic feeds and constant monetization.
- **TikTok:** Artificially boosts content to keep engagement high, frustrating creators.
- **WebMD:** Began with clear, objective and resourced medical information. Degraded as advertising for unvalidated OTC treatments, etc. overwhelmed factual content and influenced the advice.
- **Other popular sites** bought by marketers and loaded with advertising, including articles that are essentially paid promotions (e.g., We Are Teachers, now owned by Dun & Bradstreet). A once-popular teaching resource, [PuzzleFry](#), is a truly sad example, one among thousands.

### **Key Takeaway:**

It's a systematic decline where platforms become less useful as they become more profitable.

**Source** (ironically): Google AI Search.

