Deshittification Through Decentralisation

How Evernode Could End Internet Platform Decay

By

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1. Introduction

1.1 In late 2022, tech writer Cory Doctorow coined the term "enshittification" to describe a seemingly inevitable pattern in how internet platforms decline over time. The pattern is as predictable as it is destructive: platforms start by offering excellent service to attract users, then gradually degrade that service to better serve business customers, and finally exploit both users and businesses to maximize shareholder returns. From Facebook to Google Search, from Amazon to Uber, this cycle of platform decay has become so common that it seems almost natural—an inevitable consequence of the internet's current architecture and business models.

1.2 But what if it wasn't inevitable? What if the problem isn't with internet platforms themselves, but with how we build them? Enter Evernode, a new decentralized infrastructure network that might just offer a way to break the cycle of platform decay. To understand how, let's first examine the problem it's trying to solve.

2. The Enshittification Cycle: A Pattern of Platform Decay

2.1 The pattern Doctorow describes follows three distinct stages:

(a) First, platforms are good to their users, often offering services below cost to build a user base. Think of Amazon's early days of selling books below cost with free shipping, or Uber's artificially low, venture-capital-subsidized fares.

(b) Once users are locked in, platforms begin to degrade the user experience to attract and serve business customers. Amazon pushes sponsored products over organic search results; Uber raises prices through surge pricing while taking larger cuts from drivers.

(c) Finally, when both users and business customers are sufficiently dependent on the platform, it begins to extract maximum value from both groups. Amazon charges sellers up to 45% in various fees; Uber implements aggressive monetization strategies that squeeze both drivers and passengers.

The result is a steady decline in service quality that seems impossible to escape. Users and businesses stay because switching costs are too high, creating what Doctorow calls a "death spiral of declining quality and increasing prices."

3. Breaking the Cycle: The Evernode Solution

3.1 Launched in January 2024, the Evernode Network offers a potential solution to this problem by fundamentally changing how internet platforms can be built and operated.

3.2 Instead of centralized servers controlled by a single company, Evernode provides a decentralized network where applications run as mini-blockchains or "AppChains" across multiple independent hosts. Evernode allows contracts to be written in almost any computer language and allows dApps to function as normal Apps – read/write data, connect to external services, perform computations, support Progressive Web Apps – whilst being a dApp in the sense of maintaining a canonical state across multiple instances

3.3 This architecture addresses several key factors that enable enshittification:

(a) **Decentralized Control:** Unlike traditional platforms where a single company can unilaterally change terms of service or degrade quality, Evernode-based applications are governed by transparent smart contracts and decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs). Changes require community consensus rather than shareholder mandate.

(b) **Economic Alignment:** The network's native currency and reward system creates direct economic alignment between infrastructure providers (hosts) and users. There's no central authority that can gradually extract more value from the ecosystem.

(c) **Exit Rights:** Perhaps most importantly, Evernode's architecture ensures users maintain the right of exit—the ability to leave a platform without losing their data or connections. This fundamental right, which Doctorow identifies as crucial to preventing enshittification, is built into the system's design.

4. RoadRush: A Decentralized Ridesharing Platform

4.1 Recently, Everpower Labs, a developer in the Evernode ecosystem, released a prototype of a ridesharing dApp on Evernode called RoadRush. (https://x.com/EverpowerLabs/status/1880209432828928077)

4.2 RoadRush represents a new approach to ridesharing built on Evernode's decentralized infrastructure. Understanding its technical implementation helps illustrate how decentralized architecture can create platforms resistant to degradation.

Technical Architecture

4.3 RoadRush operates as a decentralized application (dApp) running across multiple Evernode hosts. Each instance of the application functions as part of a mini-blockchain or "AppChain," maintaining consensus about ride requests, driver availability, and payment processing without requiring a central authority.

Key Components

4.4 RoadRush is a decentralised Progressive Web App with the following key components:

(i) **Smart Contract Layer:** Running on Evernode's HotPocket consensus engine, RoadRush's core logic handles ride matching, bidding, and payment processing through deterministic smart contracts that execute identically across all nodes.

(b) **Cryptocurrency Integration:** The platform supports both traditional fiat payments and cryptocurrency transactions, with integrated wallets enabling instant, secure payments between passengers and drivers.

(c) **Matching Token:** Drivers purchase RDT Tokens and burn an RDT token for each ride (match), which is the systems way of charging for the matchmaking function it provides. No other fees are charged.

(d) **Decentralized Storage:** Rider and driver data, including ratings and history, are stored across the network rather than in centralized databases.

(e) **Bidding System:** A 30-second window allows drivers to bid on trips, creating a transparent marketplace where pricing is determined by real-time supply and demand rather than algorithmic "surge pricing."

How It Works

4.5 These features work in concert as follows:

(a) **Driver Onboarding:** Drivers join by downloading the RoadRush application and receiving RDT tokens, which serve both as operational fuel for the network and governance tokens.

(b) **Ride Requests:** When a passenger requests a ride, their request is broadcast to the network of RoadRush nodes.

(c) **Driver Bidding:** Available drivers in the area can bid on the ride within a 30-second window, specifying their price per kilometre.

(d) **Passenger Selection:** Passengers choose their preferred driver based on price, distance, and driver ratings.

(e) **Route Customization:** During rides, passengers can set waypoints and update routes, with fare calculations happening transparently on-chain via the smart contract.

(f) **Payment Processing:** Upon ride completion, payment is processed directly between passenger and driver wallets, with no platform fees deducted.

Leveraging Evernode

4.6 RoadRush is an excellent example of the kind of dApps that can be built on Evernode. Evernode is a way for wrapping a consensus engine around any kind of App, transforming the App into a dApp (or AppChain). Since Evernode dApps can be programmed in almost any language and have almost any desired behaviour, it can support powerful decentralised Progressive Web Apps (PWAs) like RoadRush.

5. RoadRush: A Case Study in Preventing Platform Decay

5.1 RoadRush demonstrates how Evernode's decentralized infrastructure can create platforms resistant to enshittification.

Direct Value Exchange

5.2 Rather than a central company taking an increasing cut of each ride, RoadRush enables direct peer-to-peer transactions between drivers and passengers. Drivers keep 100% of their earnings, setting their own rates through a transparent bidding system, and pay a flat fee for the match-making function provided by the platform.

Aligned Incentives

5.3 The platform's governance token (RDT) gives both drivers and passengers a say in the platform's development. This ensures changes must benefit the entire ecosystem rather than just shareholders.

No Central Control

5.4 Because RoadRush runs on Evernode's decentralized infrastructure, no single entity can degrade service quality to extract more profit. The application's rules are encoded in smart contracts that can only be changed through community consensus.

Sustainable Economics

5.5 Instead of venture capital-subsidized growth followed by aggressive monetization, RoadRush's economic model is sustainable from the start. The platform's costs are transparent and distributed across its users, with no hidden fees or sudden price hikes.

6. The Future of Platform Development

6.1 The combination of Evernode's infrastructure and applications like RoadRush points to a possible future where internet platforms don't inevitably decay. By building decentralization and user rights into the foundation of these systems, we might finally break free from the cycle of enshittification.

6.2 This doesn't mean these platforms will be perfect. They'll still face challenges around user experience, regulation, and scaling. But by removing the structural incentives that lead to platform decay, they offer hope for a more sustainable and user-friendly internet.

6.3 The key insight here is that enshittification isn't inevitable—it's a consequence of how we've built internet platforms so far. By changing the underlying infrastructure and incentive structures, networks like Evernode create the possibility for platforms that get better, not worse, over time.

6.4 In the end, the solution to enshittification might not be better regulation or more ethical business practices, but a fundamental reimagining of how we build internet platforms. By starting with decentralized infrastructure and aligned incentives, we might finally break free from the cycle of platform decay that has defined so much of the internet's history.