At Medium, we say our purpose is to “deepen your understanding of the world.”

That’s why this moment on the internet feels even more urgent than normal. Even before Google used AI to tell us to (really!), search results were already flooded with content that was written by or for machines, not humans.

It costs money to run a website, so publishers and platforms tried to pay for their business with ads.

It’s easy to name a root cause — ads reward any content that can grab your attention long enough to show you yet another ad, and the more the better.

Now we have decades of proof that attention-grabbing isn’t the same as good. Instead of the information superhighway that we were promised, ads gave us an internet where almost all incentives are to create cheap, high-volume, low-quality content designed to get as many eyeballs as possible.

If we want to build a better internet, we have to build different types of incentive models. That’s what we’re doing at Medium.

Everything Medium does is paid for by our members, not advertising. We’re not trying to manipulate your attention to show you more ads. Instead, we care about a much harder challenge: How can we show you a story that you will be happy to have paid to read?

We’re biased, but we believe more places on the internet should be directly funded by their users. That results in honest incentives for those platforms to simply give as much value as possible to their community (you), so the community sticks around and keeps paying.

And since Medium is free to use, this value extends beyond the Medium member community. Those who can afford to pay for a Medium membership are creating a better internet for everyone.

Think about the current state of the internet. Now, imagine how much it improves when you get the incentives right.