

Google Cloud's 5-Step Founder Checklist



Summary by



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Overview

Choosing the right technology platform is one of the most critical early decisions for any founder. In this session, Mike Langford, Head of VC & Startup Ecosystem at Google Cloud (APAC), shared practical guidance for startups on how to secure runway, leverage AI, prepare for scale, embed security, and avoid costly pitfalls. Drawing from Google's own infrastructure and startup programs, he outlined a five-step checklist and common mistakes to watch out for.

20-Point Summary:

1. **Speaker:** Mike Langford, Head of VC & Startup Ecosystem at Google Cloud (APAC), based in Sydney.
2. **Session Goal:** Provide a five-step checklist for startups on Google Cloud + highlight common pitfalls.
3. **Core Decision:** Choosing a tech platform is less about a “vendor” and more about picking a **foundational path**.
4. **Step 1 – Secure Runway:** Cash is king. Use the **Google for Startups Cloud Program**, which offers generous credits plus business, technical, and financial support.
5. **Step 2 – Define Unfair Advantage:** If AI/data is central, build where AI is born – direct access to **Gemini models** and **Vertex AI**.
6. **Google Advantage:** Founders use the same AI tools and infra Google teams rely on.
7. **Step 3 – Build for Scale Day One:** Assume viral growth (e.g., TechCrunch feature). Google Cloud runs on the same infra as Search and YouTube, ensuring reliability.
8. **Step 4 – Embrace Openness:** Avoid lock-in. Google backs open ecosystems (e.g., invented Kubernetes, open-sourced it).

9. **Open Ecosystem:** Lets teams build with familiar tools and migrate easily if needed.
10. **Step 5 – Security First:** Trust with customers starts with embedded security. Google Cloud infra is secure-by-design, same as Gmail/Search.
Workspace Advantage: If you already use Google Workspace, you can extend **users, groups, and security controls** into Google Cloud with Cloud Identity.
11. **Unified Identity:** Simplifies user management and strengthens security as the team grows.
12. **Summary of Benefits:** Preserve runway, access world-class AI, scale seamlessly, build openly, and stay secure.
13. **Pitfall 1 – Misguided “Avoid Lock-In”:** Many founders stick to low-level VMs to avoid lock-in. This causes **operational complexity** and slows product building.
14. **Better Approach:** Use open yet advanced managed services like **Cloud Run** and **GKE**.
15. **These Tools:** Deliver agility + speed while remaining portable via open standards.
16. **Pitfall 2 – Credit Expiry:** Founders fail to plan for paying bills once credits run out.
17. **Hot Tip:** Time your sign-up. Credits start when you join, so wait until your cloud usage is ready to scale before activating.
18. **Getting Started:** Explore resources at **cloud.google.com/startup** for technical + business support.
19. **Extra Resources:** Broader founder help also available at **startup.google.com**.